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"To present Him to the Lord."
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TIME TO RENEW?
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All single copies $4 each

ABOUT THE COVER
The central themes of this issue of Israel My Glory are divine judgment and personal responsibility. Unfortunately, these topics are seldom dealt with in this get-rich, feel-good era. Art Director Tom Williams has created a cover that graphically depicts these subjects. The balance scale is a powerful reminder of the Lord’s word to Belshazzar in ancient Babylon during the days of the prophet Daniel: “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” The balances still serve as a severe warning to individuals and international leaders who have forgotten God. Dark clouds further reinforce the message: Judgment is coming. Accountability will be required. Now is the time to prepare!

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CREDITS (All uncredited images are from FOI archives)
Cover & pages 6, 18, 21, 24: Thomas E. Williams.
Page 11: B. G. Silberstein/Super Stock
Page 30: Hanan Isachar /Corbis
Page 31: AP/Wide World Photos, Stringer
Page 32: Reuters New Media, Inc./Corbis

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The Voice of the Devil

It started in the Garden of Eden. His voice was soothing and persuasive; the objects of his intentions, receptive; and, as a result, we live today with some very regrettable consequences. I speak, of course, of the Devil in serpent’s clothing. His conversation in that leafy paradise was the introduction of *incitement* into the human experience (“the act of provoking to action, stirring up, or urging on”). The Luciferian brand of incitement used on our first parents was designed to provoke them to rebel against their Creator. Regrettably, it succeeded.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4).

Satan’s direct challenge to the words of God followed the provocative question, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1).

Finally, the great deceiver got to the bottom line: “Ye shall be as God” (Gen. 3:5).

Thus came the introduction into the human experience of the big lie: You can have absolute liberty, live forever, and attain equality with the God of the universe. In other words, you can have it all!

Variations of the big lie forged in the Garden of Eden have been used for centuries to incite people to commit unspeakable atrocities.

Variations of the big lie forged in the Garden of Eden have been used for centuries to incite people to commit unspeakable atrocities.

We know well the awful story of the Holocaust, which some are trying to wish away as they attempt to chronicle positive aspects of what Hitler did for the German people. What we need to believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator; by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.”

Hitler’s anti-Semitic madness never abated. Hours before his suicide in a bunker in Berlin, he was still ranting against his target of choice, the Jewish people.

A centerpiece of the Führer’s overall strategy to build a Reich that would last 1,000 years was the Hitler Youth. He firmly believed that if he could capture the minds and unqualified loyalty of children, they would never escape his control. Deranged as he was, Adolph Hitler was not the first person, nor the last, to adopt such a strategy. It is inevitably catastrophic in its consequences—first for those incited to feel such hatred and then, of course, for the objects of their fury.

Regrettably, the Palestinian Authority is using the same tactic to incite children to a life of hatred and violence—a fact not reported to any significant degree by the Western news media. Textbooks in Palestinian schools are used as primers on how to hate and destroy Israel. Summer camps have been turned into indoctrination centers and training sites to teach the art of killing and the use of military weapons. Such indoctrination and incitement emanate from the top down and cannot be denied. Their words speak for themselves.

Yasser Arafat: “And they shall kill and be killed. Our blood is a small price to pay for the cause.”

remember are the words from Hitler’s own mouth that incited seemingly normal people to maim, mutilate, and murder their fellow human beings in horrifically astonishing numbers.

Early in his infamous rampage, Hitler wrote, “Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?”

“Hence today,” he raved on, “I
An Islamic preacher in a service at a mosque: “They are the ones who must be butchered and killed. Wherever you are, kill those Jews and Americans.”

A Palestinian teenager: “Palestinian mothers bear their children in order for them to become martyrs.”

A 10- or 11-year-old schoolboy: “But if I starve, I will eat the flesh of my conquerors. Beware of my hunger and rage.”

A Palestinian preschooler telling her class: “Oh, my sister, sing constantly of my life as a suicide warrior.”

(All of these quotations came from official, Palestinian television footage or have been taped by other agencies. These tapes are available for confirmation of the above information.)

Once again we are reminded of the words of the late Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, who believed that there will be no peace in the Middle East until the Arabs stop teaching their children to hate Jews. We agree.

If responsible leaders in the Palestinian community and Muslim world truly want peace and acceptance as peace-loving people, here’s a way to make a good start: End the radical Islamic incitement that trains children to search out and destroy people whom thugs and terrorists have marked for annihilation.

We have great empathy for the imagery of Rachel, the ancient daughter of Abraham, weeping for her suffering children. Today we also weep for the Palestinian Arab children who are being used and abused by their morally bankrupt leaders. If the rest of the Muslim world does not agree with such a tactic (it claims it does not), then it must step in and stop the incitement and violence. If it does not do so, the losers will be the Palestinian children who will be doomed to lives of frustration and violence. Muslims who genuinely want true peace will never be taken seriously or trusted fully in the Western world until they actively oppose radical Islamic terrorists who are listening to the voice of the Devil.

An Islamic preacher in a service at a mosque: “They are the ones who must be butchered and killed. Wherever you are, kill those Jews and Americans.”

