PERSECUTED

Exposing the Growing Intolerance Toward Christianity
by Elwood McQuaid

In his newest book, Persecuted, Elwood McQuaid shares eye-opening, up-to-the-minute information and personal stories about people who are being persecuted for the sake of Jesus, challenging readers to break their silence. Christians will discover how they can make a difference through prayer and action to help those who risk everything for what truly is going to last forever.

With great passion and inspiration, Elwood McQuaid unflinchingly calls readers to reexamine their lives and be people of hope and purpose. Persecuted will make a lasting impact as it lifts your vision to Jesus and the hope of His return.

“Christians are being slaughtered, starved, and persecuted today in unprecedented numbers. And it is imperative that this generation of believers not only recognize the enormity of the conflict but also come to grips with its own indifference . . . and do something!”

— Elwood McQuaid

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Jonah was bitter, selfish, angry, and a poor excuse for a man of God. Unfortunately, he was not much different than many of us.
They are unaware that our keen interest in studying the Bible begins with the first verse of Genesis and continues throughout all sixty-six books of the Bible. They think of the Hebrew Scriptures as their book—the Jewish book—and view the New Testament as the Christian book.

Although Jewish people know that the Old Testament writers were Jewish, they usually are unfamiliar with the Jewish background of the New Testament and are surprised to learn that almost all of the New Testament writers were Jewish too. The only exception was Luke, a proselyte to Judaism, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

An interesting case-in-point of this perception occurred when my wife and I were invited to join two Jewish couples in our neighborhood for dinner. In the course of the evening we mentioned that...
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.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
A quiet debate reportedly has arisen in the Bush administration over whether our victorious men and women in uniform should be awarded ticker tape, flag-waving parades down New York City’s 5th Avenue and other streets in the good old U.S.A. 

It seems there is some trepidation about whether such fanfare would offend Muslims and Europeans and evince a kind of pride deemed unbecoming in a world given to apology, appeasement, and shamefaced breast-beating over who we are and what we have accomplished.

If we’ve learned anything from the fiasco following the Vietnam War it is that a reputable nation should not tolerate radical minorities tagging its heroes with badges of cowardice and mantles of ridicule and disgrace because they honorably answered the call to serve their nation in time of war. 

These young men did not slink away to Canada and hide out while more than fifty thousand of their peers gave their lives for their country. Neither did they join the unwashed rabble that desecrated the streets of America and trafficked with the Communist killers who debased a country and savagely ravished a people.

In those days, it was my duty to help bury some of the young men who had made the ultimate sacrifice. Most were unsophisticated, simple kids who believed it was right to stand up for people who could not stand up for themselves. Although never credited as such, these were genuine American heroes—young people a cut above most of the rest of us; true soldiers who still believed in the late Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s immortal words, Duty, Honor, Country.

Many of us had begun to believe that the concept died with MacArthur and the casualties of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. But such was not the case. Iraq has shown us and, we hope, the world that when it comes to America and our coalition allies, duty, honor, country are alive and well.

So why shouldn’t our soldiers march in a parade? And why shouldn’t we, as God-fearing and profoundly grateful people, line the streets, cheer them on, wave our flags proudly, and proclaim victory?

What do we have to celebrate? Perhaps a competent and committed leadership equal to any since the days of the Founding Fathers. Perhaps the greatest single military campaign in the history of the modern world. Perhaps the greatest show of technological genius ever displayed on the planet. Perhaps one of the most successfully planned war strategies exhibited in human history. Or perhaps the most uncommon courage, devotion, and willingness of our young men and women soldiers to risk it all to free people from oppression.

So to whom should we apologize?

Certainly Not to the Muslims

Our leaders have persisted in telling us that this war was not about religion—and that statement is true from our side of the line. But such was not the case for Islamists who strapped on the paraphernalia of a suicidal obsession in the name and for the honor of Allah. For them, it was a clash of religions.

People in the West made sport of the Iraqi minister of information who stood daily at the podium denying that coalition troops were anywhere near Baghdad and that those who were there were awash in their own blood. Although we may scoff, most Westerners fail to comprehend that this type of Alice in Wonderland fantasy is an integral part of the rhetoric that dupes the Arab street into delusions of superiority.

Two well-documented events are historical proof. During the 1967 Six-Day War, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser sent urgent dispatches to King Hussein of Jordan expounding on his forces’ sweeping victories over Israel. In truth, however, they were suffering a devastating defeat at the hands of the Israel Defense Forces. Nasser’s lies convinced Hussein to get in on the action in order to share the spoils of victory. Hussein’s “reward” was the loss of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

In the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Egypt and Syria suffered one of the most humiliating defeats in the history
of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet, despite the cold facts of reality, they persisted in celebrating the Arab forces’ early advances as a victory. It was a delusion that cost Egyptian President Anwar Sadat his life. As he sat on a reviewing stand celebrating Egypt’s “triumphs,” Islamic fanatics murdered him.

Thus the lesson inherent for the deluded Osama and Saddam wannabes in the Islamic world: “Don’t try it!” Clean up your act, or risk suffering the same consequences. Your mullahs and information ministers may tell you the sky is not falling. But look out your windows; a Predator drone may be soaring overhead.

Certainly Not to the Antiwar Warlords

We have long since come to expect that publicity-seeking, show business know-nothings will rouse the rabble for any cause that produces a few fleeting moments of face time on the small screen.

The sad fact is that the very people who risked their lives for them give them the right to denigrate this country and the freedoms our Constitution guarantees. Their religionist, pacifist next of kin, unfortunately, profess to represent the gun-shy Christians of America and the Western world. Without a doubt, the “mainstream” Protestant clergy have long since confirmed their credentials as card-carrying dupes of the radical left. Their strident rants, rising from the streets alongside the leftover Hippies of the ’60s anti-war movement, have confirmed their irrelevance in the marketplace of the real world.

Their churches are virtually empty; their pronouncements, hollow; and their posturing as world leaders of Western Protestant religion have disappeared behind the barricades of opposition to decency and order in a disorderly world. A recent article by Hollywood producer Dave Berg titled “Anti-war Protestants” in The Washington Times lays the facts on the line:

*This domestic [religious] war has been simmering for decades. . . . It is the struggle for the soul of America, which is being carried out by two diametrically opposed armies. One is made up of traditional Americans with Judeo-Christian beliefs, who contend, as President Bush does, that America is a force for good in the world, which is ruled by God. . . . Leading the charge for the Protestant fringe-left are the leaders . . . [who] have cut themselves loose from their moorings of Biblical scriptures and traditions and have set a course both in this world and of it.*

One mainstream bishop, wrote Berg, “recently whined, ‘I’d like to go somewhere in the world and not have to apologize for being from the United States.’” The bishop and his fellow travelers apparently would have felt much more comfortable in Baghdad when, earlier this year, Berg continued, “the National Council of Churches . . . went to Baghdad and gave aid and comfort to the enemy. They met and even prayed with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. . . . Unlike their leaders, most Protestants sitting in the pews are, indeed, mainstream. . . . But now, parishioners are plugged in to what their leadership is doing through various Web sites.”

That’s a bit of good news. What liberal Protestant leaders have tried to hide from those who dutifully pay their salaries has been unveiled through the Web and the Bible-believing Christian media, in particular.

**Revolutionaries in Disguise**

If you take the time to listen to the voices of the jaded left, this is what you will hear: the shout of Communist dogma, which does not rest beside Lenin in his Moscow crypt. It is back on the street, bellowing the slogans of an era that has outlived its time: “Power to the People”; “Occupation, Not Liberation”; “Power to Hussein, Death to Bush”; “Free Palestine From Israeli Imperialism”; etc. The mantra goes on ad nauseam.

The unvarnished truth is that these denizens of defeatism, intolerance, and appeasement are, in fact, articulating a declaration of war. They are not peaceniks. They are revolutionaries whose one great hope is to overthrow the government and establish a Bohemian Utopia. The question is, If they tear down the establishment, what do they plan to erect in its place? They have nothing to offer—nothing they would dare articulate on the streets of America at this hour, anyway.

**Roll Out the Red, White, and Blue Carpet**

Let the confetti fall and the streets of America overflow with millions of flag-waving patriots. Let’s have a sea of young men and women in olive drab and desert gear, heroes all, march by reviewing stands to receive the gratitude and salutes of our leaders and all loyal Americans. We have every reason to honor the victory and the victors and, yes, to unfurl the flag. And although the General has been off the scene for many years, his words still ring true: *Duty, Honor, Country.* Thanks be to God, we still believe.
When we enter the ancient city of Jaffa on our “Up to Jerusalem” journeys, our bus passes a weathered bronze statue of a whale. Immediately the story of Jonah, God’s recalcitrant prophet, comes to mind.

We all know the story. Jonah was commissioned by God to go to pagan, Gentile Nineveh with a message of impending doom. Rather than obey, he said no to God and took a ship traveling in the opposite direction. The result of his folly is well documented in the account of the prophet and the great fish in the book of Jonah.

As I watched and listened to the United Nations deliberating the issue of how to curtail the activities of a tyrant every bit as godless and tyrannical as were the Ninevites, my mind returned to Jonah and his excruciating excursion into how to face the facts of his position and accept the responsibility committed to him.

Yes, It Is About Religion

We are constantly bombarded by political statements that the war on terror has nothing whatsoever to do with religion. Ever careful not to offend Muslim world leaders, politicians tell us the enemy is a misguided, extremist liberation movement led by an overzealous few who are attempting to free Palestinians and other Arabs from the impaling injustices of Israel and the Western democracies.

Some have gone so far as to remove the stigma of identifying these people as the terrorists they truly are. As in the case of master terrorist Yasser Arafat, who was suddenly alchemized by the news media into a “fighter,” Islamists are now dignified as “freedom fighters,” “militiamen,” and members of a legitimate “liberation movement.”

Painting these false faces on such types is a despicable deception and outrageous breach of responsibility. And it wrongfully anoints them with a designation they do not place on themselves. By their own declarations, they do their hideous work of slaughtering the innocent in the name of their religion and to honor Allah.

Furthermore, our saying so does not constitute intolerant bigotry. It merely restates what they themselves proudly proclaim.

America’s apparent failure to recognize the true nature of the conflict is not because militant Muslims have deceived us. It is because Western leaders and media moguls have failed to face the facts and transmit them to Americans and other democratic people in the Western world. It is malfeasance—and it is too often fatal.

Why, for example, do politicians and news reporters give such scant attention to the thousands of Christians who are being killed, starved, tortured, enslaved, and driven from their churches and homes, all in the name of jihad, the Qur’an, and Islam? Horrendous atrocities are perpetrated in many countries while the vast majority of
people in the world, including "moderate" Muslims, ignore the growing catastrophe. Why? Because those responsible for exposing such cruelty are reluctant to call it what it is—an Islamic holy war against Christians, Jews, and Western democracies. The rationale is that we cannot afford to stigmatize peace-loving Muslims by mentioning religion in the same breath with terrorism. Apparently it doesn't seem to matter that, while Christians and Jewish people are being viciously slaughtered in the name of Islam, one can cut the silence with a knife.

Several years ago I was asked to speak to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. My subject related to the Middle East struggle. I stated that the basic issue is religion and that the Islamic claim to the land lies in the belief that all territory ever ruled by Muslims is sacred to Allah. Consequently, if infidels—namely, Christians or Jews—ever gain control of such land, Muslims can never rest in their beds until Allah’s honor is restored and the infidels annihilated, subjugated, or driven out.

After the meeting, a member of the mainstream media told me he had never heard that side of the issue. Frankly, I was astonished. He had attended numerous press conferences where major political figures had spoken on the Middle East. None, however, apparently addressed this element, which formulates the essence of the controversy.

