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**ABOUT THE COVER**
Our cover depicts three key figures in the early Zionist movement that resulted in the creation of the modern State of Israel. Theodor Herzl (center) organized the First Zionist Congress (1897) and is known as the father of Zionism. British Lord Arthur Balfour (left) penned the Balfour Declaration. Zionist theorist Max Nordau (right) drafted the document that set forth the aims of a Jewish homeland sanctioned under international law. (Herzl, AP Wide World Photos; Nordau and Balfour, Culver Pictures, Inc.; digital composition, Thomas E. Williams)

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As a Jew, I traveled to Israel; and it was Christians who were inspiring me. It was not something I had anticipated.” — Susan Lorell, vice president, Jewish Community Relations Council.

In traveling to Israel recently on a solidarity tour with representatives of our nearby Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Jewish community, we prayed that our lives as Christians would reflect both our commitment to the Bible as God’s Word and the reality of our walk with the Lord.

The Friends of Israel and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey cosponsored this unique trip—and it was a blessing to us both.

Throughout the land we saw much that the major news organizations virtually ignore. And we witnessed Israel’s uniqueness as the Middle East’s country of compassion and democracy.

Arriving one morning at an absorption center for Jewish Ethiopians, we saw firsthand Israel’s commitment to its immigrants. In Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, temporary housing is provided. Hebrew is taught. Educational classes are held for preschool and school-age children, as well as for adults.

The Ethiopians learn a wide range of basic skills for living in Israel’s highly developed society. Unexpectedly, we were on the scene as a bus pulled up from the airport with Ethiopians of all ages who had just arrived in Israel. We witnessed the joyous, emotional reunions of new immigrants with relatives and loved ones who had preceded them. We could feel the emotion and anticipation as others arrived, too, filled with dreams of a better life in the land of their forefathers.

Later the same day we experienced another chapter in the amazing story of Israel’s Ethiopians as we visited the Technion, the high-technology campus in Haifa often described as “Israel’s MIT” (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). We spoke with several of the more than two thousand Ethiopians studying for careers in technology and science, and we saw hundreds more training under a special program for them in science and technology.

One of the students who emigrated from Ethiopia at age thirteen under
Israel’s Operation Moses airlift described in fluent English his parents’ dream to be in Jerusalem. He explained how his family walked for twenty-five days in the African desert to a refugee camp before finally being transported to Israel.

From the start of our day meeting new Ethiopian immigrants who knew no Hebrew, to the end of our day at the Technion with well-trained, Ethiopian young adults fluent in Hebrew and English, we witnessed Israel’s comprehensive efforts to help uneducated people from an undeveloped country adjust to the highly developed society of the modern State of Israel.

We also saw Israel’s compassion for its veterans. Since Israel’s inception in 1948, many men and women have been severely injured in their unceasing efforts to protect their homeland from those bent on destroying it. Today Israel’s Zahal Disabled Veterans Organization numbers almost fifty thousand. These members are assisted in their rehabilitation and hope someday to resume normal living—physically, mentally, and socially.

While visiting the Zahal Center in Jerusalem, we met Arik Vamosh, the husband of our Israeli guide, Miriam. Arik was permanently disabled in the 1973 Yom Kippur War during a tank battle in the Sinai Peninsula. He pointed out how the center uses its gymnasium, swimming pool, auditorium, treatment and fitness rooms, classrooms, tennis courts, and other supportive facilities to work toward fully integrating the veterans back into society.

Though in a wheelchair all of these years, we noticed how little Arik spoke of himself and how much he spoke of the many other disabled Israeli veterans needing help.

Our tour not only witnessed the compassion of Israel’s institutions and its people, but we also observed a dynamic democratic government—the only such democracy in the midst of a sea of twenty-two Arab dictatorships.

Arriving at the Arab/Druze village of Ussafiya near Haifa, we met with a

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ONLY IN ISRAEL!

Where can you find a terrorist and his victim in adjacent hospital beds, being treated with equal compassion? At Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

It is a strange situation that Hadassah doctors have come to take for granted and that speaks volumes about Israel’s commitment to human rights.

For example, in November 2002 a suicide bomber boarded an Israeli bus in Jerusalem that was so packed with Jewish schoolchildren no one noticed him. He waited until the bus was full, then exploded himself, killing eleven people and wounding forty-nine, half of them under age eighteen.

That evening on Arab TV, his father lamented that he did not have more children to send out as suicide bombers. The next day this father experienced chest pains and was transported to Hadassah Hospital. There he was treated by Jewish doctors with the same high standard of care as any other patient.

The hospital’s situation is so unusual that a film has been made about it and BBC News reported on it, saying, “Jerusalem hospital where there is no distinction between Arabs and Jews.”

In another incident, a Jewish doctor operated on a terrorist responsible for two bus bombings. The doctor told the BBC he had no hospital bed in his section for a top Israeli intelligence man because he needed it for the terrorist. So he put the Israeli somewhere else. “I’m telling you,” he said, these situations “can be only in Israel.”

Of the one million patients seen by the staff annually, some 2,500 have been terror victims—Jewish, Arab, and others. The hospital itself has been bombed by Arab terrorists, and today the emergency room doubles as a bomb shelter.

The 300-bed facility on Mt. Scopus is one of two facilities now called the Hadassah University Medical Center. Staffed by both Arabs and Jews, it opened officially in 1939. But its real start came in 1913 when Henrietta Szold, the scholarly, courageous daughter of a Baltimore, Maryland, rabbi, organized a medical team to go to Jerusalem to treat the awful illnesses she saw there.

Her passion was to provide medical care for both Arabs and Jews. She founded Hadassah Women, the largest Jewish organization in America and the primary source of funding for Hadassah Hospital.
By currently invoked, politically correct reckoning, when the Palestinians finally achieve statehood, Jerusalem will be lopped in half and become the capital of two nations “living side by side in peace.”

That’s the dream. But dreams rarely reflect reality. And nocturnal pleasantries inevitably vaporize when exposed to the harsh light of morning. Such will be the case when foreign interlopers, dreamers, and wishful thinkers impose their concepts for the “new Middle East” on the citizens of the State of Israel. I say “on the State of Israel” because Israelis will be doing all of the giving, and Palestinians will be doing all of the taking while complaining that their portion still is not enough.

Already the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its commissars have staked out police-state-like positions on what they will create and enforce in Jerusalem if they have their way. For proof, listen to the words of Yasser Arafat’s appointed mufti of Jerusalem. In a recent sermon delivered at the Temple Mount’s Al-Aqsa mosque and broadcast on PA radio, the mufti asserted that seventy years ago, the Committee of the League of Nations issued a statement giving Arabs the rights to the “Burak Wall” (Western Wall). Translation: No reference to the Western, or Wailing, Wall—Judaism’s holiest site—is legitimate because the wall is the exclusive province of the Muslim Waqt.

In a 1997 interview with Aaron Lerner, director of the Independent Media Review & Analysis (IMRA), the late Palestinian Minister of Waqt and Religious Affairs, Hassan Tahboob, explained the practical implications of that claim.

Jewish worshipers, he said, would be allowed to pray toward the wall but would be kept at least two meters (6.5 feet) away from it. They would not be permitted to touch the sacred stones, and the practice of inserting prayers into the wall’s crevices would be no more.

To dignify the illegitimate Muslim claims of exclusivity to the places where the Jewish Temples stood and Jesus worshiped and ministered is no less than an act of international thievery of indescribable proportions.

Presumably, some sort of barrier would restrict access. Under those circumstances, Muslim guards probably would be posted between worshipers (both Jewish and Christian) and the “Al Baraq Wall” to enforce its Islamic sanctity.

What Western masters of appeasement in the name of peace do not choose to consider is the fact that conceding the Old City, Temple Mount, and possibly the Western Wall to absolute Muslim authority literally excises the heart and soul from the anatomy of Judaism and the Jewish people.

In June of 1967, Gen. Moshe Dayan voiced the desire pent up in the hearts of Diaspora Jewry for two millennia when, referring to the Old City, Temple Mount, and Western Wall, he declared that the Jewish people had returned to Jerusalem, “never to part from her again.” By no stretch of the imagination is it incorrect or imperialistic for Jewish people to claim as their heritage the place King David lawfully purchased from Aurunah the Jebusite.

On Mount Moriah the Jewish people built and maintained their magnificent Temples and made sacred pilgrimages from the far reaches of the known world to worship there. And all this transpired many centuries before Islam sprung from the birthing chamber. To dignify the illegitimate Muslim claims of exclusivity to the places where the Jewish Temples stood and Jesus worshiped and ministered is no less than an act of international thievery of indescribable proportions.

Anyone deluded into thinking the Palestinian Authority will be a respectable and considerate custodian of areas sacred to Jewish people and Christians should think again.

**Article 6** of the Palestinian Constitution states, “Islam shall be the official religion of the state.”
Article 7: “The principles of the Islamic Shari’a are a primary source for legislation.”

Article 8: “Jerusalem shall be the capital of Palestine and its seat of government.”

Article 25: “Palestinian citizenship is secure and permanent for any Arab who lived in Palestine before May 1948. It is transmitted from father to child.”

Article 32: “The right of the Palestinian refugee to return to his home and the original home of his ancestors is a natural right which cannot expire. Its exercise may not be delegated nor surrendered.”

Edward B. Miller, in a January 15, 2003, guest editorial titled “A Constitutional Milestone?” in the National Review Online, aptly comments:

Furthermore, a constitution that enshrines a right of return to Israel for all Palestinians, claims exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem’s Old City, or codifies the PLO’s role . . . as sole representative of the Palestinian people will hardly create an atmosphere in which talks with Israel over final-status issues can be restarted . . . For the PA to attempt to legitimize such unreasonable expectations in a constitution will only subject Israel to further suicide bombings and the region to further turmoil.

An old spiritual expresses the desire to be “Walking in Jerusalem, just like John,” one glorious day. If these seemingly intransigent Palestinian demands continue to generate a colossal, Western diplomatic cave-in, it is unlikely that either the apostle John or the singers of spirituals will be welcomed or even allowed to set foot on the holy ground confiscated by the sons of Ishmael. Nor will they be allowed within six feet of the Western Wall. Guess they’ll have to wait for a tour of the “New Jerusalem”—the one waiting for us just over the horizon.
In 1897 in Basle, Switzerland, the First Zionist Congress met under the auspices of Theodor Herzl and several other groups, such as Hovevei Zion (lovers of Zion). There was no central direction or political program driving the Congress. It was simply the formal outgrowth of a mass movement toward Zionism within the Jewish and Christian communities. The definition of Zionism resulted from the deliberations of a committee headed by Max Nordau, a Hungarian-born doctor who had drifted from Judaism but returned due to anti-Semitism. He wrote,

The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Eretz-Israel [the land of Israel], secured by international law.

That aim was realized following the decimation of the Jewish people during the Holocaust of the Hitler era. As men like Herzl had discerned half a century earlier, Europe was no longer a place Jewish people could comfortably call home; and they pursued emi-

The Zionist Movement

Such recognition by Western governments represented the consummation of nearly two thousand years of pent-up Jewish desire to return to the land of their forefathers—Eretz Israel. This undying hope is memorialized today in the Israeli national anthem, “Hatikvah”:

So long as still within our breasts
The Jewish heart beats true,
So long as still towards the east
To Zion looks the Jew.
So long our hopes are not yet lost—
Two thousand years we cherished them—
To live in freedom in the land
of Zion and Jerusalem.

A Jewish writer expressed it this way: “Upheld and fortified in the dispersion by the Messianic vision of an ultimate return, the Jews never forgot or forsook their ties with the Homeland. This imperishable hope of redemption gave them fortitude to endure discrimination and persecution.”