A Palestinian teenager: “Palestinian mothers bear their children in order for them to become martyrs.”
Downsizing the State of Israel
Downsizing is a well-known word to the children of this generation. It is a game industrial giants delight to play: Whittle down industries and businesses in one country and send the work to the Third World where it can be done more profitably, all the while creating huge, international, economic empires at the expense of nationals who are forced to teeter along the poverty line. You may say this scenario is an inevitable fact of life in the last days, and you would be quite correct.

However, not all downsizing involves industry. In the Middle East, it involves geography; and it is one reason why believers must make sure they have at least an elementary grasp of the prophetic Scriptures.

An Illuminating Spotlight on Israel

Over the past 100 years, Israel has become a focal point, first in “sizing up,” then in being forcibly “sized down.” The process is a prime example of the widespread disregard for Scripture and the historical, legal, and moral bankruptcy rampant in the new millennium.

All other considerations aside, Israel became a modern state mainly because people who believed the Book understood that the Jewish people had an inherent, God-given right to a home in the ancient land of their fathers. Some will dispute this contention on the grounds that many of the Jewish leaders instrumental in the formation of the state were secular Zionists. That is true. But it is equally true that, while these men were coming to the fore, so were others who came alongside to help make Israel a reality because they were convinced by what they believed was a biblical mandate.

Theodor Herzl, recognized to this day as the father of modern Zionism, was himself a secular journalist. Herzl, particularly while covering the infamous Dreyfus trial in Paris, was perceptive enough to accept the fact that time was running out on the Jews of Europe. Alfred Dreyfus was a Jewish officer in the French army who was convicted of treason based on falsified evidence in 1895. He was publicly degraded amid an enormous outburst of anti-Semitism and carted off to incarceration on Devil’s Island. Dreyfus was later exonerated, but Theodor Herzl had seen the future. Half a century later, his vision would become the nightmare of the Holocaust.

The father of modern Zionism was not without an equally committed Christian Zionist who came alongside to help pave the way for a Jewish state. His name was William H. Hechler, a man of rather odd proclivities but thoroughly given to the return of the Jewish people to Palestine. Following their meeting on March 10, 1896, Herzl described his new friend as “curious and complicated . . . given to pedantry, undue humility, and much rolling of the eyes.” Strange he may have been, but Hechler was a man with a wide circle of connections in the courts of Europe. As a result, he introduced the Jewish journalist to kings and princes who extended him a hearing for his dream of a return to Zion.

William Hechler was certain he understood what he was witnessing:

We are now seeing the stirrings of the bones in Ezekiel’s valley: O! may we soon see the glorious outpourings of the spiritual life predicted in Ezekiel 36. The religious element is, according to God’s word, to become the inspiring force, and, I think, I can see that it is the religious faith in Zionism, which is now influencing the whole nation of the Jews . . . what food for reflection to every thoughtful student of the Bible and history.

In the end, Theodor Herzl’s assessment of Hechler concluded: He counsels me superbly, and with unmistakable genuine good will. He is at once shrewd and mystical, cunning and naive. So far, with respect to myself, he has backed me up in quite a wonderful way. . . . I would...
wish the Jews to show a full measure of gratitude.³

The Restoration Movement

There were, of course, other staunch supporters—Jews and Gentile Christians—who stood fast by the promises of the prophetic Scriptures. A Jewish source had this to say:

*It should be noted that the idea of a Jewish return to Palestine had long found strong support among prominent Christians in Western Europe, particularly in England. Eminent men and women lent themselves to what came to be known as the Restoration Movement, which favored the ingathering of Jews to their Homeland on the ground of Christian doctrine. . . . in all likelihood they helped pave the way for the British acceptance of Zionism later on.*⁴

Among the better-known members of the Restoration Movement was the prominent social reformer, Lord Shaftesbury. It has been written about him, “He never doubted that the Jews would return to their own land. This was his daily prayer, his daily hope. ‘Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem’ were the words engraved on the ring he always wore on his right hand.”⁵

In December of 1917, General Edmund Allenby wrested control of the Holy Land from the hands of the Ottoman Turks. As commander of the British Expeditionary Force, General Allenby led a mounted procession toward the Jaffa Gate of the Old City to receive the keys of surrender on behalf of the British Empire. Upon arriving at the gate, the general suddenly reigned in his horse and dismounted. When asked by startled attendants why he had done so, Edmund Allenby declared, “Because it is not fitting that I should ride mounted across the stones where My Lord carried His cross.”⁶

It was out of this spirit of reverence for the Holy City and the inherent rights of the Jewish people to occupy their ancient homeland that, on November 2, 1917, the landmark Balfour Declaration was handed to the Jewish leader Lord Rothschild. It was a letter authored by British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour, an associate of the Restoration Movement; and it declared Britain’s commitment to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The dream of these men was virtually as broad as the land grant given to the patriarch Abraham millennia earlier. Accordingly, when the government officially dignified the British mandate for a Jewish homeland, it was, indeed, crafted along the lines of the biblical grant. (See map A.)