The_Jumble_Speaks

On January 16 the United States launched the space shuttle Columbia from Cape Canaveral, Florida. It was a landmark event for NASA and the global community. For Israelis, it was a euphoric occasion that saw the first Israeli astronaut, Col. Ilan Ramon, embark on a mission into outer space. Ramon was already a national hero and had participated in the 1981 raid on the nuclear reactor in Iraq, setting the former Iraqi dictator’s plans to build an atomic bomb back for decades.

Tragically, the space vehicle disintegrated on reentry, and all aboard, including Col. Ilan Ramon, were killed. For the vast majority in the civilized world, it was a horrible loss. Memorial services were held around the world, lamenting the catastrophe that took the lives not only of Americans but also of astronauts of other nationalities. For some in the Islamic world, however, it was a time to celebrate.

In England, a firebrand Muslim cleric, Abu Hamza Al-Masri, gloated over the shuttle disaster and rejoiced over the astronauts’ deaths. He referred to the Columbia crew as a band of “thugs in space who deserved to die” and further claimed that the disaster was a sign from Allah because debris rained down on a Texas town named Palestine. While more rational Muslim officials rightly denounced these fanatical rantings, others in the Islamic world agreed when Al-Masri said,

The target of this event was the trinity of evil, as the shuttle carried Americans, an Israeli, and a Hindu, the trinity of evil against Islam. This is a message to the American people that Bush’s term is nothing but a string of curses cast upon them, and that it will lead to the exhaustion of their resources and the elimination of the false American dream. . . . This is a divine message to the Israelis, saying that they are not welcome in space.

Were these but isolated incidents, they could be written off as the meanderings of demented minds. The problem for us all is that such anti-Israel, anti-America venom flows freely from the pulpits of mosques throughout the Middle East, America, and the Western world—and it is not something we can afford to whisk aside in the interests of ecumenical harmony.

Stumping for a Palestinian State

The vaunted Quartet (U.S., UN, EU, and Russia) has proposed a “road map” for peace in the
Middle East that will impose a settlement on Israel and the Palestinians. No matter that it will be, as columnist Caroline Glick has so aptly described, a “road map to perdition.”

Consider these factors. The proposed constitution for the new State of Palestine will incorporate Islamic Sharia law as the legal basis for the nation. This is the same Sharia law that Sudan has forced on Christians and animists, resulting in their torture and death. Under Sharia law, tens of thousands of non-Muslim Sudanese women and children alone have been brutally force-marched, beaten, mutilated, enslaved, and forced to convert to Islam. Despite all of the noble rhetoric about establishing a “democratic” Palestinian state alongside a “secure” Israel, it cannot happen. There is no democracy under Sharia law. A “Sharia democracy” is an irreconcilable contradiction in terms and practice.

In addition, the proposed constitution calls for the conscription of Palestinian youth for the defense of the country. This feature comes in spite of the fantasy that a State of Palestine will be a demilitarized entity. With an army dedicated to the principles of radical Islam and Sharia law, democracy is only a gossamer-winged dream—one that may live in the minds of wishful thinkers in the West but is sure to disintegrate after the state becomes a dreadful reality.

**Pity Palestinian-Arab Christians**

Since the terrorist Arafat regime was installed after Oslo gave Arafat respectability and position, many Palestinian Christians have lived a nightmare. Bethlehem has witnessed 60 percent of its Christian population leave rather than face daily harassment and deprivation at the hands of a corrupt, militant administration. This being the case, what will happen when Islamic law becomes an official fact of life and the official doors of state slam shut to the scrutiny of the outside world? You can be sure Palestinian believers will be no more welcome there than any of their Israeli neighbors. It can be said unequivocally that, in addition to the Israelis, the biggest losers in the Quartet’s plan for peace will be Arab Christians.

**A Time for Responsibility**

Academic recognition that the problem is religious, and that religious bigotry and aggression emanate from Islamic radicals, is not enough. Yes, it is correct to be sensitive to the feelings of moderate Muslims. However, unrealistic sensitivity can and, in all probability will, make the situation much worse.

As the president has demonstrated, ours is a time for courage and decisiveness. Terrorism must be met and defeated. There can be no “everyone must feel he’s won something” approach. Americans cannot coexist with a militant minority that abhors everything true democracy represents. Furthermore, Muslims who wish to be integrated into the American way of life, with all of its manifold benefits, must not tolerate those among them who promote discord and terror.

And in the interest of true peace, Americans and others who treasure peace cannot stand idly by and countenance a nonsolution in the Middle East that will further jeopardize the lives, safety, and well-being of the only true democracy and real friend we have in that volatile part of the world. Any thought or promotion of a Palestinian state under the present rules of the game is intolerable. To capitulate will only invite disaster. And we have certainly seen enough of that.

Following Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech to the UN in February, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw eloquently stated why the international community needed to act decisively and immediately against Saddam Hussein. He reminded us of the issue that came before the League of Nations during the rise of Nazi Germany. There was much talk, many resolutions, but no action. As a result, the world paid a terrible price. Currently there has been much talk at the UN but little desire to act against aggression and global terror. Fortunately, with American power and will, we have the ability to stop both before it’s too late. And, like it or not, the responsibility is ours.

Here’s the test. Jonah had a clear mandate to act responsibly. Instead, he chose to run in the other direction—and paid the price. Will we be rejectionists like Jonah or face the unpleasant task of being branded “bad guys” while doing a good work for our people and the world? Time is fast running out.

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Of all the supernatural occurrences in the Bible, few have received as much ridicule and derision as the story of Jonah. To liberal scholars and skeptics, the account of a man swallowed by a great fish is suitable only for children, not for serious thinkers.

Yet, apart from the events recorded in the book of Jonah, documentation exists of men being swallowed by whales and living to tell of it. And there are certainly records of large populations repenting and turning to God.

These facts, coupled with the witness of Jesus Himself (Mt. 12:39–41), make the historicity and chronicle of Jonah moot points.

Besides, “Jonah and the whale” is not the book’s primary thrust. Rather, the central theme is God’s gracious and compassionate heart for lost souls.

When compared with his hawkish attitude, Jonah’s name—meaning “dove”—is a misnomer. Nevertheless, God chose this man from the small town of Gath-hepher in Zebulon, three miles northeast of Nazareth, to be His prophet of grace and mercy. Earlier God had sent Jonah to announce the restoration of lost territory to King Jeroboam II of Israel (793–753 B.C., 2 Ki. 14:25).

Wicked Jeroboam certainly did not deserve such a gift, but the Lord had compassion on Israel (2 Ki. 14:26–27), just as He has compassion on us today.

Overboard
In Jonah 1:1, God had another mission of mercy for Jonah. He told him to go
to one of the great cities of Assyria, Nineveh. Nineveh was not yet the capital of the powerful Assyrian empire, although it housed one of the royal residences. With its surrounding suburbs, Nineveh’s population was upwards of 600,000.

In Jonah’s day, Assyria was a formidable military machine. It was the force that took Israel captive some fifty years after Jonah’s ministry. The Assyrians were idol worshipers known for their brutality. About seventy-five years before Jonah, an Assyrian king boasted of his cruelty:

_I carried off their spoil and their possessions. The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city, their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire. I built a pillar over against the city gate, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar; many within the border of my own land I flayed, and I spread their skins upon the walls; and I cut off the limbs of the officers, of the royal officers who had rebelled._

Sending Jonah to such despicable people was surely an act of God’s grace; for by sending a prophet to forewarn them of impending doom, the Ninevites received an opportunity to repent.

However, instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah went to the city of Tarshish, famous for its gold, silver, iron, tin, lead, ivory, apes, and peacocks (2 Chr. 9:21; Ezek. 27:12). Some archaeologists believe Tarshish was located in southern Spain. If so, instead of going eight hundred miles northeast of Israel, Jonah sailed almost two thousand miles west, in the opposite direction.

So God threw a great wind onto the Mediterranean Sea, causing such a storm that the ship was in danger of breaking into pieces. The crew had seen storms before, but this one was so violent the frightened sailors cried out to their heathen gods to save them. Hoping to lighten the ship, they even jettisoned cargo.

Where was Jonah during this crisis? Was he leading the sailors to the one true God? Was he demonstrating God’s love by helping them lighten the ship? No, Jonah had gone to the innermost part of the vessel, as far from people as he could get. And as the sailors’ screams filled the air around him, he slept. (The Septuagint says he was even snoring!)

It was in that ignominious condition that the captain of the ship found the disgruntled prophet. Although their roles should have been reversed, the captain roused Jonah and admonished him to call on his god. Perhaps Jonah’s god would notice their plight and save them.

Sensing the offended gods needed to be appeased, the sailors cast lots to determine who was to blame for the insult. The final lot indicted Jonah. As at other times in Israel’s history, God providentially directed the lot (Lev. 16:8; Josh. 18:10; cf. Prov. 16:33). And His finger pointed squarely at Jonah.

Immediately the sailors peppered Jonah with questions, grilling him as to his identity and occupation. When he told them the truth, they became terrified. They asked Jonah the same question that has been asked for centuries of godly men who have fallen in disgrace: “How could you do this?”

The solution to their problem, offered by Jonah himself, indicated how far the prophet’s heart had strayed from God. Instead of communicating the truth about a forgiving God, Jonah implied that the God of the Hebrews was no different than pagan gods, demanding a human sacrifice to propitiate His anger. Jonah wanted to take the easy way out through assisted suicide, whereas he should have confronted his pride, humbled himself, and repented of his sin.

The sailors wanted no part of Jonah’s death wish. They rowed harder, trying in vain to reach dry land. Faced with no alternative, the sailors reluctantly accepted Jonah’s offer. But before doing so, they prayed earnestly to the Lord, asking God not to hold them guilty for what they were about to do. Then they lifted Jonah and, like so much jetsam, tossed him overboard.

Immediately the sea became calm. Extremely frightened, the sailors sacrificed to God and made vows. As far as they knew, Jonah was dead. Instead of leaving them with an understanding of God’s grace and compassion, Jonah left them with an image of a wrathful God who punishes disobedience—an incomplete and inadequate testimony at best.

But God was not finished with His wayward prophet. Shortly after Jonah hit the water, a great fish (possibly a whale, but the Greek in Matthew 12:40 merely indicates a large sea creature) providentially supplied by God, took the bait and swallowed Jonah whole. Now, instead of sleeping comfortably in the belly of a ship, Jonah was uncomfortably awake in the belly of a fish. For three days and three nights God had his undivided attention.

**Overview**

_Jonah is a picture of Israel._ Like Jonah, God called the nation of Israel to be a witness for Him
among the nations of the earth (Isa. 43:10). Yet Israel fell away from God, ultimately even rejecting His Son, the Messiah. As God forewarned through Moses (Dt. 28), He disciplined Israel, even as He disciplined Jonah. Nevertheless, God did not reject either. As with Jonah, God will bring Israel to repentance. As with Jonah, God will one day fulfill His plan to use Israel as a witness to the nations.

**Jonah is a picture of Jesus the Messiah.** Jonah’s disobedience, of course, is in no way analogous to Jesus Christ. However, his experience in the belly of the fish pictures Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Mt. 12:40).

**Jonah is a picture of a disobedient Christian.** Jonah wanted to run from God’s presence, so much so that he was deliberate in his plans and willing to pay whatever the cost. Perhaps Jonah would have seen the foolishness of his actions if he had considered David’s words in Psalm 139:

> Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in sheol [hell], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (vv. 7–10).

No one can hide from God. But disobedience to Him produces an aversion to His presence. The same was true for Adam and Eve at the beginning of time. They hid themselves among the trees of the Garden (Gen. 3:8). And the same will be true at the end of time when, during the Tribulation, the wicked will hide in caves, trying to escape God’s presence (Rev. 6:15–16). When Jonah said no to God, the subsequent break in fellowship drove him to run and hide.

Like Jonah, Christians who disobey God often avoid fellowship with other Christians or exposure to God’s Word. We recoil from repentance, seeking to rationalize and justify our errant behavior. Like Jonah, we, too, are a poor testimony of God’s love and grace. We become insensitive to the spiritual needs of lost people around us and are as the shameful son in Proverbs 10:5 who sleeps during harvest.