The Muslim world, in league with some intellectual, European bedfellows, is floating a new message these days. It is not, say Muslims, that they are anti-Semitic, but merely opposed to Zionism—implying that if the political State of Israel were dismantled, Palestinians and Jewish people could live in peace and harmony in Palestine. There should not be a country that is distinctively Jewish, they say.

Some Muslims in Great Britain have even gone so far as to demand the British apologize for the Balfour Declaration and repudiate the very notion of the document as soon as possible.

Arthur James Balfour conveyed the Balfour Declaration to Baron Lord Rothschild and the Zionist Federation in a letter on November 2, 1917. It affirmed, “His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object.”

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On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (Partition Plan). The vote was 33 in favor, 13 against, and 10 abstentions. With that historic vote, Israel became a sovereign state under international law. As Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary after the 1897 Basle Congress, “At Basle, I founded the Jewish state. . . . If not in five years, then certainly in fifty, everyone will realize it.” His dream had come true.

**Rejectionism**

Arab and Muslim reaction to the reality of modern Israel was swift and violent. It rejected the Partition Plan and began a war of annihilation immediately after the official launching of the state on May 14, 1948. Five Arab armies unsuccessfully fought to make the State of Israel a stillbirth. Over the next fifty years they continued their battle through military adventurism, only to come up empty time after time.

Realizing they could not wipe out the state by military means, they turned to terrorism and international campaigning to discredit what they chose to attack as “political Zionism.” Political Zionism was deemed odious, illegitimate, and the basis upon which the nation existed.

As with the revisionist crusade that denies all of Jewry’s historic associations with the Temple Mount, the strategy is to convince the world that the Jewish people have no right to an exclusive, national entity in the Middle East. It treats Israel as though it did not exist as a legitimate, legal, national reality in the international community, but as a mutation dubbed “Zionism”—a plague to be snuffed out.

One Arab source claims that anti-Zionism does not mean Jewish people have no right to immigrate to the region . . . only that there should not be a racially exclusive state built upon “ethnic cleansing” and maintained through an “apartheid” system.

Such accusations ignore the fact that, besides the Jewish people from more than a hundred countries, 20 percent of Israel’s citizens are Palestinian Arabs (Muslim and Christian), Druze, and other ethnicities.

And though the Muslim public relations campaign declares “political Zionism,” not anti-Semitism, the issue at hand, the facts speak quite differently.

Itamar Marcus, director of the Palestinian Media Watch, reports, PA [Palestinian Authority] academic and religious leaders teach that Islam is at war against Jews. They cite Islamic sources to demand Jews be hated and killed. Tens of times in recent years they have taught the Hadith (Islamic tradition attributed to Mohammed) demanding Muslims kill Jews, is a current obligation, in order to bring “the Hour”—the Resurrection. Two examples are: Dr. Hassan Khader, founder of Al Quds Encyclopedia, PA TV July 13, 2003, and Dr. Ibrahim Maadi, PA TV Apr. 12, 2002.

Throughout the Middle East, Europe, and, unfortunately, on many campuses in the United States, Jewish people are the victims of verbal and physical assaults. By any standard, these attacks are anti-Semitic and cannot be written off as venting on “political Zionism.”

Therefore, by any name, the game is the same: anti-Zionism = anti-Semitism.

Ironically, the Palestinian rush toward statehood is a declaration of intent and purpose to establish a Palestinian state. Legislators will be Palestinian, Islamic Sharia law will rule, the military will be led by Palestinians, and Palestinian citizens will be subject to the mores of a purely Palestinian state . . . all of which begs the obvious. How can a Palestinian state be more legal and legitimate than one that happens to be legitimately Jewish?

It cannot, of course. But the drive to devalue and exterminate Zionism is a glaring exhibition of the “final solution” envisioned by Hitler and now articulated by Palestinians, Muslims, and the majority of Arab leaders. The ruse of “political Zionism” is nothing more than a device to expel the Jewish people from the Middle East in a modern dispersion and plant the Palestinian flag on the whole of the God-given homeland of the Jewish people.

**Christian Zionism**

For all of the talk about “political Zionism,” the concept of Zionism reaches far beyond the confines of secular legislatures or UN corridors.
First and foremost, Zionism is an integral element in the biblical mandate and record handed down by God himself. Therefore, it is not surprising that evangelical Christians were vitally involved in the establishment of the modern Jewish state. And what was their reasoning? It was as simple as this: Because the Bible says so.

An outstanding illustration of this stance is seen in the involvement of the venerable Englishman William H. Hechler, who shared Herzl’s dream of a return of the Jewish people to Zion.

Hechler had an enormous circle of contacts among religious leaders and in the royal courts of Europe. Thus he was able to introduce the father of modern Zionism to individuals who would become invaluable resources to the cause.

Herzl, a Jewish journalist, said of Hechler, a Christian clergyman,

He counsels me superbly, and with unmistakably genuine good will. He is at once shrewd and mystical, cunning and naive. So far, with respect to myself, he has backed me up in quite a wonderful way. . . . I would wish the Jews to show him a full measure of gratitude.

For those of us who identify with the aspirations of men like William Hechler and other early Christian Zionists, our mandate is grounded in the Scriptures. And we are unabashedly committed to the fact that the promises God made to Abraham and his posterity are irrevocable.

God’s Irrevocable Promises to Abraham

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee; And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3).

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a sojourner, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:7–8).

God’s Promise to Preserve the Jewish People

And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord (Lev. 26:44–45).

Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations (Dt. 7:9).

God’s Promise of a Return to the Land

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off on our part. Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:11–12).

Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you [the land], even my people, Israel; and they shall possess the, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. . . . For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land (Ezek. 36:12, 24).

New Testament Assumptions and Assertions

The New Testament everywhere assumes that the Jewish people will be in Eretz Israel during the final phase of this dispensation. Speaking of the Jewish people during the Tribulation, Jesus said:

When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . Then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains; . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. . . . Behold, I have told you before (Mt. 24:15–16, 21, 25).

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:25–26).

God’s Promise of a Millennial Kingdom Under the Messiah

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. . . . And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one (Zech 14:4, 9).

To these great and irrefutable promises we can only say, “Even so, Come, Lord Jesus.”

ENDNOTES

2 Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch, “Demonizing Jews: Racism and Anti-Semitism.”

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
Church split. For Christians these words send shivers down one’s spine. Those who have been through a church split know it is never spoken of as something positive, for it indicates a situation where Christians, who are one in Christ, could not be one on an issue.

In Acts 15, Luke related a crucial debate within the early church over issues that had the potential of splitting the nascent body into two: a Jewish church and a Gentile one. By God’s grace, the split was averted; and the church remained unified.

The Issues
The church began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost around A.D. 30 or 33 (Acts 2), with Christ pouring out the Holy Spirit on believers, signifying their entrance into the New Covenant (Jer. 31; Joel 2). For the first few years, as the church grew in Jerusalem and Judea, it was almost exclusively Jewish. But when Peter, a Jew, preached the gospel to Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile from Caesarea, and Cornelius also received the Holy Spirit, a furor arose in the Jewish church. How could an uncircumcised Gentile be included in the New Covenant, which was for Israel?

This dilemma led to the First Jerusalem Council (Acts 11). Following Peter’s testimony that God had led him to Cornelius (going was not his own idea) and that God had worked in this way, the council concluded, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

This was a major revelation. God was accepting uncircumcised people into this new congregation of believers on the basis of a spiritual circumcision of the heart rather than a circumcision of the flesh (cf. Ezek. 36:25–27). The first evidence of this new body comprised of Jews and Gentiles together appears in Antioch in Syria. It is from this assembly that the apostle Paul and Barnabas are sent on their first missionary journey, which takes them from Cyprus to the Province of Galatia in Asia Minor (Turkey). Here many churches are planted consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, with a probable predominance of Gentiles.

However, there is an inherent problem in these new gatherings. How do Jews and Gentiles have a “church picnic”? Gentile believers bring their ham sandwiches, and Jewish believers refuse to eat them. The result is two separate groups...
eating lunch at a gathering that is supposed to signify unity in Christ.

Stark evidence for this problem is seen in Paul’s rebuke of Peter as related in Galatians 2. The same Peter who championed the move to include Gentiles in the New Covenant is then pictured as afraid to eat with them in Antioch because word might get back to Jerusalem that he is not keeping the Jewish dietary laws (Lev. 11).

Paul (also Jewish) rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy and identified an issue that had the potential to split the church irreparably. In fact, two issues had that potential: circumcision and food. These already were problems because some Jewish people, whom Paul anathematized, were teaching the Gentile converts in Galatia that they had to be circumcised and keep the Law to maintain their relationship with Christ. This doctrine prompted Paul to write the Epistle to the Galatians on his way to Jerusalem for the crucial second council.

**The Council**

As the church gathered for the Second Jerusalem Council (around A.D. 49 or 50), it was represented by two main groups: the Jewish party led by James, the Jewish half-brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, and what could be termed the Gentile group, led by Paul. James’s group apparently felt that maintaining the Law, including circumcision, was important even for Gentile Christians, whereas Paul argued that Gentile believers had received the Spirit and thus entrance into the New Covenant by faith, without circumcision; so circumcision was then not necessary for salvation. Peter moderated the council.

First the church heard Paul and Barnabas who testified that God had converted many Gentiles by their faith, as demonstrated during the pair’s missionary work in Galatia. Then some of the Jewish group, apparently of the Pharisaic sect, argued that even if the Gentiles were saved by faith, they should be circumcised and keep the Law. The reasoning was that (1) physical circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12; 15; 17), which culminates in the New Covenant, and (2) all those circumcised were then considered in relationship with God and thus should evidence that relationship by keeping the Mosaic Law as prescribed in the Torah. In other words, they felt Gentile believers needed to become Jewish.

After much discussion, Peter stood up to speak. In one of the most important statements of early church theology, Peter sided with Paul and the Gentile party. He reasoned that in giving the Holy Spirit and including the Gentiles in the New Covenant, God made no distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised in granting salvation by faith. Thus the church should not add to salvation since God apparently did not.

In addition, Peter noted that keeping the Law for salvation is not a freeing experience, but a burden that only leads to the impossible task of salvation by legalism. So Peter concluded, “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:11). What a momentous statement!

The question then became, What would the Jewish party do? Would it stay in the church or split off?

Then James stood, representing the Jewish group. As good believers do, he and his party sought scriptural confirmation of this apparently new situation of Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, together in one body. James found Amos 9:11–12, where the Lord calls people to His name as Gentiles (i.e., as uncircumcised):

> In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches of it; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the nations, which are called by my name, saith the LORD who doeth this [emphasis added].

So James agreed with Peter’s judgment, since it was confirmed by Scripture. But the Jewish group still had a few issues. It felt that, if the two groups were to have true fellowship with each other, the Gentile believers needed to be sensitive to Jewish sensibilities and follow a modicum of nonpagan decorum. Thus the Jewish believers asked the Gentile believers to follow certain basic behaviors based primarily on Leviticus 17—20, which separates holy living from paganism. James made four specific requests: that the Gentile believers keep themselves from (1) things associated with idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8—10), (2) fornication (possibly based on the incest laws of Leviticus 18), (3) things strangled, and (4) blood (again a reference to Leviticus 17).

James’s rationale stemmed from the fact that such teaching was not new to Gentiles. From the time of the Babylonian exile, six hundred years
earlier, Jewish people had settled throughout the Mediterranean world, establishing synagogues and teaching the Mosaic Law.

Thus the ball was back in the Gentile court. Would Gentiles accept this compromise?

The apostles, elders, and entire church agreed on this solution. So a motion was made to compose a letter to the Gentile churches, with the authority of the council, stating its resolution that non-Jews need not be circumcised or keep the Law but that they did have to avoid certain pagan practices. This action was taken to forestall any who might teach Christian legalism, pretending to have the authority of the church.

The letter is so important for the church, in fact, that Luke recorded its entire text (Acts 15:23–29). Furthermore, the episode exemplifies how the church can resolve certain inflammatory issues while remaining united.

The Aftermath

The council’s letter initially was sent to the most prominent Gentile church, the one in Syrian Antioch. When the believers heard the contents, they rejoiced, not only because the burden of the Law was not imposed on them but also because the church was one. Unity was maintained.

But though the major issue of salvation by faith alone had been resolved, putting the implications into actual church practice was more difficult. Many of Paul’s letters, even after this conference, concerned Jewish/Gentile issues: 1 Corinthians 8–10; Romans 14; Philippians 3; Ephesians 2–3. Although, theologically, believers are one in Christ, making them act as such is more difficult.

A summary of Paul’s teaching in these passages provides a picture of how individual liberty within overall unity functioned. Paul used himself as an example of a Jewish believer who honored the Law without seeing obedience to it as enhancing his position in Christ. For instance, Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3) so that Timothy would be accepted by unbelieving Jews in order to minister.

Paul also funded a Nazarite service at the Temple for some Jewish believers (Acts 21:20–26) to show the Jewish church he was not teaching Jewish believers to abandon the Law as a tradition, only that it held no soteriological value. At the same time, Paul said that neither food nor anything else was an issue for him; he became a Gentile to minister to Gentiles and a Jew to minister to Jews (1 Cor. 9:19–23).

So, at the early “church picnic,” could Gentiles bring their ham and cheese sandwiches? Absolutely. Did the Jews have to eat them? No. May a Jewish believer eat a ham and cheese sandwich today? Certainly, if his conscience allows. Should a Gentile believer not eat the ham and cheese sandwich? He may abstain if he chooses, but there is no special blessing involved in either eating or abstaining. The only sin would be to judge those who eat or to pressure individuals to eat against their consciences. Believers are to accept one another and one another’s cultural differences in unity in Christ as a testimony to God’s act of accepting all of us just as we are (Rom. 15:7).

Present Significance

How does this ancient decision affect us? First, it establishes that salvation is completely by grace through faith; and neither Jews nor Gentiles can add anything to their positions in Christ.

Second, it establishes that the church is one. Though some congregations may find it more beneficial to meet separately, mainly because of language issues, there is no cultural reason to do so. In fact, the opposite is true: It is better that believers from different cultures meet together because it demonstrates the unity of the church and the work of the Spirit. It shows that believers can accept each other in a spirit of grace, as does the Lord.

Third, all believers need not have the same practices on issues of liberty, yet they can all honor the Lord. Jewish believers may want to follow certain Mosaic Laws simply because they want to; but there is no added spiritual blessing in doing so. A church may or may not celebrate the Passover. The decision is entirely up to the church. The challenge is to continue to accept one another as one in the Lord, just as God Himself has accepted us.
Imagine coming home only to find the family you love so dearly does not know who you are. To your amazement your own children spurn you. You desire to shower them with affection, encouragement, help, and consolation. But they despise and abandon you.

Such rejection would be painful indeed. Yet it is exactly what Messiah Jesus experienced: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Jn. 1:11).

Jesus was born into a Jewish family. His mother, stepfather, brothers, sisters, friends, and heritage all were Jewish. He identified with the Jewish people and their struggles and position in a Gentile world. As God incarnate, He knew well their spiritual failures and saw clearly their future tragedies. Yet He loved them, and He came to Earth to help them.

His desire was not only to minister physically to His ancient people but ultimately to offer forgiveness from sin; launch the promised Messianic Kingdom; and establish the throne of David, as He had promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

But “His own received him not.” Not only did the Jewish people fail to understand who He was or what He was there to accomplish, but the world at large also had no idea. He was the Creator of everything, yet those He created did not recognize Him.

He Came to Israel

The idea conveyed by the words his own is that He went to those who belonged to Him. The words declare a special relationship between Jesus and those who were His.

At the outset of His ministry, Jesus clearly came to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” exclusively (Mt. 10:6; 15:24). He instructed His disciples, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not” (Mt. 10:5).

Later a Canaanite woman “cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.” Her daughter was “grievously vexed with a demon” (Mt. 15:22).

Jesus responded, “It is not right to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs” (Mt. 15:26). Although this answer was not a compliment to her, it simply stated that Jesus’ power and ministry—at this point—focused strictly on God’s chosen nation.

The woman’s reply was both humble and profound: “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table” (Mt. 15:27). She clearly comprehended where she stood and anticipated the residual blessing that will ultimately fall on the Gentiles from the Jewish people.

Since the Church Age was nowhere in view yet, her comment indicated that she recognized Jesus as Messiah and anticipated the Messianic-Kingdom blessing that will fall to the Gentiles as well as the Jewish people during the Millennium (Zech. 8:23). This blessing will occur when Israel is restored to its proper place in its land during the Messiah’s future reign. The woman’s request was granted due to her tremendous faith.

The ‘Iceberg’ of Sin

At the conclusion of his gospel, John wrote,

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (21:25).

Jesus did what He did for a reason. His mission was to deal with sin. Like an iceberg, sin has two parts: the visible, and usually smaller, section; and the larger section that is submerged beneath the water’s surface. The physical
The Shepherd’s Love

manifestation of sin was visible to all. For example, there were the blind, deaf, and dumb; those stricken with leprosy; those possessed by demons; and even those who had died. Then there was the underlying root of sin, which is not visible: the heart that is in rebellion to and far from God (Isa. 59:1–2; Jer. 17:9).

Jesus came to deal with the physical manifestation of sin to show He had power to deal with the root of sin—man’s heart. When a man “sick of the palsy” was brought to Jesus, He told the man, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mt. 9:2).

Knowing their hearts, He then told the crowd,

Which is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . . Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house (vv. 5–6).

Only God can forgive sin. Jesus healed the man’s ailment. Yet since He was God, He was able not only to deal with the physical aspect of sin but forgive sin in a person’s life and heart as well.

Jesus’ own heart grieved for the Jewish people: “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36).

The Messiah’s Lament

Scripture is clear that the Lord will visit Israel and lift it above all the nations of the earth. The land boundaries of the future Messianic Kingdom were revealed in Genesis 15:18–21, and the lineage of Israel’s rightful Ruler was identified in Genesis 49:10.

In 2 Samuel 7:4–17 God told King David He would establish David’s house. And Matthew 1:1–17 establishes forever that the line of the rightful King ends with Jesus. He received the legal right to the throne from his earthly stepfather, Joseph. Luke 3:23–37 discloses His biological tie to David, most likely from His mother, Mary (Miriam).

Even John the Baptist, the herald of the King, preached, “Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2). God’s Word also indicates that God loved the entire world, and someday He would bless the Gentile nations too (Isa. 19:23–25).
Near the end of His earthly ministry—after three years of giving of Himself to the lost sheep of Israel—Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey’s colt, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. Then a “very great multitude” spread garments before Him; others cut down branches from trees and spread them like a carpet (Mt. 21:8). People cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest” (v. 9).

Yet the religious leaders told Jesus, “Rebuke thy disciples” (Lk. 19:39). Clearly, they rejected Him as their Messiah and King despite all He had done to authenticate Himself and His message.

So crucial was His prophetic “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem that He replied, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (v. 40).

The Master was coming to His own, and His own did not recognize Him. Yet even the rocks knew the Creator and the hour of His visitation. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem and her people, saying with grief, 

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Mt. 23:37).

In this tender passage, Jesus showed His true heart. He longed to bring His beloved people together under His wings, which picture warmth, security, sustenance, and nurture. But as the prophet Isaiah had predicted centuries earlier,

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (53:3).

If only His people had known the hour of their visitation, how different world history would have been.

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

From Bill Sutter’s Desk, from page 5

Druze leader and former member of Israel’s parliament, the Knesset. He described Israel’s hundred thousand Druze as Arabs who are uniquely “super loyal to the State of Israel.”

We were in Ussafiya on election day, and the Arab men and women were voting as full participants in Israel’s democratic process, a privilege afforded to all of Israel’s 1.2 million Arabs. As our bus wound its way through the streets of this Druze village we noted the festivities of election day and returned the smiles, waves, and greetings of the village children.

Later we were guests at the Knesset in Jerusalem, which stands as a symbol of Jewish sovereignty and dedication to democracy. Sitting in the visitors’ gallery, we viewed the often-heated debates of its elected members. An outspoken Arab member was at the lectern berating the State of Israel. In what Arab country of the Middle East could such an exchange happen? We were experiencing democracy in action in a region of the world that is no friend of democratic institutions.

Eight days with our Jewish friends provided wonderful times for interacting and sharing. We could not help but feel the vital, living connection Jewish people have with Israel as their homeland. Their observations throughout our trip enriched our lives. We, in turn, put 1 Peter 3:15 to work through the many opportunities we had to reflect the hope we find in the Bible and in the Lord Himself:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

Alan Respler, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey, shared his thoughts about this trip with The Friends of Israel: “My wife and I were moved by the warm, positive reactions of the Christians that permeated everything we did. We were overwhelmed by the expressions of solidarity and commonality with Israel and the Jewish people.”

Everyone lamented the trip coming to an end. However, meaningful new friendships will continue. And for that, we praise our Lord.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.

An official in Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s office, regarding U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel C. Kurtzer:

“This man takes the plans of Peace Now and turns them into America’s anti-Israel policy. I would prefer that he wasn’t here and in his place they would appoint an Evangelical Christian who loves us much more.”

—Quoted in Ma’ariv, January 16, 2004

Near the end of His earthly ministry—after three years of giving of Himself to the lost sheep of Israel—Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey’s colt, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9.
Entebbe Ad
(Waveline)
Jewish professor Samuel Sandmel recounts two jokes he heard as a child. One was about a man who began to beat up several Jews after he left a church service. When a policeman intervened, the man protested, saying, “The Jews killed Jesus.”

The policeman replied, “That was two thousand years ago.”

The man retorted, “But I only heard about it this morning.”

The second story is of three Jewish people who were determined to convert to Christianity. Outside a church they drew straws to choose which of the three should go inside and then return to tell the others what happened. When the one emerged from the church, the other two ran to him asking, “How did it go?”

He replied, “Get away from me, you Christ killers!”

Though meant to be humorous, these two stories poignantly reflect a common Jewish perception: Christians are hateful, and their religion is inherently anti-Semitic.

This viewpoint comes as a surprise to most Christians, who see the gospel message as one of love and reconciliation. Yet most Jewish people respond to that message with disbelief and skepticism. They examine the source of Christian doctrine and cringe over what they find.

To many, the New Testament and, in particular, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John seem the seedbed for centuries of Jewish pain and persecution. They feel the Gospels, especially the passion narratives, germinated anti-Judaism that sprouted into anti-Semitism, which flowered into the Holocaust of World War II.

As Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of the Interfaith Affairs Department of the Anti-Defamation League, wrote, “This diabolic event [the Holocaust] was a complex process nurtured by diverse spiritual, economic, and national reasons as well as the indirect influence of the ‘teaching of contempt,’ anti-Judaism that was part of Christian theology and teaching.”

Texts such as Matthew 27:25 (“Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children”) are looked on with horror. Many Jews believe Christians associate all Jews with the Devil since Jesus said to the unbelieving Jewish leaders, “Ye are of your father the devil” (Jn. 8:44).