Jesus said the harvest is plentiful (Mt. 9:37). So where are the workers? Perhaps too many of us are like Jonah, fast asleep, oblivious to the cries of those perishing around us. Often the unsaved, like the sailors on Jonah’s ship, are more concerned about perishing than many Christians realize. Unless disobedient Christians get right with God, people who have never received Jesus as their personal Savior will continue to suffer from the neglect of Christians who can introduce them to Him. Perhaps someday someone will ask us the same question the sailors asked Jonah: “How could you do this?”

Disobedience to God carries consequences and repercussions that affect not only us, but also the people around us. Truly, the most dangerous place on Earth to be is outside God’s will.

Like Jonah, do you feel someone nudging you, perhaps a neighbor, a coworker, a relative, a friend? Like the captain of Jonah’s ship, perhaps that person is saying to you, “What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not” (Jon. 1:6).

People who have no personal relationship with God lack genuine peace and live in a storm of turmoil—whether they show it or not. Many are drowning in defeat, depression, and despair and are anxious to find a lifeline, a way out, anything that will calm their fears and give them hope.

Are you prepared to show them the way, to tell them of God’s grace and compassion, so they might not perish (Jn. 3:16)? Scripture says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Ps. 107:2). Perhaps the time to begin is today.

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**ENDNOTES**

3 Archer, p. 344.

Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Hope, Minnesota.
Not long ago I got a traffic ticket. I was speeding, and I was caught, and I was guilty. But while I was in my car, waiting for the policeman to process my license and registration, I entertained the hope that the officer might be gracious to me. I thought perhaps he would see that I had no previous tickets and I was an upright citizen. I even had an Ichthus emblem on the back of my car!

But the officer politely came up to my window, handed me a ticket, and advised me to slow down. I was extremely disheartened. But why? After all, I got what I deserved. I was presuming the officer’s grace to me since I considered myself a good person. But that was the problem. At that moment, I was not a good person; and I needed to pay a penalty and be taught a lesson. For the officer to be gracious to me would have been totally irrational and even irresponsible.

What does all this have to do with Jonah? Jonah disobeyed God and deserved punishment. As a result, he was cast into the sea. But as he was about to drown, he called to the Lord and repented. The Lord in His grace saved Jonah...
by sending a big fish to swallow him so he would not die (1:17). Safe in the fish’s belly, Jonah then responded by praising God with a psalm of declarative praise because of God’s grace to him. Jonah knew he should have drowned and was deeply touched by God’s unmerit-ed favor to him.

What I learned from my experience as compared to Jonah’s is this: We are in danger when we begin to presume on God’s grace. First, we begin to think we deserve grace when we really deserve punish-ment; and second, if God in His mercy forgives us, we may not appreciate it for the unbelievably wonderful act it is on God’s part.

The book of Jonah teaches us about repentance, grace, and thanksgiving. We should never lose the sense of heartfelt, unbelievable joy that the God of the universe is willing to forgive sinners like us—not just when we receive Him as Savior, but for all the days of our lives.

Jonah’s Psalm of Praise (2:1–9)

The story of Jonah in chapter 2 is that Jonah appreciated God’s grace so much that he composed a psalm to record his thankfulness. This psalm follows the pattern of other psalms of declarative praise, such as Psalms 32 and 34. And like these psalms, it also follows a certain literary structure.

Verse 1 is a summary statement of the psalm’s theme. In synonymous parallelism, Jonah recounted how he was in distress and about to die when he called on the Lord. The Lord heard his cry and rescued him.

Verses 2–7 tell the story of Jonah’s distress and the Lord’s deliverance in more detail. Jonah recounted that the Lord threw him into the sea (v. 3). As he was sinking in the water, he recognized that the Lord punished him because of his disobedience. Yet he directed his thoughts to the Lord (v. 4). While on the bottom of the sea floor (notice “the weeds” and “the bottoms of the mountains,” vv. 5–6) and about to drown (“when my soul fainted within me,” v. 7), Jonah called out to Jehovah in His holy Temple. The Lord heard Jonah’s cry and graciously delivered him by providing a great fish to swallow him.

Then Jonah prayed again from inside the fish’s belly. He ended his psalm with a vow of praise and instruction to those who would hear his testimony (vv. 8–9). Jonah recognized that his God is a God of grace and that he himself had received that grace, as opposed to those involved in idolatry, who would never know God’s mercy.

Jonah then vowed to bring a public sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord in order to declare, “Salvation is of the Lord” (v. 9). At the same time, Jonah seems to have committed himself to be obedient to the Lord’s command (chap. 3) as a result of having received God’s grace. In response to Jonah’s repentance and vow, the Lord had the fish spew Jonah back onto dry land, presumably not far from where he had started in Joppa (2:10).

Chapters 1 and 2 thus form a neat cause-and-effect story. In chapter 1, Jonah received the Word of the Lord to go to Nineveh but disobeyed. As punishment, the Lord sent a storm; and Jonah was thrown overboard, presumably to drown. But as he was sinking, Jonah desperately cried out to the Lord to deliver him from death. Miracle of miracles, the Lord not only reached out in grace to rescue his stubborn prophet, He sent a big fish to do it! The irony of the story is that, when the Ninevites ultimately repented and the Lord was gracious to them, he became angry. We find that he did not want to go to Nineveh because he did not want the Ninevites to receive God’s grace, as he had. But that’s another issue.

Jonah and Jesus

When the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to prove He was the Messiah, Jesus said they would only receive the sign of Jonah: As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so Jesus would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Mt. 12:40). Jesus also said that
The danger for us is that we have become so accustomed to God’s goodness that we forget we do not deserve it. In Deuteronomy the Lord warned the Israelites not to forget that the Lord’s goodness to them was not based on their own righteousness but rather on God’s grace and faithfulness to His promises (Dt. 8:1—9:6). The book of Jonah teaches us about repentance, grace, and thanksgiving. We should never lose the sense of heartfelt, unbelievable joy that the God of the universe is willing to forgive sinners like us—not just when we receive Him as Savior, but for all the days of our lives.

It is always an exciting time at our church when new believers are baptized. Not only is it wonderful to see new souls added to the church, but it is uplifting to hear the testimonies of those new believers. They are still in awe of God’s grace to them. They can relate to Jonah’s distress of certain doom and helplessness. They can vividly recall their supplications; cries of repentance to the Lord; and God’s amazing, gracious response to forgive them and bring them into His family. The glow on their faces, I think, would be similar to Jonah’s when he offered his sacrifice of praise to God for His mercy and deliverance. This action certainly glorifies God.

But what happens after years of receiving God’s grace and goodness? Do we lose the sense of awe and minimize the magnitude of it? Do we begin to presume that God should be gracious to us, even when we cut corners or commit “little” sins? As Paul might say, “God forbid!”

My experience with the police officer reminded me that grace is not the norm. Grace is special. And in the believer’s case, it is extra special because God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, died in our place so that we might have life.

When I was living in Texas, we went to a church that had communion every Sunday. Those who celebrate the Lord’s Supper once a month might think that celebrating communion every Sunday makes it common. But I found the opposite to be true. The Lord’s Supper became the focal point of every worship service. And what ministered to me was the weekly opportunity to remember my desperate need of Christ in my life, both past and present, and His grace to me. It was also a time to recommit myself to Him, based on what He has done for me.

So, while Jonah was a disobedient prophet, like many of us when he cried to the Lord, the Lord responded with mercy and saved him from his distress. In response, Jonah praised God, for he did not presume on God’s grace to him. May we learn from Jonah and be ever thankful for God’s goodness to us. May we also speak publicly of God’s amazing grace to us and our thankfulness to Him, for this gloriﬁes Him.

Responding to Grace

As New Covenant believers in Jesus Christ, we are recipients of God’s grace. The joy and newness of this relationship is evident throughout the New Testament. Passages, especially in Acts, record how the Gentiles rejoiced when they learned that they could now come into covenant relationship with the God of Israel (Acts 13:48). The Gospel of Luke is full of stories of people who received grace from Jesus and returned to thank Him for what He had done for them (i.e., Lk. 17:11–19).

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FEATURING:

- Children’s Program — Monday through Friday during each session — Philathea Building (on campus).
- Reports from Meno Kalisher on the ministry Israel.
- Honor Israel Night, July 22 at 6:30 P.M. with Joseph Puder (American Jewish Congress).
- Annual Banquet, July 23, 12:30 P.M. — Ramada Plaza Hotel, Warsaw, Indiana.
- Concert with Diane Susak July 25 at 9 P.M.

For further information about the conference or for conference accommodations, call Lisa Nickerson at The Friends of Israel, Monday through Friday between 8:30 A.M. and 4 P.M. (Eastern time), at 800-257-7843. Or visit our Web site at www.foi.org.
A
n old Jewish story goes like this:
Men asked Wisdom: “What is the doom of the sinner?” It answered: “Evil pursues sinners.” (Prov. 13:21) They asked Prophecy the same question, and it answered: “The soul that sins shall die.” (Ezek. 18:4) They asked the Law, and it answered: “Let him bring a trespass-offering, and it shall be forgiven him,” as it is said: “And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” (Lev. 1:4) They asked God, and He answered: “Let him repent, and it shall be forgiven him.” This is the meaning of the text: “Good and righteous is the Lord; therefore will He instruct sinners in the way.” (Ps. 25:8)

The third chapter of the book of Jonah is an historic demonstration designed to teach, in practical form, Psalm 25:8: “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore will He teach sinners in the way.”

The Mission Field
‘Evil pursues sinners’

“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee” (Jon. 3:2). Nineveh was founded by Nimrod on the eastern banks of the Tigris River in Mesopotamia (Gen. 10:8–10). It was the Assyrian capital when that empire was at its height. Excavation in the midnineteenth century produced significant finds. Many clay tablets; prisms; and steles of huge, embellished bas-reliefs on the palace walls revealed that Nineveh was “an exceedingly great city” (3:3) before it was destroyed in 612 B.C. The city was so impressive that one author described it this way: Dotted with majestic palaces, temples, canals, and gardens, its walls rose 200 feet above the West Asian plain. Fortified by 1,500 watchtowers, the walls were so thick, it was said, that three chariots easily drove abreast upon them. Like the kernel of a nut protected by outer husks, Nineveh was defended by five walls and three moats. Each of the city’s fifteen gates was guarded by castellated ramparts. And within its perimeter were more

Doom and Deliverance
Jonah 3
than thirty temples, “each shining with silver and gold.”

Yet, as grand as it was, the city had an extremely dark side: Nineveh was a wicked city, its rulers coarse, lustful, and sadistic. Young women, including the wives of Assyrian nobles, danced naked before royal guests; human sacrifice was practiced; the emperor was unimpeachable, his word, law; the palaces were guarded by eunuchs, young men stripped of their virility; temple prostitutes, so designated, practiced their trade openly before idols, half-man, half-beast. Among the gods, Ashur (from which the Greeks derived the word “Assyria”) was first, above all. Justifiably, perhaps, the Assyrian kings bragged that they had built Nineveh “for all times” and “for lordly pleasure.”

Nineveh was bad. God demonstrated His goodness by sending a prophet to warn the Ninevites of impending judgment. It would seem strange for God to send an unworthy prophet like Jonah, but Jonah’s severe discipline had prepared him for the task. When God commanded him a second time to go and preach to the city, Jonah obeyed (vv. 1–3). Such is the great God who can restore and transform spiritually weak, clay vessels into vessels of honor for His glory. And He still does so today by commissioning and sending out workers around the world to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Message
‘The soul that sins shall die’

“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). Jonah not only denounced the city’s wickedness but announced its doom. It was a simple cry, convincing in its explicitness.

Sin indeed solicits judgment. Human beings, by virtue of their sin natures, are theologically repulsive in God’s eyes and are under judgment: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13; cf. Isa. 1:4, 11–15). The world stands condemned, for God is holy. The fact that God sent a messenger to the Assyrians instead of destroying them without warning gave them a gleam of hope. The Ninevites repented and were spared.

When the Law was asked, according to Jewish tradition, “What is the doom of the sinner?” it answered, “Let him bring a trespass-offering, and it shall be forgiven him,’ as it is said: ‘And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him’ (Lev. 1:4).” The Old Testament’s sacrificial system was God’s temporary provision for dealing with the sin problem. Sin requires the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11). Yet Jonah’s message of doom accompanied the message that the people could turn from their sins and live.

The penalty of sin is spiritual death in this life and the next (Eph. 2:1–3; Rev. 20:11–15). Today a message of doom still cries out to a sinful world: “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). But the Good News is that God has provided a remedy through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Mourning
‘Let him repent, and it shall be forgiven him’

The Ninevites were shaken by Jonah’s message. The national emergency was so urgent that people “from the greatest of them even to the least of them” (v. 5) repented. Their faith was an action of the heart. Then followed their outward sign of inward mourning—the wearing of sackcloth and ashes.

Jonah himself was God’s sign to the people of Nineveh (Lk. 11:30–32). The Ninevites possibly heard about Jonah’s experience, how he was literally entombed in the belly of a great fish and presumed dead—then emerged alive. To someone in the Assyrian culture, Jonah would have been a walking miracle.

It is also conceivable the Ninevites associated Jonah’s experience with the idea of going to Sheol, the place of the dead, and then being raised. Jonah was a sign of the coming Messiah. It is not surprising that the Ninevites would connect their suffering with the suffering of the Messiah.

The Ninevites were not alone in repentence. “The news spread across Nineveh, from one end of the city to the other.”

The Ninevites were convinced that God was a merciful God. They had been given a change of heart and a change of behavior. They were being changed from within. It is only right that the Ninevites would call this change repentance.

The good news is that God is still calling people to repentance. The bad news is that God will call the wicked to judgment if they do not repent. The news of salvation and judgment are both true. God’s message is just like God’s people—half-villain, half-hero. God is the judge, but He is also the judge who judges without sin.
with their belief in a water god called Enki and a strange, leviathan god called Kur. However, they quickly turned from these false gods to the true God whom Jonah preached. Scripture says the Ninevites “turned from their evil way (v. 10).” The word turned is the word shoov in Hebrew. It is a verb that expresses a total reversal of formally held religious notions, including a repudiation of all sin.

It is amazing that these people went beyond contrition and sorrow to a conscious decision to believe Jehovah, followed by outward mourning. If their prayers had been faint, they would not have reached beyond the clouds. But because the king himself urged his people to “cry mightily unto God,” their penitent prayers prevailed (v. 8). Their repentance averted judgment. “Great is Repentance!” say the Talmudic rabbis, “for it reaches the Throne of Glory and brings about redemption” (Talmud Yoma 86b).

The Mercy of God
‘Good and righteous is the Lord’

Jonah was living proof of two important doctrines: Judgment is certain, but God can be merciful. Jonah was swallowed by a fish because he disobeyed God. But God spared Jonah because he repented. Perhaps the Ninevites thought, Did He not deliver His servant after he repented? Maybe if we repent, God might be merciful to turn away His judgment and spare us from doom also (cf. 3:9). They were not disappointed (v. 10).

The Assyrian gods were not noted for mercy. Rather, they were viewed as strict and unflinching dispensers of punishment for even minor infractions. The Ninevites must have known that Jonah suffered much and was delivered—delivered, in fact, in order to go to their city and warn them. This realization must have encouraged them to petition for God’s compassion. By their remarkable act of faith in the mere possibility of a pardon, the Ninevites received mercy. They learned firsthand that the God of Jonah was merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth—a God who keeps mercy for thousands and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin (cf. Ex. 34:6–7).

One of the most popular religious refrains in the Old Testament is “for his mercy endureth forever” (cf. Ps. 136). The ancient scholars were accustomed to referring to God as rachmana, which meant “the merciful.” In seeking to understand the spiritual balance between God’s justice and mercy, the Jewish sages decided that God always remembers mercy and compassion (Talmud Pesach 87b). The same hope and confidence that God will grant pardon and peace to all who truly seek them are the best incentives to trust Christ.

Jonah’s unfortunate experience in running from the Lord had a positive effect. It sent a strong message that God means what He says. The Ninevites were doomed. The appearance that God changes is only a human perspective (v. 10). God never changes (Ps. 102:24–27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). For example, the sun can melt wax while simultaneously hardening clay. But the sun does not change. The change is in the object it shines on. That God can regard an individual or nation as reprehensible and then love that person or nation is consistent with His absolute, moral immutability. Only with the God of the Bible can this situation be true. The Ninevites responded to the light shown them; and, as a result, God showed mercy and forgave their sins.

Judgment for the Assyrians was turned aside about a hundred years. God’s forgiveness was a testimony to all nations and individuals. From that moment and for all eternity, the Ninevites’ remorsefulness condemned to judgment all who had the privilege to believe but did not.

Joan chapter 3 shows how God teaches sinners about true repentance. First, we must realize that everyone has a sin nature. Second, God’s judgment is imminent for all. Third, now is the time to change your mind (repent) about God and His salvation. Finally, it is possible to know, experientially, that God is truly merciful.

During the modern-day observance of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the book of Jonah is read in the afternoon to inspire the nation of Israel to repent, as the people of Nineveh did. The ancient rabbis taught, “All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given; and the world is judged by grace” (Mishnah Aboth III.16).

One of the highest tributes to the Ninevites of this period was that, hundreds of years later, Jesus Christ cited their faith and repentance as a testimony to His generation, which was under condemnation for failing to repent and accept Him (Mt. 12:41).

As God was gracious to the Ninevites, so is He still gracious today to all who truly repent and come to Him by faith: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

ENDNOTES

3 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

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If we were writing the book of Jonah, how would we end the story? We’d probably have Jonah rejoicing over being restored from disobedience, rescued from the great fish, recommissioned in the Lord’s service, and returned to Nineveh to preach a great revival there.

However, God’s ways are not our ways. In chapter 4, God unveils Jonah’s attitude toward the redemption of a hated people while contrasting His deep love for and grace toward all peoples. Keep in mind, Nineveh was located in the country we know today as Iraq.

Jonah’s Anger

Jonah was an unhappy prophet. God had done exactly what Jonah expected He would do: He spared Nineveh from judgment when the city repented (3:10). The decision “displeased Jonah exceedingly [Jonah thought it a great evil], and he was very angry” (v. 1). Note the interesting comparison. Like Nineveh, Jonah had been the object of God’s extreme displeasure and divine anger; but the prophet was shown mercy. Jonah had been saved from a storm (1:4–5), drowning (1:15), and death in the fish’s belly (1:17). But prejudice blinded Jonah to the mercy God had bestowed on both him and Nineveh.

Jonah prayed to God in anger and had the audacity to rebuke the Lord for His forgiveness to Nineveh:

I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my

The Angry

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Jonah prayed to God in anger and had the audacity to rebuke the Lord for His forgiveness to Nineveh:

I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my
country? Therefore, I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil (v. 2).

He quoted Joel 2:13 almost word-for-word, proving that he knew God’s nature was one of grace and compassion. Knowing the Lord’s mercy, he fled to Tarshish because he did not want to preach to Nineveh and see God save the nation. He knew the Lord would bestow mercy on Nineveh if it manifested any sign of repentance (cf. Ex. 34:6–7). Without shame, the prophet laid bare the motivating impulse of his heart—an unbelievable loathing for Nineveh that was deplorable for anyone, let alone for a prophet of God.

Jonah became so despondent and depressed over God’s gracious stay of execution that he prayed for God to take his life: “Therefore now, O LORD, take me to die; for it is better for me to die than to live” (v. 3).

Earlier Jonah had prayed to live and rejoiced when God delivered him from death. But now, like a fickle or spoiled child unable to get his way, he prayed to die. Jonah’s prejudice shows the depth of his depraved nature—and that of all humankind.

Jonah’s prayer is indefensible. First, he discriminated. The prophet showed prejudice against the people of Nineveh. Second, he had a despicable, unloving, spirit toward those outside Israel. Third, he discredited God by criticizing His wisdom in showing grace and mercy to Nineveh. Fourth, he disdained God’s divine love for Nineveh. Fifth, he was defeated by his own selfishness and thinking. In essence, he told God, Your way of dealing with sinful people like the Ninevites is not the right way. If You are going to show mercy to Nineveh, count me out. I do not want to serve You anymore. Just let me die.

Sixth, he wanted to die, which was selfish. Seventh, the Devil had gotten a foothold into Jonah’s life by using discouragement, then to defeat, and then to a death wish.

How did God respond to Jonah’s prayer? God never answered it directly. The Lord understood that Jonah’s request was irrational and, if granted, would have greatly dishonored the Lord. Jonah was distraught because God showed mercy to Nineveh, yet he was blind to the mercy God was showing him. The Lord could have taken Jonah’s life but did not. Instead, He answered the complaining prophet by showing him mercy, love, and patience.

The Lord responded to Jonah by asking him a simple question: “Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?” (v. 4). In other words, Jonah, do you have any right to question My ways and purposes with humankind? The answer is no! The Creator has the right to do with His creation whatsoever He purposes (cf. Rom. 9:14–24). Jonah was so upset that he never answered God’s question.

Jonah’s Action

The prophet immediately left the city of Nineveh, but not the area: So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made a booth for himself, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city (v. 5).

The east side of Nineveh is a hilly, bare area opposite the side Jonah entered, and it is high enough that one can view the entire city. Jonah built a crude booth, or hut, similar to those built during the Feast of Tabernacles. The hut was made of woven branches to protect him from the sun’s hot rays. Jonah sat in his hut waiting to see if God would accept Nineveh’s repentance or bring judgment on the city.

Jonah’s rebellious spirit and desire to see Nineveh destroyed was an ungodly attitude for God’s servant. Undoubtedly, Jonah was backslidden. Yet even today many of God’s servants grumble and rebel, splitting themselves from fellowship with God and sulking in their own pity because they did not get their way.

In a show of mercy to the rebellious prophet, God prepared a gourd to shade Jonah from the sun: And the LORD God prepared [appointed] a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd (v. 6).

This vine may have been a castor oil plant that grows quickly in the Middle East’s hot climate. It possesses a shallow root system, produces one huge leaf, and can grow twelve feet tall. The Lord prepared, or appointed, the gourd to sprout; and it grew overnight to shade Jonah.

While beneath the gourd’s shade, Jonah’s spirit quickly changed from displeasure to delight. He was overjoyed at receiving comfort from the gourd God had created. But the ungrateful prophet never once thanked God for His mercy and kindness; nor did he rejoice that God spared the Ninevites from judgment because they repented.

To get Jonah’s attention, the Lord destroyed the gourd: But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day,
and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did rise, that God prepared a vehement [sultry] east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die (vv. 7–8).

After the worm destroyed the gourd, Jonah again felt the sun’s scorching heat. Then God brought a searing sandstorm known as a sirocco in the Middle East. It is a suffocating, dry wind that fills the air with sand. The prophet could hardly breathe. Heat exhaustion set in, causing Jonah to lose consciousness. In his affliction, the prophet asked God to grant his earlier request to die. Jonah became so caught up in his own distress that he sought death rather than ask God for deliverance.

Jonah’s Attitude

Again God asked Jonah a question: “Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?” (v. 9).

This time the defiant prophet answered, “I do well to be angry, even unto death” (v. 9). Such an insolent response could have provoked God’s wrath. But the Lord continued to show pity and mercy to Jonah despite the prophet’s self-centeredness. God pressed home the practical lesson on His compassion, mercy, and love. First, Jonah stubbornly maintained his unreasonable anger. Yet, if it were not for God’s great love, He could have taken His hand off the prophet and allowed him to die.