The apostle John’s Gospel in particular is considered anti-Semitic because it frequently uses the phrase the Jews, which many Jewish people regard as a disparaging term that encourages stereotyping. Other Gospel passages are frequently cited as having anti-Semitic overtones, such as Matthew 23, where Jesus excoriated the scribes and Pharisees.

But the portions that disturb Jewish people the most are the passion accounts. These have been used for centuries to blame not only the Jewish authorities but all Jews of every generation for the execution of Christ. It is these reports of frenzied Jewish mobs crying out for Jesus’ crucifixion that send chills up the spines of Jewish readers. They know not only what the texts say, but also how they have been applied.

Tainted History

Many of the early church fathers preached against the Jewish people, referring to them as disinherited, accursed, enemies, Christ killers, robbers, and wild beasts. Over the centuries the Roman Catholic Church passed numerous injunctions against them; forced them to be baptized and wear distinguishable clothing, such as badges or horned hats; secluded and expelled them; extorted money from them; and even killed them.
In recent years attempts have been made to rectify these wrongs. In 1965 Vatican II issued what became known as the Nostra Aetate (“In Our Time”), an official declaration that not only included a call for “mutual understanding and respect” for the Jewish people, but denounced the charge of deicide (that is, the Jews alone are responsible for killing Christ).

Many Protestant churches over the last few decades have also decried anti-Semitism and rightly described it as “sin against God and man.”

**It’s Time to Confess**

There is no denying that much of what has been said about and done to the Jewish people by those who have called themselves Christians has been reprehensible and loathsome. Admitting this fact goes a long way in the protracted journey to heal the breach between these two groups.

Moreover, God commands Christians, “Boast [gloat] not against the branches,” meaning the Jewish people, because they received the covenants and promises; the Gentiles were merely grafted into those by faith (Rom. 11:17–18).

Furthermore, God vows to bless those who bless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and curse those who curse them (Gen. 12:3; 17:19; 28:13–14). This promise alone should move the church to serious reflection and confession to God for its sin against the Jewish people.

**Affirming the Bible**

Since, as conservative Christians, we believe that every word of Scripture is God-breathed, we cannot reject or repudiate any portion of it, whether Old or New Testament. History has already taught us that it is the rejection, repudiation, and reconstruction of the Bible that actually opens the door for anti-Semitism.

Erwin Lutzer, in his book Hitler’s Cross (Moody Press), relates how Adolf Hitler had to expunge and renounce portions of the Bible in order to hamstring the church and prepare the populace for his anti-Semitic “final solution.”

It is liberal rejection and repudiation of God’s Word that leads to a godless society where man is accountable to no one but himself. Human laws do not suffice. As Hitler revealed at Nuremberg, laws not based on standards higher than man are merely the opinions of those in power.

Christians, therefore, must never reject or repudiate the biblical text. To do so is not only a revision of history, but also a rejection of God.

**The Importance of Literal Interpretation**

A literal, or normal, interpretation of the Bible, taking into account the Bible’s historical and grammatical components, leads to a correct understanding of God’s Word.

Replacement Theology, based on a nonliteral, nongrammatical, nonhistorical method of interpretation when it comes to Israel, claims the church has superseded and replaced Israel. This erroneous position has done considerable damage to Jewish-Christian relations.

When Christians understand the Bible correctly, they rightfully comprehend that for Israel to be exalted is for God to be exalted since this proves God’s faithfulness to His promises.

Interpreting the Bible literally also helps people understand that the apostle John’s use of the phrase the Jews was not intended to mean every Jewish person, then or now. John was speaking in general terms to describe the group of Jewish religious leaders and their followers who rejected the claims of Christ.

A literal interpretation also compares Scripture with Scripture. Doing so reveals that the majority of the Jewish people who turned Jesus over to the Romans acted in ignorance (Acts 3:17). Furthermore, Gentiles, not only Jews, were responsible for Christ’s death (Acts 4:27). Ultimately, however, it was the sin of the whole world that caused Jesus to give up His life willingly (Jn. 10:17–18; 1 Jn. 2:2).

Nowhere does the New Testament make it the church’s mission to castigate Israel. If God wishes to chasten His people, He will do so Himself, as in biblical days. He did not give that responsibility to the Body of Christ.

**ENDNOTES**


Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel.
Baseball manager Dusty Baker ignited a controversy last year by saying Latino and African-American ballplayers “work in the heat” better than white players do.

Their color “is more conducive to heat than it is to the lighter-skinned people,” said Baker, who is Black. “That’s why my ancestors were brought over here, for this heat.”

Public reaction came swiftly. Newspaper editorials and radio talk-show pundits speculated aloud that if a white person had expressed such beliefs, he would have been fired.

Surprised by the criticism, Baker disagreed with those who considered his comments racist, feeling they should be regarded no differently than Italians speaking about Italians or Greeks speaking about Greeks.

Baker told reporters, “If I want to talk about African-Americans, that’s my prerogative. I can say stuff and call someone of my color things that you all can’t say.”

Baker’s point is well taken. Words matter, but what matters more is who actually speaks them. The fact that Baker is African-American makes all the difference.

Jewish people probably understand Baker’s position; we who are Jewish make disparaging comments about one another about as often as the sun rises in the East. You need look no further than the chambers of the Knesset, Israel’s version of Congress. Its elected representatives regularly hurl verbal assaults at one another whenever they disagree. These may include anything from name-calling and cursing to shouting and screaming.

A Gentile could not indulge in such diatribes without being accused of anti-Semitism. Yet Israeli Jews understand that the Knesset is the home of many “family” squabbles. Jewish
people have long held a reputation for flamboyant disagreement. And most will smile when they hear the well-known joke, “Get two Jews together, and you will get three opinions.”

‘Slurs’ From the Prophets

But politics is not the only arena where Jewish people feel free to speak frankly to one another, even if that means they speak harshly. The Hebrew Scriptures contain numerous verbal attacks delivered by Jewish people to Jewish people. A sampling of epithets includes:

- **Stiff-necked**—Exodus 32:9; 33:3; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13; Jeremiah 17:23
- **Hard-hearted**—Ezekiel 3:7
- **Rebellious**—Ezekiel 2:3, 5–8; 3:9; Jeremiah 5:23
- **Sinful and laden with iniquity**—Isaiah 1:4
- **Evildoers, corrupters**—Isaiah 1:4
- **Foolish, stupid, devoid of understanding**—Jeremiah 4:22

Who spoke these words? None other than the Jewish prophets called by God to deliver messages of truth and condemnation to their own Jewish brethren, calling them to repent and return to the God of their fathers. And where are these words recorded? In the Torah and Prophets—the Jewish Bible that Gentiles and Christians refer to as the Old Testament.

Furthermore, Jewish tradition teaches that Scripture is sacred and holy. It is the Word of God. The high regard in which it is held is shown in the following rules established to insure it is handled with care:

- No common objects are to be placed on top of a Bible, for it alone is supreme.
- The reader kisses the text before reading it.
- Torah scrolls are beautifully covered with ornate cloth and precious jewels.
- Should a Torah scroll accidentally fall to the floor, a limited food fast must be implemented.

And so it is noteworthy that such highly esteemed and sacred literature includes such hostile language between fellow Jews. Yet no one in the Jewish community has ever labeled this text racist, hateful, or anti-Semitic.

All in the Family

Although most Jews do not consider the New Testament to be God’s Word, it, too, records Jewish “family” squabbles. Specifically, the first four books (the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are eyewitness accounts of the life and works of Jesus of Nazareth. The writers chronicle passionate debates and disagreements and record reactions by the Jewish leaders to the teachings of “this man” Jesus.

Jesus used strong, seemingly hostile language to convey His message to His people. Yet His style was no different from that of the ancient prophets. His preaching was much like a surgeon’s scalpel, directed skillfully, precisely, and quickly to the place of needed repair. And, though a scalpel may initially inflict pain, the end result is better health.

In the same way, Jesus’ scathing, insightful words may have been painful to hear; but their truth, if applied, worked spiritual health. Jesus delivered His message with the same fervor as the prophets before Him. And though many Jewish people were persuaded to follow Him, many more rejected Him.

From the time He first spoke them to now, Jesus’ words have troubled and infuriated the Jewish community. As a result, some claim His words are anti-Semitic, and some have even called for them to be expunged.

A Jewish theologian described the New Testament as “the most dangerous antisemitic [sic] tract in history,” supporting “oppression, persecution and mass murder of an intensity and duration that were unparalleled in the entire history of man’s [s] degradation. Without Christianity’s New Testament, Hitler’s Mein Kampf could never [have] been written.”

These are strong indictments. Does evidence within the New Testament allow for such strong criticism? Consider the facts:

- All the writers except one, Luke, were Jewish.
- Jesus, the centerpiece of the New Testament message, is Jewish.
- His followers were all Jewish.
- The twelve disciples were all Jewish.
- The first church was all Jewish.

As with the Dusty Baker controversy, words matter; but the speaker matters more. The Gospels record intense Jewish debate within the ranks of the Jewish
people. Historically, the “Christian” church has not understood the Jewish-ness of the text and, at times, has blatantly misrepresented it. Jewish history runs red with blood because people lifted verses to justify their unjustifiable hatred of Jewish people. A Jewish Web site puts it this way:

Using the New Testament as its authoritative source, the Church has painted the Jews as an icon of unredeemed humanity—they become an image of a blind, stubborn, carnal, and perverse people, a dehumanization that formed the psychological prerequisite to the atrocities that followed.2

Putting Things in Perspective

What are some aspects of the New Testament that create such an outcry? 1. The Gospels record vicious names describing Jewish people.

Jesus described the Pharisees as serpents, vipers, blind guides, fools, whitewashed sepulchers, hypocrites, extortionists, and killers of the prophets (Mt. 23:13–36). These criticisms were directed against specific Jewish people, not against all. Jesus publicly confronted these individuals because He saw a dichotomy between their positions as leaders within the Jewish community and their lifestyles.

His approach was similar to that of the Old Testament prophets when they confronted the priests and prophets of their day. Jeremiah 26 is but one example of a Jewish prophet (Jeremiah) who preached against the leaders of his own people.

Historically, Jewish people are extremely critical of their leaders and, in fact, use similar language to describe them. Anti-Semitism is not the issue; theology is.

2. The Gospels blame Jesus’ death on the Jewish people.

No denying the text. All four Gospels say the Jews cried out, “Crucify him.” But the text also teaches that the Romans actually performed the inhuman act (Mt. 27:27–35). The Jewish people had no authority to do so (Jn. 18:31). Yet today’s Italians are not accused of being Christ killers.

Most important, the New Testament teaches that no one took Jesus’ life; He offered it freely as a once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Jn. 10:17–18; Heb. 10:4–10). His death was part of God’s plan. One of the New Testament’s most beloved verses states,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (emphasis added, Jn. 3:16).

Thus the New Testament acknowledges that a portion of the Jewish people participated in bringing about Jesus’ death. But it also clearly shows they did not act alone. The Romans arrested Him, beat Him viciously and mercilessly, then crucified Him. It was a crime of humanity in opposition to God’s eternal plan of redemption.

3. The Gospels attack the Jewish people collectively.

They do not. Throughout history, anti-Semites have condemned Jewish people as “Christ killers” because of verses like John 5:16, which they have misinterpreted: “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him.”

Although the people who persecuted Jesus were Jewish, not all Jews persecuted Him. The term Jews did not imply the entire Jewish race. It identified a select group at a particular time, and that specific group was indeed Jewish. Many other Jewish people, in fact, followed Him.

Furthermore, John 4:22 records, “Salvation is of the Jews.” When the Nazis were throwing Jewish people into the ovens during World War II, claiming they were Christ killers, none ever quoted John 4:22! Yet that verse is as much a part of the New Testament as any other. Thus the New Testament teaches that without the Jewish people, there would be no salvation or forgiveness of sin because through them alone came Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world.

4. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah.

This statement is absolutely true. In John 4 a Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ” (v. 25).

His response to her was stunning: “I that speak unto thee am he” (v. 26). His forthright answer immediately began to distance Jewish people from Him and from one another.

Later the Scriptures say division occurred because some believed He was “the Prophet”; others said, “This is the Christ” (Jn. 7:41). “So there was a division among the people because of him” (Jn. 7:43).

The core issue was—and still is—the Messiahship of Jesus. Is stating, “Jesus is the Messiah/Savior,” anti-Semitic? For that matter, is stating, “Jesus is not the Messiah/Savior,” hatefully anti-Christian? Obviously the answers are no.

Those who believe the Gospels believe the words of Jesus. The same Jesus who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6) also said, “Love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44) and wept over Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37–39).

Those who follow Christ accept the fact that their faith will separate them from those who are without Christ. But rather than preaching hatred toward those who are not Christians, the New Testament preaches love, tenderness, compassion, and prayer.

When Dusty Baker delivered his opinion on skin color, he expected people to consider the source. And when people read the Gospels, they, too, need to consider the source. A book so obviously Jewish could never be anti-Semitic.

ENDNOTES

1 Eliezer Berkovitz, quoted in Howard Taylor, Is the New Testament the Source of Anti-Semitism? [www.apologetics.fsnet.co.uk/ntantis.htm].


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Haggadah/Feast books
Ad Waveline)
The Historical Scene. In 538 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia, having defeated the Babylonian Empire (539 B.C.), issued an unprecedented decree allowing the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem. Zechariah, along with his contemporary Haggai, was among the fifty thousand Israelites (Ezra 2:64–65) who returned to their land under the able leadership of Zerubbabel, who became governor, and Joshua, the high priest.

The returnees started to rebuild the Temple and brazen altar with the assistance of Phoenician workmen and the materials they provided. Samaritan volunteers wanted to help, but the Jews refused their aid.

Within two years the foundation was laid, after which the Samaritans were successful in stopping further work by appealing directly to the Persian Kings, Cyrus and his son Cambyses.

For the next sixteen years no work was done on the Temple. Apathy set in, and the Jewish people showed little interest in finishing the project. Over time their spiritual commitment declined as well. Instead of building the Temple, they focused on constructing luxurious houses for themselves.

In the meantime, Cyrus died; and his son Cambyses committed suicide, leaving no one to rule Persia. A struggle for leadership ensued, resulting in many revolts. Eventually Darius I crushed the revolts and restored peace to Persia under his leadership.

Soon after coming to power, Darius found Cyrus’s original decree that gave the Jewish people permission to return to Judah. The decree paved the way for Darius to give the Jews permission to resume reconstruction of their Temple.

In 520 B.C., Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to finish the task of rebuilding (Ezra 5:1–2; Hag. 1:1). Haggai preached four sermons in four months that motivated them to resume construction. Two months later, Zechariah called them to spiritual renewal and inspired them to finish the rebuilding by revealing God’s plan through eight prophetic visions of Israel’s future (Zech. 1:1—6:8).

Consequently, the Jewish people were inspired to resume the work on September 21, 520 B.C. (Hag. 1:15) and completed the task on March 15, 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

Zechariah’s Background. The prophet gave a short profile of his ancestry. He simply said, “Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo” (v. 1).

The name Zechariah means “he whom Jehovah remembers” or “Jehovah remembers.”

His name was a reminder that God would not forget His commitment to Israel but would bring restoration and redemption to His people. Even today Zechariah’s prophecies reach into the future and are an ongoing testimony to Jewish people of every generation that God does not forget His promises to Israel.

The name Berechiah means “Jehovah blesses”; and the name Iddo means “his time.” Put these three names together and they mean “Jehovah remembers and blesses in His time.”

Many believe Zechariah’s father, Berechiah, died soon after the family returned to Judah (536 B.C.), because Zechariah is often referred to as the son of his grandfather, Iddo; and he

Called to Repentance

The book of Zechariah is among the most profound in the Old Testament and of great importance in view of the times and circumstances in which it was written. Zechariah summed up and condensed most of what the former prophets wrote concerning Messiah’s First and Second Advents.

His words are important not only for their Messianic predictions but also for their apocalyptic and eschatological predictions regarding the ultimate destruction of Israel’s enemies and the glories that will be hers in the Millennial Kingdom.

The book’s theme is Messiah’s work of redemption and Israel’s future restoration. Zechariah began his prophecy by calling Judah to repent of her sin and be restored to a right relationship with the Lord her God.

Introduction

The Jewish people had longed for liberation from their seventy-year Babylonian Captivity. It came in 536 B.C. and, with it, a return to Jerusalem. It was after their return (commonly called the postexilic period) that Zechariah received his prophecy. He gave the exact date: “In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius [October 27, 520 B.C.]” (v. 1).
succeeded his grandfather in becoming head of the priestly family (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:4, 16).

Zechariah was one of the returnees who had been born and reared in Babylon. After he came to Jerusalem, God called him to prophesy to the Jewish people. Zechariah’s message was clear: He called the Israelites to return to God, repent of sin, and commit to finish constructing the Temple begun sixteen years earlier.

Like Daniel and Ezekiel, Zechariah was given a number of visions in his prophesy. The prophet was a young man (2:4) when he received these visions and probably continued his ministry long after the last date presented in this book (Dec. 7, 518 B.C.). He may even have ministered into the early reign of Artaxerxes (465–424 B.C.). Age has no bearing on God’s call into the ministry. Not only did God call Zechariah early in life, He also called Daniel, Jeremiah, and Samuel when they were young.

**Indictment**

Zechariah began with a review of God’s past anger: “The LORD hath been sorely displeased [literally, angry or furious, full of wrath] with your fathers” (1:2).

God had been furious with the returnees’ forefathers because they had rebelled against their covenant relationship with Him, rejected the prophets’ messages to repent, and refused to stop their idolatrous practices. Yet God was now ready to turn from His anger and comfort this returning generation of Jewish people. But first they would have to put away the sins that brought on their destruction and seventy-year captivity.

Through Zechariah, the Lord extended a gracious invitation:

Therefore, say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Turn unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts (v. 3).

The threefold repetition of God’s name, “LORD of hosts [armies]” (used once more in verse 4), gave authority to Zechariah’s message. This urgent invitation required and expected an immediate response.

The Hebrew word for “turn” or “return” carries with it the same meaning as the Greek word for “repent.” Bible scholar F. Duane Lindsey makes a good point when he writes,

*The condition for their receiving divine blessing was not simply to resume building the temple, but to return to Him—not just to the Lord’s Law or to His ways but to the LORD Himself. Their repentance two months before (cf. Hag. 1:12–15) apparently involved an incomplete commitment, resulting in delay in rebuilding the temple. Now a complete return to the LORD would bring divine blessing, expressed by the words, I will return to you.*

**Illustration**

People often try to mimic the lifestyles of their ancestors or elders, but Zechariah commanded the Jewish people not to do so:

Be not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Turn now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings; but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, said the LORD (v. 4).

The words your fathers are used four times in verses 2–6, exhorting the Israelites not to follow in their fathers’ evil footsteps. For their fathers either did not hear or turned a deaf ear to the messages of the preexilic prophets. They utterly disregarded the prophets’ calls to repent (cf. Isa. 55:6–7; Jer. 3:12; Hos. 7:10; Joel 2:12–13; Amos 5:4, 6; Mal. 3:7).

Although permanently cured from the practice of idolatry, this new generation was in danger of giving only lip service to the Lord instead of giving Him their hearts. Zechariah’s message is an ageless truth for two reasons. First, repentance must always come before blessing; and second, change must follow repentance. All too often believers give lip service to God’s message and show little change in the way they live.

Zechariah warned the Jewish people to repent and not delay their decision, as did their fathers. The prophet illustrated his point with two rhetorical questions: “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?” (v. 5).

The obvious answer to both questions is no; they are dead! The prophet used these questions to disarm any objections the people might give to the admonition in verse 4. The returnees might have objected by saying, “True, our forefathers are dead; but so are the prophets who gave them the message. So these events have long passed and have no relevance to our generation.”

Zechariah nullified that prospective argument by saying, essentially, “Yes, your forefathers passed on long ago, as did the preexilic prophets. But the words of the prophets given to your forefathers continued next page
Zechariah, from page 25

were fulfilled, and such will be the case with this generation if it does not repent."

The lesson is obvious. Israel’s forefathers were evil and guilty of disobeying God’s law. They turned a deaf ear to the prophets’ messages to repent. Judah’s destiny was to spend seventy years in the depths of a demoralizing and degrading captivity.

God gives people time to repent. But once the opportunity is gone, their destiny is sealed. Failing to respond to Zechariah’s message would bring deadly consequences to this generation of Jews, just as it did to their forefathers.

Although the preexilic prophets are long gone, the words God gave them will be fulfilled:

But my words and my statutes [decrees], which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not take hold of [overtake] your fathers? And they returned [repented] and said, As the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us (v. 6).

The curses that God’s Word promised did indeed overtake the elders (cf. Dt. 28:15, 45). During the Babylonian Captivity some Jewish people either had a change of mind or repented (Dan. 9:1–19). They admitted God’s judgment and their captivity were justified because they had ignored the preexilic prophets and persisted in their sinful “ways” and “doings.” God’s judgment is always based on the ways and conduct of His people.

The message is the same today. When we confess that we have sinned against God and repent of our sins, then our restoration begins.

ENDNOTE


David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Jesus and the Jewish holiday of Passover are inextricably intertwined.

“Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). Using clear imagery rooted deeply in the Jewish experience, God identified His servant the Messiah as a lamb—not just any lamb, but the one whose sacrifice is sufficient to eradicate the sin of everyone in the entire world.

The use of lambs as sacrifices for sinful mankind began back in the Hebrew Scriptures. Sacrifices have been known since man first rebelled against his Creator: “For Adam also and for his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21).

But it was not until the Exodus that God expressly demanded a lamb for a specific and unique reason. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, and Moses had been dispatched by the Lord to secure their freedom. After nine plagues and other miraculous signs that God did through Moses, Pharaoh still refused to let his Jewish slaves go free.

Then the Lord gave instruction concerning the tenth and final plague: “This month [Nisan, also called Aviv; March–April] shall be unto you the beginning of months. . . . In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house” (Ex. 12:2–3).

God then gave specifics regarding their lambs. First, they were to be young males, healthy and clean, “without blemish, a male of the first year” (v. 5). They were to “keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it” (Ex. 12:6–7).

The instructions were precise: Choose a lamb; observe the lamb; apply the blood of the lamb. The Pascal (Passover) lamb spoke of redemption. The innocent animal would lose its life to redeem all firstborn males, human and animal. Clearly, the Passover speaks of redemption by the blood of a lamb “without blemish” (Ex. 12:5).

Scripture teaches that Jesus was fully God, thus without sin (2 Cor. 5:21). He was “without spot” and “without blemish.” He was observed for three years as He ministered; and just as the Pascal lamb was pronounced perfect for the Passover sacrifice, Jesus was pronounced “perfect” by Pontius Pilate who declared, “I find no fault in him” (Jn. 19:4, 6).

It was after He had eaten the seder meal, called the Last Supper by Christians, that Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and was arrested by Roman soldiers. The next day they beat Him, scourged Him, and crucified Him.