Jonah is like many people who tenaciously hold selfish biases—even when their positions are irrational and often devoid of substantiating facts. Second, Jonah’s life-death experience of being thrown into the sea, swallowed by a great fish, vomited onto the land, and surviving extreme heat and dust produced no change in his life. He stubbornly held to his position. Third, Jonah had more compassion over the death of a gourd than he did for the deaths of people.

In verse 10, God drives home the main lesson of the chapter:

Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night (v. 10).

The Lord told Jonah he had no reason to be angry. He did not create the gourd, sustain it, or cause it to grow or die. Jonah’s compassion was distorted and misplaced. To care for a worthless plant that had no soul—here today, gone tomorrow—was foolish. Jonah’s interest in the plant was purely selfish.

Then God drives home the key question of the book:

Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (v. 11).

In other words, were God’s mercy, grace, and love to be bestowed on Israel alone, at the neglect of the Gentiles? Here was a huge city of people who had cried out in repentance to God; covered themselves in sackcloth and ashes; and turned from their violent, evil ways. Should not God show mercy to those who repented, along with the 120,000 innocent children, as well as the lowly beasts of the field? Are these not better than any plant (i.e., gourd)? The answer is yes. The gourd was only a temporary plant that was of little value compared to human beings and animals. The souls of men are of infinitely greater value than plant life!

Chapter 4 closes with Jonah giving no reply to God. The prophet offered no rebuttal or agreement to God’s question, no sign of repentance, and no acquiescence with showing mercy to Nineveh. Perhaps if Jonah had reflected on his anger, selfishness, bitterness, and critical spirit, he, too, would have come to God in repentance.

Jonah’s experience is like a mirror that reflects our own walk with God. Like the prophet, we often have difficulty surrendering to God’s will. Like Jonah, we often harbor anger, prejudice, and hatred toward others because they are of a different nationality, race, or religious background. And, like Jonah, we have been shown God’s love and mercy, often without showing these

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In Old Testament days, Jewish worship revolved first around the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Crucial to that worship was music, particularly the skill and purpose of its presentation. In accordance with 2 Chronicles 29:25–27, the priests from the tribe of Levi were directed to play various instruments skillfully as biblical psalms were performed.

In A.D. 70 a stunning event dramatically altered Jewish life. The Romans attacked Jerusalem, leveled the Temple, and forced the city’s mostly Jewish population to flee. This action ended sacrifices, stopped all Levitical activity, and silenced the music. As a result, the rabbis forbade the playing of all music, believing that only a total ban could adequately express the tremendous grief associated with the Temple’s destruction.

Not all Jewish people, however, embraced the decision. The issue eventually came before the great Jewish sage Maimonides, who issued this simple and logical ruling: “In spite of the rigor of the law, music could not be sup-
pressed.”¹ By the third century A.D., the ban on all music had become largely disregarded. Yet it was upheld in the synagogue and extends even to this day in the Orthodox tradition.

Observant Jewish people believe music will resume when Messiah comes, the Temple is rebuilt, and Temple worship restored. One unique “instrument,” however, has never left the synagogue. This quintessential Jewish instrument is the shofar, or ram’s horn. Some people even believe the shofar is the shofar, or ram’s horn. This quintessential Jewish instrument is the shofar, or ram’s horn. Some people even believe the sound of the shofar “possesses strength and powers beyond that of common instruments.”² It is the one instrument played in times ranging from great joy to great despair. Its sound is compulsory. Its sound is compulsory during Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) services.

As global wanderers, the Jewish people have been able to preserve their identity while incorporating into it many of the foreign cultural elements into which they migrated. Thus, to understand what makes music uniquely Jewish, it is probably best to explore three basic categories—religious, celebratory, and entertaining—and three primary styles—Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi.

Ashkenazi originated in such Eastern European countries as Romania and Bulgaria, then extended west and north and eventually reached America. The primary language used is Yiddish (a Hebrew/German mixture). Sephardi originated in countries along the Mediterranean, such as Spain, Morocco, and Turkey. The primary language for this music is Ladino, a mixture of Hebrew and Spanish. And Mizrahi, which means “east,” is Arabic in style, originating in such countries as Persia, Iraq, and Egypt. Its primary language is Hebrew.

Melodies to Draw the Heart

Because only a capella music was allowed at Jewish religious services, a melodious chant arose that is still employed today. Rabbi Judah he-Hasid (1150–1217) said, “Say your prayers in a melody that is most pleasant and sweet to you . . . because the melody will draw your heart after the words that come from your mouth. Supplicate in a melody that makes the heart weep, praise in a melody that makes the heart glad.”³

The Talmud, Judaism’s all-important, extrabiblical work, exhorts, even requires, a worship leader to be “skilled in chanting and having a pleasant voice.”⁴ Some special melodies are memorized and passed down from generation to generation. Incorporated with scriptural texts, these are called cantillations.

Cantillations are “vocal inflections used for emphasis while reading texts aloud, inflections which were handed down by oral tradition until the 10th century, when they were codified.”⁵ The reader chants the text using only a series of musical notations that look like squiggles above or below each word. These are called trope. Said one expert, “Christian Gregorian chanting is actually a descendant of Jewish chanting of the Torah via cantillation.”⁶

Any Jewish boy preparing to become a bar mitzvah is familiar with these marks. His responsibility is to memorize the musical voice inflections associated with each little mark and then memorize his haftorah, the portion of Scripture read on his special day. On the day of his bar mitzvah, he marries the marks with the text in the prescribed singsong manner.

Cantillations are taught in yeshivot (Hebrew schools) or by a tutor. Depending on the Scripture, they are sung either in a melancholy or happy tune. Either way, they were recorded as “musical notations . . . which have served as accents, punctuation marks, and musical interpretations of the texts.”⁷

In addition to scriptural voice music, prayers known as nusaim are also chanted. Recited on the high holidays and festivals, some of these chants go as far back as the days of the ancient Temples: These simple responsive and unison readings in the Temple gave rise to the ancient synagogue melodies which became the core of the synagogue Nusah, as we read in the Talmud: “At the time the Israelites ascended from the Red Sea . . . how did they render the song [of Moses]? . . . R. Nehemiah declares: Like a school-teacher who recites the Shema in the synagogue, viz., he begins first and they respond after him. (Sotah 30b).⁸

Not every prayer has or had a distinctive nusah. Over time new nusaim have been introduced. Usually the person who writes these new prayers is the hazan, or cantor. Today a cantor must have a professional quality voice that adds a powerful dimension to the service, as well as the ability to write musical prayers. Whether Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform, every synagogue usually employs a full-time cantor. In many instances, cantors write nusaim continually. It should be noted that, while Orthodox Jews continue to abide by the ban on instruments and choirs, most Conservative and Reform congregations do not. For these two groups, the quality of the music takes precedence over the performer’s piety or
religious background. Thus some congregations hire Gentiles to sing their worship songs.

Hasidism, the most pious of all Jewish movements, roots its worship in the concept of joy. This thrust reflects the teaching of its founder, an eighteenth-century Eastern European mystic named Israel Ben Eliezer, known through-out Judaism as Baal Shem Tov (“Master of the Good Name”). Said one Jewish author, “The ecstasy of melody is one of the primary keys that Hasidism used to unlock the gates of heaven. It is, so to speak, the ladder to the throne of God.”

The words to Hasidic music are among the easiest to recite. They are words like la-la, bim-bam-bim, vima-voom, dai-dai-dai, etc. In the movie Fiddler on the Roof, Tevya the milkman sang the song “If I Were a Rich Man,” using many such words.

A Hasidic rabbi once said that melody is the outpouring of emotions. Thus the tunes and, in many cases, the words spring from the heart. One of the best-known Hasidic melodies is not even known as Hasidic at all. Regarded as an Israeli song, it is played at most Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs around the world. Performed by many well-known recording artists, it was created “in the court of the rebbe of the world. Performed by many well-known recording artists, it was created “in the court of the rebbe of the rebbe of Sadigura at the turn of the century.”

The words are simple: “Come let us be glad and rejoice. Awake brothers with a joyful heart.” The tune is electric. When people hear it, they are captivated and inspired to sing it, dance, and clap their hands. Perhaps you will recognize it as Hava Nagilah.

Hasidim also uses dance in its music and worship. From the gentle sway while praying, to the vigorous dance of the hora, Hasidism teaches that the whole being must be able to sing. This belief is based on Psalm 35:10: “All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee . . . ?” Some of these dances are still used today.

### Melodies to Grow Old With

Celebratory and entertaining music take into account life-cycle events, such as bar mitzvahs, weddings, and anniversaries. These types of music are pleasant to listen to, and both instruments and voice are used frequently. Probably the two most popular instruments with Jewish people are the violin and clarinet. “Why this should be so, no one really knows, though there’s a joke that says: ‘Have you already seen someone running away from a pogrom [persecution] with a piano under his arm?’”

A particular style of music that many people identify as Jewish is klezmer. Yet, according to klezmer expert Ari Davidow, “Not all Jewish musicians play klezmer, not all Jewish music is klezmer, and not all klezmorim [people who play klezmer] are Jewish.” Larry Maxey, a non-Jewish clarinetist, called klezmer “a microcosm of all that music has to offer—joy, pathos, dance, lyricism.”

The word klezmer is Yiddish but comes from the biblical Hebrew kley zemer or kelizemer, meaning “vessels of song.” Describing klezmer music is difficult. Bands play it; yet drums, common to most bands, usually do not. A pure klezmer band is not supposed to have vocalists, yet many do.

Klezmer music had its beginnings in the fifteenth century in the shtetls, the close-knit, Yiddish-speaking communities of Eastern Europe; yet it thrives today in the musical meccas of America. Klezmer bands don’t limit themselves to klezmer music and usually play anything from Israeli tunes to jazz to rock ’n’ roll.

Klezmer music was designed to dance to. It swings. What jazz is to the African-American community, klezmer is to the Jewish community. Some people would even call it Jewish soul music.

Said writer Moshe Denburg, The Jewish people and their music have their roots in the Middle East, specifically in the land of Israel, and their branches everywhere. They have lived, for over 2000 years, amongst many cultures, both Eastern and Western—from Iran to Israel, to the Western Mediterranean and North Africa, to Europe, and most recently, the Americas.

Their love for music can be seen by looking at the number of their accomplished musicians. If you check the list of musicians in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, you will see eighteen full pages of accomplished composers, instrumentalists, musicologists, singers, writers, and conductors. It is no accident that one of the all-time favorite songs in Israel is called, simply, “Hallelujah.” God has blessed the world with the wonderful ability to play and hear music. We can all say or sing Hallelujah—praise the Lord!

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**ENDNOTES**

4 Ibid.
5 “Jewish Music.”
6 Millgram, p. 365.
7 Ibid., p. 366.
9 Ibid., p. 468.
10 “Jewish Music.”

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Full Page ad When Prophets Speak of Judgment book (Waveline)
God’s Judgment Against Judah

In chapter six of Micah, God brings litigation against the people of Judah, charging them with gross immorality and idolatry. Judah is the defendant, and the Lord is both the prosecuting attorney and judge.

Prosecution Revealed

As the proceedings open, Micah states the Lord’s position:

Hear now what the LORD saith: Arise, contend [literally, “plead your case”] before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD’S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy [lawsuit] with his people, and he will contend [plead] with Israel (vv. 1–2).

Judah is asked to testify of any evil the Lord has committed against her. The mountains, hills, and foundations of the earth represent immutable and inanimate creation, which have, since time immemorial, stood in silent witness to God’s gracious faithfulness toward evil Judah. They are asked to listen to God’s lawsuit as He pleads with Judah concerning her sin and idolatry.

God asks Judah two rhetorical questions, requesting that the nation present any charge it has against Him: “O my people, what have I done unto thee? And in what have I wearied thee? Testify against me” (v. 3).

Judah is addressed as “my people,” revealing God’s strong covenant love, deep affection, and care for the nation. Like a father before his wayward son, God examined His own heart to see if He put unreasonable demands on Judah or neglected her, causing her unfaithfulness. In what way had He wearied Judah? Had He made harsh demands on her that were too difficult for her to keep? Had He not provided enough help during her pilgrimage as a nation? Had He failed her during times of crises and conflicts?

Since Judah presented no countercharges, God answered His own rhetorical questions:

For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O

my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, devised, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD (vv. 4–5).

In short, God (1) liberated the Israelites from Pharaoh; (2) redeemed them from slavery in Egypt; (3) gave them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam as political and religious leaders to guide them; (4) delivered them from Balak’s evil plan to curse them (Num. 22—24); and (5) took away their shame, providing forgiving grace at Shittim (Num. 25; Josh. 3:1).

It was at Gilgal, where Israel camped after entering the Promised Land (Josh. 4:19), that God renewed His covenant. There, through circumcision—the sign of being under the Abrahamic Covenant—God renewed His covenant promises and blessings with Israel (Josh. 5:2–11) and gave the nation strength to defeat her enemies. All these acts of grace and mercy were bestowed on Israel so that she “may know the righteousness of the LORD.”

Judah, to whom God addressed His rhetorical questions and illustrations, knew it had no grounds for criticism or countercharges against the Lord’s dealings with the nation. Judah’s unfaithfulness was not because of anything God did or did not do but was totally of her own making.

Purity Required

Israel responded to God’s indictment by asking rhetorical, hypothetical questions. Micah presented Israel’s questions in the first person singular, requesting...
that God give evidence of what He required of individual Israelites. Some scholars believe these questions are querulous in tone, revealing Israel’s deplorable ignorance. If not, they at least betray the nation’s bankrupt spiritual condition. Other scholars believe these questions counter God’s indictment of Israel and show Israel’s willingness to give all to be restored to Him.

The Israelite asked, “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” (v. 6). He was asking what sacrifice God required him to bring in worship, so he could please God. If God would reveal His demands, the Israelite was ready in his devotion to present the type of sacrifice that would satisfy the Lord. The burnt offering, unlike other offerings, required that the whole animal be presented as a sacrifice. A one-year-old calf was more valuable than a younger calf because time and expense had been invested in the animal.

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The Israelite should have known what God demanded of him, for it was revealed in the Mosaic Law (Dt. 6:5; 10:12). God demanded obedience rather than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6) and wanted His people to walk in justice and trust Him (1 Sam. 12:14; Hos. 12:6). Even today, the Lord is more concerned with an individual’s character and conduct than with sacrifice.

Once again Micah summarized what God demanded of His people. His statement is a model of the Israelites’ duty toward man and God. First, “to do justly” means to maintain honest and just relationships with one another as revealed in the Mosaic Law (Ex. 20—23; Mic. 2:1–2, 8–9; 3:1–2, 9–11). Second, “to love mercy” (Hebrew, hesed) expresses an attitude of loyal, covenant obedience. In divine love, God made a voluntary covenant with Israel in which He promised to be obedient to the provisions made in covenant partnership with the nation. Likewise, the Israelites were voluntarily to manifest the same attitude of loyal love and obedience to God and their fellowman. Third, “to walk humbly with thy God” means they were to live circumspectly and wisely in following God’s will. Micah warned the Israelites not to be careless by doing things their own way, but to do all things carefully, according to God’s will. If they lived according to God’s Word, they also would treat their fellowman with justice and love.

God’s requirements for Israel were not negative, but positive. If followed, the Israelites would have enjoyed full lives that pleased God. God required much more from them than bringing animal sacrifices in
worry. The Lord required total commitment from the heart, as revealed in His Word.

**Prosperity Repudiated**

After presenting Judah with God’s standards, Micah exposed the corruption of Jerusalem. The prophet denounced Judah’s disloyalty and dishonesty: “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city [Jerusalem], and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it” (v. 9). Micah advised the people to listen closely and heed what God had to say. For God had appointed a “rod” (a nation used as an instrument of His wrath) to bring judgment on Judah.

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Judgment will come on the nation for three reasons. First, merchants had dishonestly and deceitfully acquired and accumulated wealth: “The treasures of wickedness [are] in the house of the wicked” (v. 10). Second, merchants had used irregular weights in doing business: “the scant measure that is abominable, . . . the wicked balances, . . . the bag of deceitful weights” (vv. 10–11). Third, the inhabitants were wicked: “For the rich men are full of violence [lawlessness], and the inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth” (v. 12). Injustice, insult, and a lack of integrity permeated Judaean society. The wealthy set society’s pattern in deceiving and defrauding the people.

**Punishment Rendered**

Judah’s sins brought God’s judgment. The punishments Micah was about to mention had already started to be felt. First, sickness came on the people as a result of sin: “I make thee sick” [literally, “have made”] . . . [and] desolate because of thy sins” (v. 13). In Deuteronomy 28, Moses listed all the afflictions and destruction Israel would experience if she turned from serving God.

Second, they will go hungry: “Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee” (v. 14; cf. Lev. 26:26).

Third, their storehouse of food will be rifled by enemies: “And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver” (v. 14; cf. Lev. 26:16–17; Dt. 28:33).

Fourth, they will sow crops but will not reap a harvest because they will be taken captive and not allowed to eat the fruit of their labor: “Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; . . . tread the olives, but . . . not anoint thyself with oil; and sweet wine, but . . . not drink wine” (v. 15; cf. Dt. 28:39–40).

Fifth, their sin is repudiated because they followed the sinful practices of Omri and Ahab, the two most evil kings in Israel: For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and your inhabitants an hissing; therefore, ye shall bear the reproach of my people (v. 16).

Under these two kings, Baal worship flooded the land of Israel (1 Ki. 16:21—22:40). Even Judah followed Ahab’s wicked counsel. As a result, Judah will be made desolate; and its people will be hissed at, that is, held in derision or ridiculed by the world (cf. Lam. 2:15–16). They will suffer reproach, or be disgraced and despised during their captivity.

Like Judah, we each need to ask ourselves, “What does the Lord require of me?” The answer is the same. We who have trusted the Lord for our salvation need to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. Is this the testimony of your life before God and your fellowman?

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Previously we examined the senselessness and consequences of idol worship. Here we will examine spheres that are subject to the sovereignty of the true and living God.

**Angels**

God’s significant relationships with the angels indicate His sovereignty over them. God created the angels, signifying that He is their sovereign.

In eternity past, God determined to have a Kingdom that He would rule as King. He created two major types of personal subjects for His Kingdom. First, He created an enormous host of angels to serve Him primarily in the heavenly realm of His universal Kingdom. The apostle John saw hundreds of millions of angels around God’s throne in heaven (Greek text of Revelation 5:11). The prophet Daniel saw a similar spectacle (Dan. 7:9–10).

Because the angels were created by God, they owe their existence to Him. They are not self-existing beings. In Psalm 148:2–5, all of God’s angels are commanded to praise the Lord, “for he commanded, and they were created” (v. 5). In addition, the apostle Paul declared that angels were created (Col. 1:16).

God holds a position of authority over the angels, signifying that He is sovereign over them.

God created angels with different degrees of intelligence and power, established them in ranks on the basis of these differences, and organized them similar to the way armed forces are organized. Thus God is called “Lord of hosts” in the Old Testament (Ps. 24:10). The Hebrew word translated “hosts” means “armies”; therefore, God is “Lord of armies.”

The holy angels constitute a powerful, heavenly army (or armies) that is divided into legions (Mt. 26:53); is under the command of other angels; and wages angelic warfare (Rev. 12:7). Thus God’s title Lord of armies indicates that He is the Commander in Chief of the angelic armies of heaven.

Angels obey God’s commands, revealing that God is sovereign over them.

King David wrote, “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure (Ps. 103:20–21).

Angels worship and adore God, signifying that He is sovereign over them.

The apostle John saw the four beasts, twenty-four elders, and all the holy angels worship God in heaven (Rev. 4:8–11; 5:13–14; 7:11–12). All of God’s angels are commanded to praise Him (Ps. 148:2). The multitude of angels who appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem praised God and ascribed glory to Him (Lk. 2:13–14).

God has authority to judge the fallen, evil angels, indicating that He is sovereign over them.

God has already administered some forms of judgment on these angels. For example, He cast the magnificent, wise, “anointed cherub that covereth” (Ezek. 28:14) from His heaven to the first heaven above the earth because that exalted angel became consumed with pride and became God’s great enemy, Satan.
primarily in the heavenly realm of His universal Kingdom, He created the earth and then made man, the second type of personal subject. God gave man dominion over all the earth (Gen. 1:26–29). That act of God reveals the original form of government He ordained for the earth—a theocracy. In a theocracy, God’s rule is administered by a representative. God appointed the first man, Adam, to be His representative. Adam was responsible for administering God’s rule over the entire earthly province of His universal Kingdom.

After God completed the creation of His Kingdom, He evaluated everything as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). No part of His Kingdom had yet turned against Him. But later His most exalted angel became consumed with pride and turned into God’s enemy, Satan. Satan began a revolt to make himself like God, the Most High (Isa. 14:12–14). Since God was the ultimate sovereign of the universe, Satan wanted to be that ultimate sovereign. Since God had a Kingdom He ruled as sovereign King, Satan wanted to rule a kingdom as sovereign king. Since God had angelic and human subjects serving Him in His Kingdom, Satan wanted angelic and human subjects serving him in his kingdom. But, since Satan was only a creature and not the Creator, he lacked the ability to create angels and humans. The most he could hope for was to persuade God’s angels and humans to join Him in his revolt against God.

Satan persuaded a significant number of angels to join him. Thus the Bible refers to “the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7–9). He also succeeded in getting Adam and Eve, the first humans, to do the same (Gen. 3:1–6).

God’s purpose for history—the ultimate purpose—is to glorify Himself by demonstrating that He alone is the universe’s sovereign ruler. Satan’s purpose for history is to make himself the sovereign ruler of the universe.

History

God has a purpose for history and will fulfill it, indicating that He is sovereign over history.

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Because God’s representative, Adam, defected from Him, the theocracy was lost from the earth; and Satan usurped the rule of the world system away from God. He and his forces have dominated the world system ever since. Thus Satan indicated that he has authority to give the rule of the world system to whomever he wishes because it had been handed over to him (Lk. 4:5–6). Jesus called Satan the ruler of this world (Jn. 14:30), Paul called him “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), John declared that the whole world lies in wickedness (this
could also be translated “in the wicked one,” 1 Jn. 5:19), and James indicated that anyone who is devoted to the present world system is God’s enemy (Jas. 4:4).

Now there were two spiritual kingdoms operating in the universe—God’s Kingdom and Satan’s. Satan revolted to make himself the ultimate, sovereign ruler of the universe. But God already was that ruler, and there can be only one. Thus the only way Satan could accomplish his goal would be to overthrow God and usurp His position by waging war against Him and His Kingdom. That war has continued throughout the course of history. It provides the key to understanding history’s ultimate purpose.

Satan’s purpose for history is to make himself the sovereign ruler of the universe. God’s purpose for history—the ultimate purpose—is to glorify Himself by demonstrating that He alone is the universe’s sovereign ruler. To fulfill that purpose, God must crush Satan by ridding the world of him and his kingdom rule and then restoring His theocracy to the earth. If God does not restore His theocracy for a significant time before Earth’s history ends, then He will be defeated by Satan within the scope of this present Earth’s history. Thus the Millennium is absolutely essential for God to fulfill His purpose for history.

For God to restore His theocracy, He must have a human representative, an “Adam,” who will administer His rule over the entire earth. God has such an Adam. His name is Jesus Christ, “the last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). The theocracy was lost from the earth because the first Adam defected from God. Jesus Christ will return to the earth in His Second Coming as the last Adam to restore the theocracy and administer God’s rule over the entire earth. Jesus’ incarnation was necessary for this event to happen.