To the Jewish people in Egypt, the passover lamb spoke of physical redemption from slavery. Its blood had to be applied to the doorposts of their houses for them to escape the tenth plague of death.

The apostle Paul wrote, “Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). Everyone needs to be redeemed from sin. Jesus is the final sacrifice, the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” We must choose Him individually and identify with Him as our personal Sacrifice, our Lamb. And we must apply His blood to the “doorposts” and “lintels” of our hearts by faith.

by Thomas C. Simcox
The previous article examined several biblical indications that God is sovereign over time. One of the most significant indicators of God’s sovereignty in that sphere is His amazing seventy-weeks prophecy delivered to Daniel in 538 B.C. and recorded in Daniel 9:24–27. (See chart on page 30)

Israel and Jerusalem. The entire prophecy concerns Daniel’s people (Israel) and their holy city, Jerusalem (v. 24). Furthermore, the amount of time the prophecy covers is 490 years. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that God had decreed “seventy weeks” (literally, seventy sevens) for Israel and Jerusalem (v. 24). Daniel and the people of Israel would have understood this time to be seventy periods of seven years, or 490 years.

God had divided their calendar into seven-year periods, with every seventh year being a sabbatical year (Lev. 25:1–9). In addition, they were in their Babylonian Captivity for seventy years because they had violated seventy sabbatic years over the course of 490 years (2 Chr. 36:20–21).

The Starting Point

Gabriel revealed that the starting point of the 490 years would be the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25). Two features must be noted concerning the Daniel 9:25 decree. First, the decree would permit the rebuilding of “the street” and “the wall.” Second, it would initiate a period of 483 years.

The Rebuilding. The word translated “the street” refers to the broad open space, or plaza, just inside a city’s gates—the space that was the center of city life. A city does not have gates unless it has a wall. Thus, the construction of a plaza necessitated the construction of a city wall. The word translated “the wall” refers to a trench, or moat, designed for the defense of a city. It was common for walled cities to dig deep moats around their walls as part of their defenses.

Together, the terms plaza and moat indicate the building of a city’s defenses, including a wall with gates and a moat. Thus the decree of Daniel 9:25 permitted the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s defenses, including the rebuilding of its wall and moat.

The Time Frame. Second, the decree’s time of issue would initiate a period of sixty-nine sevens of years (sixty-nine times seven, or 483 years) that would end when the Messiah would be present in the world.

The only decree related to the rebuilding of Jerusalem that corresponds with these two characteristics of the Daniel 9 decree was the one issued by King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in March–April (Hebrew month of Nisan) 445 B.C. (Neh. 2:1–8). Earlier Nehemiah had received word that Jerusalem’s wall was still broken down (Neh. 1:1–3). Nehemiah was so disturbed by this sad news that Artaxerxes consoled his servant by issuing the decree permitting the wall to be rebuilt.

In addition, that was the only decree issued late enough to start the 483-year period, which would end when the Messiah would be present in the world.

Therefore, the starting point of the 490 years of the prophecy in Daniel 9 was March–April 445 B.C.

Pinpointing Messiah’s Presence on Earth

Another significant feature of the Daniel 9 prophecy is that it pinpoints exactly when the Messiah would be present in the world (v. 25). Gabriel said that from the issuing of the decree unto Messiah the Prince would be sixty-nine sevens of years (sixty-nine times seven, or 483 years). In other words, 483 years after March–April 445 B.C. the Messiah would be present in the world.

Computing the Years. When did the 483 years end? In computing the data provided by Gabriel, it is important to keep in mind that in ancient times people reckoned a year at 360 days. The Bible followed that ancient system. (Note Genesis 7:11, 24; 8:4, where five months contain 150 days, and Revelation 11:2–3; 12:6, 14; 13:5, where forty-two months, or three and one-half years, contain 1,260 days.)

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Therefore, the starting point of the 490 years of the prophecy in Daniel 9 was March–April 445 B.C.
Thus the 483 years between the issuing of Artaxerxes' decree and the designated time in the Messiahs' life would amount to 173,880 days (483 years times 360 days).

Starting with Artaxerxes' decree in March–April 445 B.C., the addition of 173,880 days brings one to March–April A.D. 32—the end of the 483 years, when something significant would happen in theMessiah's life on Earth.6 What was that significant event?

**Messiah's Presentation.** When referring to the end of the first 483 years, Gabriel said, “unto the Messiah, the Prince” (Dan. 9:25). The word translated “Prince” refers to “the king-designate as the one chosen and appointed by God to rule his people Israel.”7

It would appear that Gabriel had in mind the time (March–April of A.D. 32) when the Messiah would officially present Himself to Israel as its king-designate, the one chosen and appointed by God to rule Israel. Zechariah 9:9 foretold that Israel could identify its future king in the following manner: He would come to Jerusalem mounted on the foal of a donkey.

When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, the crowd recognized the significance of that event, for it called Him “King” (Lk. 19:37–38). As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He wept over the city:

> If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes (Lk. 19:42).

He warned Jerusalem that it would suffer great disaster because it “knewest not the time of thy visitation” (v. 44). Jesus' language indicated that God had marked out that specific time for Jerusalem to be visited by his divinely designated King, the Messiah. It also indicated that Jerusalem should have recognized the significance of that time because several centuries earlier, in Daniel 9:25, God had revealed when the Messiah would present Himself to Israel as its divinely designated King.

**Messiah's End.** The Daniel 9 prophecy also specifies that at the end of the first 483 years, the Messiah would be “cut off” (v. 26). The word translated “cut off” was used for the death penalty (Lev. 7:20–21, 25, 27) and often referred to a violent death (1 Sam. 17:51; Obad. 9; Nah. 3:15).8

Thus Gabriel revealed that the Messiah would be cut off with a violent death after He presented Himself to Israel as its designated King.

Two chronological items in the New Testament shed light on the time of Jesus’ triumphal entry and death: the reign of a secular ruler and the Jewish holiday of Passover.

**Tiberius's Reign.** Luke declared that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Lk. 3:1–3). Several ancient writers indicated that Tiberius began his reign in A.D. 14; therefore, the fifteenth year of Tiberius’s reign would have been A.D. 28.9

John’s statements near the beginning of his ministry may indicate that he began his ministry in the spring.10 Thus John may have begun his ministry in the spring of A.D. 28. Since John had an established ministry before he baptized Jesus (Mk. 1:4–9), it is probable that Jesus was baptized and began His ministry late in the fall of the same year.11

Epiphanius, a church bishop on Cyprus during the fourth and fifth centuries, declared that Jesus was baptized in November of A.D. 2812 and Jesus’ ministry covered four Passovers.13 Since the first Passover of His ministry would have been in the spring of A.D. 29, the fourth Passover would have been in the spring of A.D. 32.

Since Jesus was crucified in conjunction with the last Passover of His ministry, this would mean that He made His triumphal entry and died in the spring of A.D. 32. In the fourth century Bishop Epiphanius indicated that Jesus died in the spring of A.D. 32.14

**The Passovers.** During the first Passover of His ministry, Jesus cleansed the second Temple (Jn. 2:11–16).15 On that occasion the statement was made, “Forty and six years was this temple in building” (Jn. 2:20). That statement referred to the forty-sixth year of a massive building project instigated by Herod the Great but not completed until A.D. 64.16 Herod began that building project in 18 B.C.17 Beginning with 18 B.C., the forty-sixth year would be A.D. 29. (There is only one year from 1 B.C. to A.D. 1.)

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**New Testament chronology corresponds with the chronology of the Daniel 9 prophecy.**

**... Only He [Jesus] experienced what the Daniel 9 chronology revealed the Messiah would experience in the spring of A.D. 32.**

**Only Jesus Fits the Prophecy.**

It is historical fact that Jesus was crucified several days after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But does the chronology of the New Testament indicate that both His presentation of Himself to Israel as its designated King and His crucifixion several days later took place in the spring of A.D. 32, in line with the Daniel 9 prophecy concerning the Messiah?

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**Began on the Jewish Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost)**

**Will End With the Rapture**
Muslims further noted that the baby was born on the twenty-seventh day of their holy month of Ramadan, revered as the night the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

How interesting that in the little town where the true Miracle Baby of Bethlehem was born two thousand years ago, Muslims are laying claim to their own “miracle baby.”

Will Bethlehem become the place of annual December pilgrimages by Muslims? Perhaps not. But it is difficult to disregard the fact that the thousands coming to see a mark on an infant’s face because it is linked to a terrorist are declaring it a divine miracle. One cannot ignore the vast gulf between reverence for one dedicated to taking life, and reverence for the One who came into the world to be the supreme giver of life.

Last December thousands of Palestinians flocked to the home of a family whose newborn son caused a sensation. Muslims are revering the boy as the “miracle baby” of Bethlehem.

The designation was given because of an unusual birthmark on the infant’s cheek. According to devout Muslims in the town, the birthmark forms the Arabic letters of the name of an uncle, a Hamas militant. Security sources say the baby’s uncle, who was shot dead several months ago, was suspected of masterminding a suicide bombing that killed twelve people on a bus in Jerusalem in November 2002.

The birthmark was immediately interpreted as a message of divine support for the Palestinians. The child’s grandmother called it a sign “the soldiers can kill our sons but not our spirit.” A local Muslim imam traced a finger over the birthmark, which ends behind the baby’s right ear, and pronounced it “a gift from God.”

Palestinian baby born November 27 with an unusual birthmark. (AP Wide World Photos)

When Will Enough Be Enough?

It’s plain from this map that the world’s Arabs possess almost all the land in the Middle East. Yet they demand Israel as well. Israel consists of only 7,800 square miles (20,330 sq. km). Arab countries already control more than 5 million square miles (13.3 million sq. km)—614 times as much land as the Jewish state. It seems that the wrong people are being asked to give “land for peace.”
Suicide Bombers

As part of its promotion of suicide terrorism, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has repeatedly taught its population the Islamic tradition that the Shahid (martyr) who dies for Allah will receive numerous heavenly rewards, including the seventy-two (or seventy, according to other sources) Dark-Eyed Maidens (or Virgins) of Paradise.

These teachings, which come in televised religious sermons as well as in a music video broadcast hundreds of times on PA TV during the last three years, show a Shahid arriving in Paradise, being greeted by the Maidens.

There is even evidence that Palestinian men have seen this goal of marrying the seventy maidens as reason to aspire death as a Shahid. In a TV
broadcast, a Palestinian mother of a man named Abdallah who died in clashes with Israel, explains her personal acceptance of her son’s death as a Shahid because it was his wish to marry the Dark-Eyed Maidens of Paradise rather than an earthly woman.

One of the early sources for this Islamic tradition of the Seventy Maidens, according to the official PA daily, Al Hayat Al Jadida, is cited in a recent article on literary analysis of Muhammad’s language. A Hadith (prophetic tradition) describes the rewards of the “Prophets, the Righteous and the Shahids”:

He said [Muhammad said in the Hadith explaining the words of the Qur’an promising “comfortable dwellings in the Garden of Eden”]: [There is] a palace of pearls in the Garden of Eden and in it seventy courts of ruby. . . . And in each court [there are] seventy houses of green emerald stone. In every house, seventy beds. On every bed, seventy mattresses of every color and on every mattress a woman.

The style of the Prophet . . . in this Hadith . . . is intended to fill Muslims with desire for the Garden of Eden . . . to be worthy of it, because . . . only three dwell there: Prophets, Righteous and Shahids [martyrs, those who died for Allah].