How will God crush Satan by ridding the earth of him and his kingdom rule? He will use a combination of the Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ. Throughout the seven-year Tribulation, God will systematically devastate Satan’s kingdom by unleashing three series of judgments on his earthly domain (Rev. 6—18). The last series will culminate with Christ’s Second Coming, the complete end of Satan’s rule, and the restoration of the theocracy. Thus, when the last series will be unleashed with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, great voices in heaven will proclaim, “The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (for a thousand years on this earth and throughout eternity on the new, eternal earth, Rev. 11:15).

After the Tribulation, Christ will come from heaven as God’s warrior to complete the work of crushing Satan and his kingdom (Rev. 19:11). He will rid the earth of Antichrist, the False Prophet, all the political rulers and armed forces of Satan’s kingdom (Rev. 19:19–21), all unsaved survivors of the Tribulation (Mt. 13:40–42, 47–50; 24:37–41), Satan (Rev. 20:1–3), and all evil angels (Isa. 24:21–23).

Then Christ will restore the theocracy to the earth. As the last Adam, He will administer God’s rule over this entire earthly province of God’s universal Kingdom for the last thousand years of its history (Rev. 20:4–7). “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth” (Zech. 14:9).

As a result of crushing His enemy Satan and restoring His theocracy to this earth, God will have fulfilled His purpose for history and thereby demonstrate that He is sovereign over it.

ENDNOTE


Renald E. Showers is an author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
A message on the wreath from the family of Bill Hyde of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, adorns the waiting shed, the site of the bombing, as an airport worker places another wreath next to it outside the Davao International Airport in Davao, southern Philippines. Hyde was one of the twenty-one people killed in the blast that also wounded more than a hundred others in the worst bombing incident in this city.

In his book, Their Blood Cries Out, author Paul Marshall shared this observation: Years ago, I drove up Bathhurst Street on my way to work in Toronto. I would pass synagogues of varying strictness, but each had a sign for the passing cars, “Remember Soviet Jews.” I did remember, since I was reminded every working day. Christians too need to be remembered. Where are the signs on the churches?1 Where are the signs indeed? Jewish people remembered and fought for the freedom of persecuted Jewry in Russia until the wall came down and the floodgates to freedom opened.

Placing “Remember Persecuted Christians” signs in front of our churches may unsettle a few squeamish believers as they prepare for an uplifting time of morning worship, but it is clearly time for us to become “unsettled” about the lot of thousands of fellow believers beyond our shores. Killing innocent Christians is the new blood sport of choice in a growing number of countries, and the line of martyrs lengthens with every passing day.

On a morning early last March, Bill Hyde, 59, a twenty-four-year veteran missionary to the Philippines, went to the airport in Davao City to pick up a missionary family returning from a trip abroad. While he was huddled in a shelter outside the airport waiting for a downpour to pass, an explosion ripped through the shelter, killing Bill Hyde and twenty other victims. Nearly 150 others were wounded, many of them seriously. Among the wounded were Barbara Stevens, wife of missionary Mark Stevens, and their ten-month-old son, Nathan, who suffered a deep shrapnel wound to his liver.

“Bill was the type of person who had a passion for going out to the hard-to-reach places to train Filipinos to start churches,” said former missionary Don Phelps. “His conviction was great and there was no place beyond the reach of God’s Spirit—and Bill’s truck!”

No doubt the Muslim fanatics who killed this soul-loving servant of God rejoice to have done so. But in the end, they only succeeded in depriving their own people of someone who cared more about them, their eternal destiny, and personal well-being than the killers themselves.

In Israel the fourteen-year-old daughter of an American Baptist
couple recently boarded Egged bus number 37 for the trip home from her school in Haifa. That particular bus was filled with children, young students, and Israeli soldiers. At 2:17 P.M. a twenty-year-old Hamas suicide bomber sitting in the back of the bus detonated his explosives belt and set off a blast heard for miles. Among the fifteen victims who perished immediately (two more have died since) was the fourteen-year-old girl, who had never handled a gun, threw a grenade, or shouted hate-filled slogans at Palestinian children. She was just going home from school. Stepping aboard that bus ended her life and changed her parents’ lives forever.

Much could be said about the seemingly mindless insanity that stakes out the innocent for murder and mutilation. It is a sickening manifestation of the world we live in. But that is not really the objective of this article. Our objective is to drive home the question that Paul Marshall asked himself on Bathurst Street in Toronto: “Where are the signs on the churches?”

Where are they, indeed?

**ENDNOTE**


Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.

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**News From a Biblical Perspective**

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Don’t be left wondering what’s happening in the Middle East. Join the Tape-of-the-Month family today—and be informed!
The Iraq encounter has clarified precisely where major nations stand on tyranny and the prestige and power of the United States and Israel. President George W. Bush made his assessment of the UN’s power and lack of conviction to act on its own resolutions. Security Council members were asked, for all practical purposes, to stand and be counted. The majority cowered behind accusations that the United States was becoming an imperialistic, go-it-alone, international “cowboy.”

Thus, to many in both the capitals of Europe and American and European news agencies, as well as in the eyes of homegrown anti-American “activists,” the leaders of the United States and Great Britain became the enemies of humanity; and Saddam Hussein and his cadre of killers became the victims. One journalist spoke for a host of liberal thinkers when he said, “By launching an illegal, unsanctioned invasion of a sovereign nation, the U.S. has abandoned its moral standing. We are, by definition, a rogue state.”

Our critics ignore the fact that we were dealing with a mass murderer of epic proportions—one who stuffed people who disagreed with him into plastic shredders and fed what was left of them to fish. Saddam Hussein manufactured, used, and intended to use more weapons of mass destruction against nations that had no quarrel with the Iraqi people. He was delusional to the point of believing he had communed with Nebuchadnezzar, the ancient ruler of Babylon. It is well known that Saddam chose to dub himself, “The New Nebuchadnezzar.” The man’s atrocities would fill volumes and place him on a plane with history’s most notorious and dangerous international criminals.

Which brings us to the issue of “moral authority.” It is strange indeed to hear people of questionable motive accuse President Bush of lacking the moral authority to act in defense of our national interest and world civilization. It is stranger still to hear less than moral people in the entertainment industry criticize the leader of a nation that saw more than three thousand innocent people incinerated and slaughtered on September 11, 2001. Equally bizarre are the disapproving voices of amoral individuals in the media pontificating about a moral standard they themselves don’t believe exists. In their studied opinion, Saddam Hussein had as much or more moral authority to commit his atrocities as Western leaders have to fight for democracy and peace.

Is a double standard being applied here—a standard that democracies like America and Israel are held to while others are not? The answer is yes, and there is a reason for it.

In a March 20 article titled “Democracies and Double Standards” that appeared in the Internet Jerusalem Post, Editor-in-Chief Bret Stephens commented,

“World opinion” holds the US, and Israel, to a higher standard than other countries. This is a patent double-standard that harshly penalizes the occasional sins of the good guys while indulging the manifold sins of the bad guys. . . . All the same, perhaps it is just as well. The world may hold the US and Israel to a higher standard, but so do Americans and Israelis themselves. It is this that has made both nations not only powerful but exceptional.

The reason the United States and Israel can be held to a higher standard is the indispensable undergirding of our societies by the Word of God, on which our Judeo-Christian system of moral, ethical, judicial, and social conduct is based. Therefore, the essence of our democracies is spiritual enlightenment, not primal brutality. If we forfeit this essence, we, too, will descend into the pit.
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God took Bath-sheba’s infant son, who was conceived in adultery. Yet, in His mercy that endures forever, He gave her another. Scripture says King David “comforted Bath-sheba, his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon; and the LORD loved him” (2 Sam. 12:24).

Here, for the first time, God declared Bath-sheba the legitimate wife of King David, sanctified the marriage, and blessed it. In His infinite mercy and love, He not only gave Bath-sheba another son, He gave her son supremacy over his older brothers by declaring Solomon the heir to the throne. Later David would say, “And of all my sons (for the LORD hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon, my son, to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel” (1 Chr. 28:5).

Bath-sheba not only became the queen mother, she became a direct ancestor of Jesus the Messiah through Solomon and, also, through her son Nathan (1 Chr. 3:5; Lk. 3:31). She is one of only four women listed in Christ’s genealogy (Mt. 1:6).

Bath-sheba remained with David the rest of his life (another twenty years or so) and bore him four sons (1 Chr. 3:5). She was one wife among many and witnessed family turmoil that today would be labeled dysfunction of the worst kind. Although God loved David, forgave him, and blessed him, He also kept His promise that the sword would never depart from David’s house because he had murdered Bath-sheba’s husband, Uriah, and taken Uriah’s wife.

Interestingly, there is no condemnation of Bath-sheba anywhere in Scripture. The sin is
always ascribed to David alone, perhaps because Bath-sheba, as a relatively powerless woman in an Old Testament economy, was caught in the web of another’s making and submitted to a relationship, believing she had no choice. David, however, spun the web by deliberately and callously breaking three of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. . . . Thou shalt not covet . . . thy neighbor’s wife” (Ex. 20:13–14, 17).

The Mosaic Law provided no way to rectify this situation through sacrifice. David deserved to die. Even so, God extended mercy but meted out His discipline; and its effects spread throughout the family, including to his wife.

First, David’s eldest son, Amnon, sexually assaulted his own half-sister, Tamar. Tamar was so devastated she spent the rest of her life as a spinster in the home of her brother Absalom (2 Sam. 13:20). David, however, did nothing to punish Amnon, who deserved to have been killed (Lev. 18:9, 29). Consequently, Absalom, who loved his sister so much he named his own daughter after her (2 Sam. 14:27), had the deed done himself (13:29). Then he fled to his and Tamar’s grandfather, the King of Geshur (13:37; 1 Chr. 3:2).

Absalom returned home three years later. But David, who was not harsh enough with Amnon, was too harsh with Absalom and refused to restore their relationship. Consequently, Absalom fomented a rebellion that sent David fleeing for his life.

In all probability, Bath-sheba and her children fled with him because the Bible says, “And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, who were concubines, to keep the house” (2 Sam. 15:16).

In the end, Absalom was killed. David, tormented by grief and possibly by his miserable failure as a parent, wept aloud, crying: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (18:33). All this because of his sin with Bath-sheba.

Bath-sheba appears again in Scripture shortly before David’s death, when he was about 70. True to form, she is ever the submissive woman who does as she is told; and David is still the negligent parent. Adonijah, Absalom’s brother and the oldest of David’s living sons, began boasting that he would become king—even though he knew the kingdom was to go to Solomon, “for it was his from the LORD” (1 Ki. 2:15). David did nothing to stop him. So Adonijah threw a party, ostensibly to celebrate his ascension to the throne. When Nathan the prophet learned what was transpiring, he instructed Bath-sheba to tell David, now old and sick.

Bath-sheba obeyed. In what was probably one of his finest moments with his wife, David declared to Bath-sheba,

As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, Even as I swore unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead, even so will I certainly do this day (1:29–30).

While Adonijah was off with his guests, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet crowned Solomon. Approximately twenty–one years after God took her son who was conceived in sin, He crowned her other son king of Israel.

Bath-sheba appears yet once more. David was dead, and Adonijah apparently still held out hope that he could usurp the throne. Adonijah asked Bath-sheba to persuade Solomon to give him Abishag, a beautiful young woman who had attended David. Bath-sheba was evidently naïve in the ways of the world and did not understand that Adonijah’s request was an attempt to undermine her son. In the culture of that day, Abishag was the king’s property. If he did not want her, no one else got her either. Solomon angrily denied the request and solidified his kingdom by having Adonijah killed (2:24–25).

But Bath-sheba’s entrance into Solomon’s presence provides a beautiful glimpse into the relationship between mother and son. The Scripture says, “And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother; and she sat on his right hand” (2:19). Although Bath-sheba was now one widow among many in the palace, she was the only widow who was the mother of the king.