1. Mother: My son aspired to Shahada in order to marry the Maidens of Paradise.

Mother of Abdallah on PA TV: He would always dream of Shahada, it was his first and last goal in life. . . . I told him: “Dear, we all want to be Shahids.” He said: “In this entire world I can’t think of anyone to marry. . . . I want to marry the Dark-Eyed [Virgins or Maidens of Paradise].” I said: “If these are his thoughts I wish for him Shahada.”


This music video, depicting a Shahid joining beautiful maidens in heaven, has been broadcast hundreds of times over the past three years on PA TV. The clip begins with scenes depicting a romance that is cut short when soldiers shoot a woman in the back. The woman goes immediately to heaven, where she joyously joins other young women all dressed in identical long white gowns—the “Maidens of Paradise.”

The maidens are dancing in water, a clear depiction of the Islamic tradition of the Afterlife, which the Qur’an repeatedly says has “flowing streams.” Later in the video, the man visits the woman’s grave and the soldiers shoot him in the back as well. At the moment he falls to the ground, he immediately goes up to heaven and joins the “Maidens.”

3. Promise of “Seventy-two Dark-Eyed Virgins” as taught on PA TV by PA religious leader Dr. Ismail al-Radouan:

When the Shahid meets his Maker, all his sins are forgiven from the first gush of blood. He is exempted from the torments of the grave [Judgment]; he sees his place in Paradise; he is shielded from the great shock and marries Seventy-two Dark-Eyed [the Virgins, or Maidens of Paradise]. He is an heavenly advocate for seventy members of his family; on his head is placed a crown of honor, one stone of which is worth more than all there is in this world.

As the Palestinian Media Watch has reported previously, the PA leaders and media have repeatedly encouraged young Palestinians to seek Shahada, Death for Allah, using a variety of persuasive tactics. In sermons, discussion, and music videos still broadcast on PA TV, young people are indoctrinated to pursue martyrdom for its “sweetness” and the rewards it brings. This latest example is another reinforcement of the repeated message: romantic and utopic portrayals of the heavenly rewards of martyrdom.

It should be stressed that this bulletin is not meant to be a critique of the Islamic religion or traditions, but merely an indication of how the PA uses the traditions to promote its war against Israel. It does so by reinforcing the lesson for Palestinian youths that death is not to be feared; rather, they should actively seek Shahada as a duty and for its many rewards.

The Palestinian Media Watch provides updates on the PA through analysis of Palestinian Arabic-language media.

Foundations of Faith, from page 29

Thus the first Passover of Jesus’ ministry was in the spring of A.D. 29, and the fourth Passover would have been in the spring of A.D. 32. Since Jesus was crucified in conjunction with the last Passover of His ministry, He must have made His triumphal entry and died in the spring of A.D. 32.


The accurate, chronological fulfillment of a precise chronological prophecy that God revealed over five centuries earlier demonstrates that God is sovereign over time.

ENDNOTES

1 Leon Wood, Commentary on Daniel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 232.
4 Ibid., 139.
12 Ibid., 253.
13 Ibid., 283.
14 Ibid., 253.

Renald E. Shoovers is an author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
The Jews are a peculiar people: things permitted to other nations are forbidden to the Jews. Other nations drive out thousands, even millions of people and there is no refugee problem. Russia did it, Poland and Czechoslovakia did it, Turkey threw out a million Greeks, and Algeria a million Frenchmen. Indonesia threw out heaven knows how many Chinese—and no one says a word about refugees.

But in the case of Israel the displaced Arabs have become eternal refugees. Everyone insists that Israel must take back every single Arab.

Arnold Toynbee calls the displacement of the Arabs an atrocity greater than any committed by the Nazis. Other nations when victorious on the battlefield dictate peace terms. But when Israel is victorious it must sue for peace. Everyone expects the Jews to be the only real Christians in this world.

Other nations when they are defeated survive and recover, but should Israel be defeated it would be destroyed. Had [Egyptian President Gamal Abdel] Nasser triumphed last June he would have wiped Israel off the map, and no one would have lifted a finger to save the Jews. No commitment to the Jews by any government, including our own, is worth the paper it is written on.

There is a cry of outrage all over the world when people die in Vietnam or are executed in Rhodesia [now Zambia and Zimbabwe]. But when Hitler slaughtered Jews no one remonstrated with him. The Swedes, who are ready to break off diplomatic relations with America because of what we do in Vietnam, did not let out a peep when Hitler was slaughtering Jews. They sent Hitler choice iron ore, and ball bearings, and serviced his troop trains to Norway.

The Jews are alone in the world. If Israel survives, it will be solely because of Jewish efforts, and Jewish resources. Yet at this moment Israel is our only reliable and unconditional ally. We can rely more on Israel than Israel can rely on us. And one has only to imagine what would have happened last summer had the Arabs and their Russian backers won the war to realize how vital the survival of Israel is to America and the West in general.

I have a premonition that will not leave me; as it goes with Israel so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish the holocaust will be upon us.
Hated for Israel and the Jewish people in classrooms controlled by the Palestinian Authority is an ongoing problem. If and when a peace agreement is reached, how can a generation of Palestinian children and young people be deprogrammed?

How do we go about turning thousands of people trained to hate, kill, and eagerly explode themselves as suicide bombers into citizens respecting their neighbor’s right to life? It is a difficult question, but one we may eventually be forced to address.

Unfortunately, such destructive attitudes are not confined to places like Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin in the Middle East. They are being played out at this moment in schools and on college campuses in the United States, Canada, England, and other “civilized” countries in the West. How do we reform the thinking of these students?

In Britain a 14-year-old girl at London’s Jews’ Free School was punched, kicked, and called a “filthy Jew” by a gang of youths while she and two friends were riding on a double-deck bus. After being taunted, the three got up to leave the bus. “You’re not going anywhere,” one of her tormentors said. Then they began to assault the girls.

When the three friends finally managed to escape, the gang chased them down a London street until they took refuge in a store. When she arrived home, the girl’s parents discovered she was bruised, shocked, and traumatized. While making his report to police, the girl’s father said the incident left his daughter frightened and reluctant to go on the bus again.

Such attacks, however, are not the exclusive province of young Jewish Europeans. A devout Muslim college student in her third year at the University of Toronto in Canada has received death threats from fellow Muslims after she expressed support for the State of Israel’s right to exist. “As a result of my pro-Israel views,” she explained, “I received a lot of verbal assaults, and a few death threats on my life.”

She advocates that pro-Israel Muslims visit Israel to see what it is really like and to equip them with the knowledge to speak out in their communities.

“I love Jews as I love true Muslims,” she says. “Therefore, I believe Jews should have a right to live legitimately in their homeland.” Such candor, expressed in the North American “free speech” zone, has marked this young woman as a target of ridicule and possibly death.

Thus, whether in the dusty towns of Palestinian territory, the clean streets of London, or the halls of higher learning at a university in Canada, the need to refashion civility and common human decency is acute.
Since the end of the first Gulf War, the Christian population of Iraq has dropped from nearly two million to about 800,000.

These startling figures reported by senior reporter George Thomas of CBN News reveal the very real problems confronting the Christians of postwar Iraq. A Christian leader surveying the situation in his country declared, “We are afraid for the future.”

The Christian exodus out of Iraq is reminiscent of the departure of more than 120,000 Jewish people from there in the wake of the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. The phenomenon is also consistent with the radical Muslim promise to drive Christians out of the Islamic sphere in the Middle East.

November 2003 was a particularly bad month for Iraqi believers. A key Christian judge was murdered in Mosul; bombs were discovered in two Christian schools, one in Mosul and the other in Baghdad; and many Christian students and families received word to convert to Islam or else.

Then, reported Thomas, in late November many Christian families throughout Iraq received a threatening letter from the country’s main Shia group. It warned Christians that if they didn’t convert to Islam, they would be raped, kidnapped, tortured, or killed.

Thomas said radical Islam is spreading across Iraq, and it has the Christian community very much on edge. An Iraqi woman commented, “One day when I was returning home on the bus, a group of Muslim men approached me and ordered me to cover my head. They told me that if I didn’t put on a veil, they would slaughter me. Can you imagine this? I am a Christian and we don’t believe in wearing the veil.”

What the Christians who remain in Iraq fear most is the growing Shiite influence. One Christian leader, wrote Thomas, begged, “Please protect us from the Shiite Muslims. They are very dangerous, they will kill us Christians. We don’t want them in the new Iraqi government.”

At the moment, his plea appears to be in vain. Thomas reported that Iraqi experts believe the Shiites, who constitute about 60 percent of the Iraqi population, will dominate the interim government this year.

Consequently, rather than becoming a functioning democracy, Iraq is well on its way to becoming an Islamic state devoid of all religious freedom. Should this be the case, it will embrace Sharia, a harsh form of Islamic law. As the basis of the new constitution, Sharia would be
imposed on all Iraqis, regardless of their religion.

Wrote Thomas, “Dr. Noah Feldman, a close advisor to Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Baghdad, recently told a British newspaper . . . ‘The end constitutional product is very likely to make many people in the U.S. government unhappy. It’s not going to look the way people imagined it looking. Any democratically elected Iraqi government is unlikely to be secular, and unlikely to be pro-Israel. And frankly, moderately unlikely to be pro-American.’

“This is music to the ears of Sheikh Hadi Hussein Al-Ghazragi. He heads a prominent Shiite fundamentalist group that’s gaining support across Iraq. According to the Sheikh, ‘The Islamic law must be the foundation of this country and constitution. All the citizens, including Christians, Jews and others who belong to different religions, must follow the strict rules of Islam.’”

In spite of imminent danger, several Iraqi Christians are boldly but secretly evangelizing in the streets. CBN said Arabic versions of the Bible “are being highly sought after.”

One Christian commented, “My prayer is that the church will expand the walls of the church. . . . We know that sharing this message is incredibly difficult, but this is what we believe in and as long as we have Christ with us, this is the day of salvation. This is the day . . . God is going to touch the people of Iraq.”

Today, wrote Thomas, “Christians in Iraq are suspended between hope and fear. Hope, that with the fall of Saddam Hussein, they will gain greater religious freedom. But also fear, because they are nervous about what a new Iraqi regime would mean.”

We have a mandate to pray for and reach out to our brethren in Iraq. They face a long and precarious future. As we survey those uncertainties, we are assured that He who neither slumbers nor sleeps watches over His own.

This groundbreaking work takes an unprecedented, compassionate, in-depth look at the true experiences of Muslim women at every stage of life.

*Voices Behind the Veil* delves into the five pillars of Islam, reveals what Islam says about women, and tells you how you can reach Muslim women with the mercy, grace, and atonement of Jesus. Two chapters tell of Muslim women who have become Christians.

Edited by Ergun Mehmet Caner, coauthor of *Unveiling Islam* and *More Than a Prophet*, this remarkable book by Christian women, including missionaries and journalists, will take you into a world much different from your own.

Dr. Caner, a former Muslim, gave his life to Christ in 1982.

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USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO ORDER.
Satan is the master of deceit. He can disguise his deceptions so brilliantly they often appear the epitome of logic and right thinking. But faith often contradicts logic. God’s ways are not our ways, and relying on human reason can lead us into grave error.

Thus God advises, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5–6).

When Sarai was seventy-five, she directed her own path, probably believing she was doing God’s will. She believed in the Lord, acknowledged that He had closed her womb, and even trusted Him enough to think that whoever conceived Abram’s child would give birth to a son rather than a daughter. Yet she reasoned that she was not meant to be the biological mother of Abram’s heir because she was old and had gone ten years without conceiving since God had first promised Abram a son.

From her limited vantage point, she saw no way she could give Abram a child. So she offered him the only logical, even practical, alternative that seemed perfectly in keeping with God’s will as she understood it. Moreover, God had not yet declared that Sarai would be the mother of the child, just that Abram would be the father.