It is written in the book of Galatians, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (6:7). Unfortunately, the one who sows often is not the only one who reaps. The minute David sowed seeds of sin, Bath-sheba’s life and the lives of David’s children were changed forever. But even as God is holy, righteous, and just, so is He merciful. His mercy endures forever, and He dispenses it graciously to anyone

Lorna Simcox is senior editor for The Friends of Israel.
No to America Yes to Osama

Palestinian Authority (PA) Arabs made no bones about whose side they were on during the recent war in Iraq as tens of thousands took to the streets waving flags and pictures of Saddam Hussein and calling for Iraq to bomb Tel Aviv with chemical weapons even as President George W. Bush was making plans to give them a state of their own.

They burned American flags and unfurled pictures of Osama bin Laden, hailing him as a hero. Sheikh Ibrahim Mudayris, speaking live on PA television from a mosque in Gaza called, “O Allah, support us against our enemies. O Allah, destroy our enemies. O Allah, destroy America and Israel,” ARUTZ-7 reported.

On the same day, official PA Radio broadcast a live sermon from the al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount, in which Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, the PA-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem, denounced “the criminal United States” and “rancorous Britain.” Both broadcasts violate President Bush’s June 24, 2002, condition that the PA “end incitement to violence in official media.” The administration supports creating a Palestinian-Arab state and gives Palestinian Arabs $150 million in American taxpayer money each year.

French Jews Flock to Paris Aliyah Fair

ARUTZ-7—Over 2,000 Jews from all over France attended the Jewish Agency’s mega-Aliyah Fair in Paris recently. The event was held under heavy security due to the recent wave of anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish institutions in France.

The fair featured 45 stands set up by Israeli industries, mortgage banks, municipalities, educational institutions, the Jewish Agency, and the government. Visitors received first-hand information on employment, housing, and educational options available to prospective immigrants in Israel. Aliyah (immigration to Israel) from France last year—2,500 Jewish people—was more than double that of the preceding year, although the rate is down so far in 2003.

The Jewish Agency reports that anti-Semitic incidents in France have risen sharply. On March 11 a woman student in Aix-en-Provence was attacked and beaten, and a Star of David was carved into her arm. On March 22 two Jewish youths participating in a HaShomer HaTza’ir youth movement activity were beaten by a mob participating in an antiterror demonstration. Two days later, a small fire was discovered in the rear of a synagogue in Cachan, and the same week vandals stoned a woman entering the Garges-les-Gonesse synagogue. The synagogue of Massy was firebombed in late March.

PA Arabs pose as Israelis and get free medical care

ARUTZ-7—The phenomenon of Arabs taking advantage of Israeli taxpayers by pretending to be Israeli-Arab citizens and receiving health care services in Israeli hospitals is ever-increasing.

The deceitful technique works as follows: An Arab resident of a Palestinian Authority-controlled area arrives at an Israeli hospital with an ID card belonging to an Israeli-Arab family member. He or she signs a few forms and in return receives high-cost medical care, such as operations, medicines, and hospitalization. All this occurs without him or her having paid one penny into the Israeli health care, tax, or income tax systems.

Many PA Arab mothers also then receive the Israeli government’s birth grant, a one-time payment of over $280 for each child born to an Israeli (five times that amount for twins).

Ironically, even when doctors or other medical staffers come across such a case—discovering the truth when a woman is in labor, for example—they are unable to take action because Israeli law requires them to provide treatment to someone who has entered their care, without regard to the circumstances.

The deception can have far-reaching consequences. If a baby born to a non-Israeli Arab is registered as having been born to an Israeli-Arab, the latter will continue receiving monthly stipends from the Israeli government until the child is 18.

Natural gas deal in works

Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and British Gas may soon finalize an agreement to drill for natural gas in what are believed to be vast gas fields off Gaza, the Associated Press has reported.

The deal was put on hold more than two years ago because of Arab-Israeli fighting.

The plan calls for Israel to buy much of the gas and for the money to go into an account under the control of Palestinian Finance Minister Salam Fayad in an effort to keep it from getting into the hands of terrorists.

Fayad was appointed in June 2002 after complaints about Arafat’s corrupt administration.
and Israeli charges that some government funds were funneled to terror groups.

British Gas reportedly did not want to drill without having an assured Israeli market. The Palestinian market alone is considered too small.

The project will take about three years while British Gas installs a $400-million pipeline to pump gas to Israel. The deal will also enable a Palestinian gas-powered electricity plant to begin operating. Palestinians currently receive electricity from Israel.

Electronic labels may end bar-coding

Eldat Communication Ltd., a high-tech Israeli company with a state-of-the-art infrared electronic labeling system, has contracted with a company in France to supply its electronic shelf labels (ESL) to one of the largest markets in Europe.

Eldat’s two-way remote system includes a processor and liquid crystal display and can update prices on whole categories of products, eliminating all need for bar coding.

Eldat signed an agreement to supply electronic price tags to one of the largest marketing chains in Europe, with more than 1,500 stores in France, the United States, Poland, South American, Taiwan, and Thailand.

Eldat is scheduled to supply two million price tags by June of this year. In Southeastern France, an entire region has committed to the system.

ESL technology also enables stores to switch between old and new currencies, as when the European Union adopted the Euro last year. Stores with the ESL system made the switch easily.

So far, Eldat has sold more than 3.5 million ESL systems in Europe and Japan. But American store managers feel the $5 to $6 price per tag will have to drop to $2 to $3 before American retail chains will adopt ESL technology.

**Ancient stone tablet could be from Joash**

_Bridges for Peace_—Israeli geologists have examined a sandstone tablet detailing repair plans for the Jewish Temple of King Solomon. The tablet bares an ancient Hebrew inscription attributed to Jehoash (also known as Joash), king of Judea in the late ninth century B.C.

The inscription describes the renovations carried out by Jehoash in the first Temple in Jerusalem. The find is about the size of a legal pad, and its text is similar to the biblical description found in 2 Kings 11—12.

If authenticated, it would be a rare piece of physical evidence confirming biblical narrative. It could also strengthen Jewish claims to a disputed holy site in Jerusalem’s Old City that is now home to two major mosques. Muslim clerics insist, despite overwhelming archaeological evidence, that no Jewish shrine ever stood on the site.

The origin of the stone tablet is unclear, making it difficult to establish authenticity.

The Israeli daily _Haaretz_ quoted an unidentified source as saying it was uncovered in recent years during Muslim renovations at the Temple Mount. From there, it reached a major antiquities collector in Jerusalem, _Haaretz_ said.

In the text, the king tells priests to take “holy money . . . to buy quarry stones and timber and copper and labor to carry out the duty with faith.”

“If the work is completed well, the Lord will protect His people with blessing,” reads the last sentence of the inscription. The Jerusalem collector has declined to come forward, and David Zailer, a lawyer for the collector, would not say where the tablet was found or give any further details.

If this tablet is authentic, it could deliver a knockout blow in two separate areas of dispute by (1) validating the Bible as the history of Israel and Judea and (2) affirming the existence of the Jewish Temple, which is closely related to who controls the site today.

Hershel Shanks, editor of the Washington-based _Biblical Archaeology Review_, said the tablet, if authentic, would be “visual, tactile evidence that reaches across 2,800 years.”

**Message to El Al: Go private or go bankrupt**

_Arutz-7_—Transportation Minister Avigdor Lieberman told transportation and aviation journalists at a Tel Aviv press conference that state-owned El Al Israel Airlines has only two choices before it: privatization or receivership (a form of bankruptcy). “There is no third choice,” he said.

Israel’s world-famous flag carrier has been “almost” put on sale several times over the past ten years. “In this period of economic troubles, Israel has no choice but to privatize the airline,” Lieberman said, calling on El Al’s management and employees to understand that the government “cannot continue to support the airline.”

The first issue of El Al shares on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange is due shortly. A draft prospectus will be presented to underwriters and regulators before an evaluation of the company is completed in the next few weeks. Although consecutive governments have been committed to a complete sale of El Al, analysts predict that Israel will ultimately retain control of the airline, via a “golden share,” to ensure that the airline maintains a freight capacity for the country and continues to fly even in times of emergency.

How these and other uniquely complex issues, including the long-standing ban on flights on Shabbat and the airline’s most-extensive but costly security procedures will play out under private ownership, is an unknown.

Despite the heavy drop in incoming tourism and export traffic, El Al succeeded in narrowing its losses by 72 percent this past year, from $85.2 million in 2001 to $23.7 million in 2002. “El Al’s management has gone through receivership once. I do not recommend that they try it again,” Lieberman noted in his press conference, but expressed confidence that “buyers will be found, since the airlines has a reputation, and good professional capabilities.”
When the weather is nice, many people come out on the streets; and we have nice conversations. In fact, you can meet people here from all over the world and hear many different languages spoken.

Before our recent elections, I was outside when several Russian immigrants came over to speak to me. Some of them know me and enjoy talking to me because I speak their language. With them were others who were trying to persuade them to vote for certain candidates. I could see the Russians were troubled. So I asked, “What are your problems?”

The immigrants began to tell me: “Soon we will have to vote in the government elections. It is our duty as Israeli citizens. But we don’t know for whom to vote. And many people come to us, trying to persuade us.”

We have many political parties in Israel, and elections can become confusing. “Yes,” I said, “we are rich in political parties. If they were products we exported, we would be the richest people in the world!” And who are coming to these immigrants? People from a political party that would have us give away our land to our enemies.

I asked them, “Do you believe in God? Do you believe what He told the people of Israel and, most important, what the Lord said to Abraham about this land of Israel? It is all clearly written.”

So I showed them Genesis 13:14–17; 15:18–21; 17:7–8, and 19. “Here is written what God promised,” I said. “God also fixed the borders of the land from the River of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates. And you are thinking about giving all this to our enemies?”

Now the immigrants began to wake up and listen carefully. Some of the men trying to persuade the Russians know the Bible, but they only know half the truth. “You cannot do such a thing,” I told these men. “You cannot give to our enemies the land God gave us, because it is written, ‘The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good’” (Prov. 15:3).

Then one asked, “How do you know the Bible?”

“Much more is written in the Bible than this,” I said. “And it is an evil thing to know the Bible and not keep God’s commands. Abraham never went to Bible school. Neither did the many who came after him. But they believed in the living God. By wanting to give away our land, you have admitted that you do not believe God. So the Lord will punish you.

“What is even worse,” I told them, “is that you are trying to erase a chapter of the Bible and forbid our people to read it.”

“About which chapter do you speak?” one asked.
So I began talking to them about Isaiah 53. Finally we arrived at the subject I wanted to discuss! You cannot begin with such verses because these people do not believe the Bible. They looked at me suspiciously, then said, “We know what you are trying to do. We know in whom you want us to believe.”

This time I asked, “To whom was the Bible given in the beginning?”

They replied, “To the Jewish people.”

“So,” I said, “we received God’s Word through Moses. And we promised to keep it. How did it come about that we, God’s Chosen People, now go to others and say, ‘This is not truth’?” Some of the immigrants began to understand what I was saying. They had come close to losing the right direction, but now their eyes were opened.

A campaigner asked me, “Why do you come and try to speak about faith? You are not Orthodox.”

“The Orthodox,” I said, “will not come to you with a Bible. They will come to you with many books that contain old rabbinical traditions. But you can see that we have spoken for several hours, and all I have shown you has come directly from God’s Word. Many people here in Israel read the book of Psalms. There it is written, ‘All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God’ (Ps. 98:3). Why shall we not also see the full truth about our Savior?”

The campaign workers, who were against me at the beginning of our conversation, had become friendly. One replied, “We must go now. But we will meet another day and continue our conversation.”

As they were leaving, the Russians turned to them, and one said, “We have nothing more to speak about. We now know the truth.”

1/2 Page ad for Prophet Isaiah book by Waveline