So Sarai told her husband, “Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her” (Gen. 16:2). The boy would be Abram’s seed biologically and Sarai and Abram’s legally. Furthermore, using her servant to carry her husband’s child was an accepted practice in that culture. So Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram; and in so doing, she created a bigger problem than she had before.

As one writer put it, “Little did Sarai think when she persuaded Abram to take Hagar, that she was originating a rivalry which has run in the keenest animosity through the ages, and which oceans of blood have not quenched.”

The logical way is not always God’s way. In 1985 the Lord showed me He wanted me to attend Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroon Lake, N.Y. I was a young widow with a five-year-old child, a house in New Jersey, and no income other than a few investments and Social Security.

I loved the Lord, trusted Him to help me, prayed and studied my Bible daily, but could see no way to muster the necessary funds to pay my tuition, living expenses, and my daughter’s tuition in Christian school without selling my house and living off the proceeds.

So I hired a realtor and put my house on the market. Soon a lovely Christian couple homeschooling their children made an offer. I agreed to a closing date, packed my belongings, and moved to New York. It all seemed so right—so logical. And it was all so devastatingly wrong.

Not a month later the entire deal collapsed, and I was in worse shape than I had been in before. I learned the hard way that God had a different, and better, way; and I live today in the same house I was sure I had to sell.

Although her situation was different, Sarah, too, learned the hard way that God can use extraordinary means to accomplish His will. Sometimes He uses the road most
traveled; sometimes He chooses the road less traveled; and sometimes He carves an entirely new road through a barren wilderness, thereby doing what only He can do: the impossible.

By taking the road most traveled, Sarai unwittingly ignited a vicious rivalry that began, not with Ishmael, but with Hagar.

When Hagar realized she had conceived, she despised Sarai (Gen. 16:4). The Hebrew word for “despised” means Hagar lost respect for Sarai and considered her inferior. And evidently, she made no bones about her feelings. Sarai complained to Abram, believing perhaps that he bore a certain amount of responsibility for Hagar’s hurtful and inappropriate attitude:

_The wrong done me be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee_ (Gen. 16:5).

From her perspective, she had done the best she knew how to enable Abram to have a son—and contempt was the thanks she got.

When Abram told Sarai, “Do to her as it pleaseth thee,” Sarai “dealt hardly [harshly] with her” (16:6). The Bible does not specify what Sarai did, but it was severe enough to make Hagar run away.

The Lord, of course, always gracious, found Hagar in the wilderness; comforted her; told her she would bear a son whom she must name Ishmael; promised her a multitude of descendants; and told her to submit to Sarai (16:8–11).

So when Abram was eighty-six years old and Sarai seventy-six, Ishmael was born. Abram finally had an heir. However, neither Sarai nor Abram realized that Ishmael was not the heir God had promised.

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ENDNOTES

2 Cited in Herbert Lockyer, _All the Women of the Bible_ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 158.

Lorna Simcox is senior editor for The Friends of Israel.

United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency team in Gaza to aid in the disposal of rubbish.

n Arranged entry into Kalkilya for an Israeli Arab family from East Jerusalem to attend their son’s wedding.

Even at the height of military action, such as the operation to clean out the terrorist nest in the Jenin refugee camp, Israeli forces have gone out of their way to assist Palestinian noncombatants. In the case of the Jenin operation, for example, the hospital there was kept running with a generator delivered under fire by an Israeli officer.

The best way to improve the situation for the Palestinians in the territories is for the Palestinian Authority to take the steps laid out by the Bush administration—end the violence, reform its institutions, and elect new leaders—so that peace talks may resume and a settlement can be negotiated.

From Myths & Facts Online—A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict by Mitchell G. Bard
Knesset creates Christian caucus

The growing alliance between Christians and Jews has prompted Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, to create a Christian Allies Caucus to maintain that relationship and support it.

Said Knesset member Yuri Stern, “The time came to establish a group of people, a particular institution that works on promoting Israeli-Christian relationships.” He addressed his remarks to listeners of “Janet Parshall’s America,” an American radio show that was broadcasting live from The Media Line studios in Jerusalem.

Stern, who immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union, credited Christians with helping secure the freedom of former “refuseniks,” of which he was one. Said Stern, “I felt very strongly that we should upgrade those contacts and we should create in our parliament a group of people that would work constantly on this line, on this media line, on this political line, cultural line in order both to help the Christian groups who are operating in this country or helping us from abroad to overcome the bureaucracies and red tape in our institutions.”

Stern said the Israeli public must understand that Christians are a “critical factor in our fight today."

Egyptian song blames U.S. for 9/11

Arutz-7—An Egyptian singer who brought the Arab world the smash hit “Ana Baktra Isra’il” (“I Hate Israel”) now has another: “Kharittat Al-Fariq” (“Road Map”).

The new song says America purposely carried out the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington “to make people think that Arabs and Muslims are terrorists and were behind that disaster. Now the U.S. can do what it pleases to the Arab world since everyone thinks they are to blame,” reported the Cairo Times.

The lyrics say, “Hey people, it was only a tower, and I swear by God that they are the ones who pulled it down.” The new hit song “gives voice to widespread views in the Egyptian street regarding the September 11 events” the Cairo Times said.

Bus protection in the works

Israelis are hoping to make their buses safer with a new device designed to keep suicide bombers at bay.

During the 40 months of Palestinian violence and terrorism, more than 900 Israelis have been killed in terrorist attacks, about a third of them in suicide bombings involving buses.

CNSNews reported that a new antiterror system—the only one of its kind in the world—would be able to detect explosives and lock out a terrorist. It was developed jointly by the Ha’argaz company, the Transportation Ministry and TAAS-Israel Industries.

Said CNSNews, “The system includes an explosives-detection device at the front of the bus; a turnstile through which passengers enter but which can be locked by the driver to prevent entry of suspicious persons; a device to protect the driver and passengers in the front of the bus; another turnstile at the back of the bus to allow passengers to exit but to prevent bombers from entering; and a two-way communication system between the driver and the people outside waiting to board the bus.”

The system will be installed on five buses for starters, but could also be used to prevent terrorists from entering shopping malls, restaurants or other public areas.

Papal meeting produces unusual result

A recent meeting between Israel’s chief rabbis and Pope John Paul II to discuss anti-Semitism and terrorism produced unexpected fruit in another area.

Israel’s chief rabbis asked the pope to help free Israeli hostages held by Hezbollah, condemn terrorism, and grant them permission to search Vatican storerooms for the huge golden menorah that stood in the Second Temple, destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70.

The menorah, symbol of the modern State of Israel, was the most important Temple artifact after the Ark of the Covenant and is thought to be in Rome.

Some Orthodox Jews believe restoring the menorah and other holy vessels to Jerusalem would be the first step in rebuilding the Temple.

Although the meeting did not produce permission to search for the menorah, it had some unexpected results.

Said one of the rabbis, “I can tell you something that the rabbi of Warsaw told me just this week. He said that after we met, he received dozens of calls from Poles who wished to confess their role in killing Jews during the Holocaust. The rabbi rebuffed them, though, saying he wasn’t a priest for confession. But one man insisted and said he couldn’t sleep at night, and told him that at age 11, his uncle came from the front wearing an army uniform and wanted to show him how to shoot.

“So just for fun, he [the uncle] took 50 Jews and shot them on the spot. He, the 11-year-old, threw the bodies into some kind of hollow in the ground and covered them.

“For 62 years, he told no one, figuring that the Jews are not important. But when he saw on television how the pope received the chief rabbis with such honor, calling them ‘my older brothers’ in front of the whole world, he said he realized that he did a great sin, and he therefore called the rabbi and said he wants to show him the ‘burial’ spot, and that he
Each day, we as Christians are given the opportunity to glorify God. Using our time well, exercising the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, and making wise use of the finances God has entrusted to us are just a few of the many ways in which we can honor Him.

One way we can glorify God beyond our time here on Earth is through a will. A will allows us to make sure that what the Lord has entrusted to us remains His when we no longer need it.

Sadly, it is reported that more than 50 percent of Americans (Christians included) have no legal will in force. This requires the laws of your state to intercede and make a will for you. Does your state know how you want your estate handled? Distributions are often made in ways that may be contrary to your wishes. In addition, your desire to see the Lord’s work benefited are likely to go unfulfilled.

If you would like to have a will written but don’t know where to start, let us help. We would like to send you our informative brochure How to Make a Will That Works at no cost and without obligation. It is our way of helping you become a wise steward over all the Lord has entrusted to you.

To receive How to Make a Will That Works, simply check the appropriate box on the envelope in this magazine; or write to Tom Geoghan at The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
Not long ago I received a nice visit in our home from four men who considered themselves extremely pious. They believed they were fighting for justice and righteousness; and wherever they went, they handed out pamphlets called “Struggle.”

And against whom were they struggling? Against us! They came to my home, not because they knew who I was, but because they were going from house to house warning people not to have any contact with those of us who believe in Christ.

Our home is always open to everyone. We receive everyone with kindness and in the friendliest way we know, even if we know that our visitors are not friendly toward us. We give them something to eat and drink and try to show much love. Such hospitality is what the Lord expects from us and teaches in His Word.

So we gladly invited these young men inside. After they finished the refreshments we provided, one asked me, “Can we have a nice conversation?”

I already had noticed their brochures, so I knew what subject they wanted to discuss. In fact, I had been waiting patiently for this discussion to begin. It is not every day that you have an opportunity to speak with such people, particularly in the comfort of your own home!

“We are those who are fighting for sanctification of the holy name,” one explained.

“How can you say you are so holy,” I asked, “when you teach hatred against those who do not believe as you do? We know that in the Lord is no hatred, only love. It is clearly written that we are to serve one another in love, not in hate.”

Now they began to look at me differently. “Where did you learn all these nice words?” one asked.

“Believe me, I did not learn them from the many commentaries you read. What I tell you is of faith. But if you do not have faith in God’s Word, then you must live by the sword. And this is how you are living.”

“So, tell us,” said another, “where you have learned all this.”

Now we arrived at the most important point. For this opportunity, too, I had been waiting. I could not tell them at the beginning that I believed in Christ because they would have fought with me, and then left. To such people you must bring the truth gently, step by step. I could tell that now they were interested in what I had to say. And so it was time to begin.
"How do I know all this?" I asked. "I know it because I read the Bible. And I never boycott any portion of what was written here by the Holy Spirit of God, as you do."

“How can you say we do such a thing?” one asked.

Now had come the time to tell them the full truth. This truth was important for them to know because they have spent their lives studying commentaries alone. So I opened the “forbidden chapter” of Isaiah 53. Whenever I begin to read this chapter, I never have to tell people in whom I have believed. This chapter says everything, and they know immediately.

After I finished reading, one man said, “Without you telling us, we now know in whom you have believed. We know who we are with in this house.”

They began to ask me one question after another. They also asked, “How could you change your faith? You were Jewish and now you are a Christian.”

This time I replied, “Have a good look at me, and ask yourselves something. You came to my home with a great stack of books. There are four of you. But not one of you brought the Holy Bible with you. Look at what I am reading from. All I have is a Bible. In here you will not find the rabbinical traditions that you worship so carefully. In here are written God’s Words, which tell about true faith in the Lord our God.”

Then I read them the entire chapter of Deuteronomy 6, which includes the Hebrew Shema, one of Judaism’s most important verses:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Masoretic text, vv. 4-6).

It is also written there, “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him” (v. 13). “Whom are you serving?” I asked. “You are not serving the Lord.”

Finally they had had enough. But they left on friendly terms, with much to think about.