Other Men With Other Minds

By 1921, other men with other minds were on the scene. In deference to Arab Sheik Abdullah, Britain truncated the Jewish
homeland and awarded approximately 75 percent of the land to the Arabs to establish the Palestinian state of Transjordan (now Jordan). (See map B.) In 1947, when the United Nations decided to repartition what was left, it carved the remainder into three segments for Arabs; three segments for Jews; and voted to establish the modern State of Israel, sanctioned by international law. (See map C.) Although the Arab states rejected the plan out of hand, Israel accepted it; and the climactic battles of the 1948 War of Independence were joined. The rest is history.

For Israel, there existed the hope that eventually the new nation could find peace with its neighbors and security for its people in the tiny state that was now Israel. However, these were nowhere near the thoughts of the Arab nations, particularly the radical Islamic regimes. They would settle for nothing less than complete possession of the entire area they dubbed Palestine.

Their contention was, and still is, that Israel and the Jewish people stole their land, dispossessed their people, and must be expelled for the sake of the Arabs and the honor of Allah. War was their path of choice, and the majority of them pursue it to this day.

With the inception of the Al-Aqsa Intifada came a declaration that the Palestinians and their brethren in the world of Islam have launched a war of liberation that will, once and for all, put an end to Israel. This is the aim, and the leaders of the movement are unified on the ultimate goal to drive the Jews into the sea.

Unfortunately, we are not living in a day when the vast majority of leaders in the Western world are men of the Bible. Exceptions exist, to be sure. But the method used to evaluate rights in the Middle East does not subscribe to any quantifiable, biblical, historical, legal, or moral standard. The international, secular news media have made the case in favor of the Palestinians, using false premises and emotional sound bites to distort the facts and cast Israel as an unprincipled villain that denies the rights of impoverished people. The sad truth is that the West is buying it. Even members of the evangelical Christian community, many of whom are deprived of consistent, biblical, prophetic exposition, are being duped to accept the liberal media’s line and the Islamic propaganda. In the process, Israel is being further downsized in the name of “peace,” which amounts to nothing more than appeasing violent terrorists who will never be satisfied with receiving less than everything—which means all of Israel.

**Can We Expect Anything Better?**

Yes, we can. First we must recognize that, unless it turns to God, this self-indulgent, look-out-for-your-own-skin generation will not be interested in the fate of our only democratic ally in the Middle East.
Next, we must realize that the prophetic Word tells us to expect as much from the children of a world slipping irreparably into apostasy.

Beyond all this, however, there is hope. Earlier we documented the commitment of Christians who believed in the future restoration and ultimate glory of the Jewish state and the destiny of the Jewish people. These men and women shared a steadfast faith in the coming of the Messiah, the reconciliation of Israel, and the triumph of God’s program. On the bedrock of these eternal truths, we stake our claim. Let the winds of political vacillation blow where they will. These promises are sure. In God we trust. He is our hope. And His plan is the reality that will be ours.

Elwood McQuaid is Editor-in-Chief for The Friends of Israel.

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“And the goat shall bear upon it all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”
— Leviticus 16:22

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The New Testament is explicit that a day is coming when believers “must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). There could hardly be a more sobering reality. Indeed, Daniel Webster, a famous 19th-century American statesman and orator, once said, “The greatest thought that has ever entered my mind is that I will have to stand before a holy God and give an account of my life.” Scripture often appeals to the reality of that day as an incentive to godliness and growth and as a warning against carelessness and spiritual sloth. Thus it behooves believers to contemplate carefully all God’s Word has to say about the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A Summary

Time. Christ will judge the living and dead “at his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:1; cf. Mt. 16:27; Lk. 14:14; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 22:12). More specifically, Revelation 19:8 indicates that when the Lord Jesus descends in glory at the close of the Tribulation period, His Bride (the church) already will have received her reward. In the phrase righteousnesses of saints, the noun righteousnesses is plural, indicating the righteous acts of the saints. The reference is not to imputed righteousness but to those elements of believers’ lives and service that God has tested in the fire and found acceptable—those elements with which the Bride adorns herself in the triumphal march to the marriage banquet. Thus the Judgment Seat occurs in the heavens during the interim between the Rapture of the saints (1 Th. 4:13–18) and the descent of the Lord Jesus in glory (Rev. 19:11–21).
Participants and Purpose. The New Testament is explicit that the “judgment (bema) seat of Christ” is exclusively for believers (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Cor. 5:10). This fact also appears in the allusion to the bema seat. In the world of the New Testament, the bema was a raised platform, usually mounted by steps, and used to make public pronouncements and to award prizes. In the Grecian games, the umpire or referee sat on a bema seat; from that seat, he rewarded the contestants who had run well enough to obtain prizes (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24). The seat usually was not a judicial bench but a prominent elevation from which honor was awarded or withheld. Paul uses the term in this sense (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Thus the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be the eternal destiny of those being judged. All will be believers who came to God, not based on their works (Eph. 2:8–9; Ti. 3:5) but on personal faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Such faith results in a standing of perfect righteousness before a thrice holy God (Rom. 4:4–5). Jude asserted that God is able to present us “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24, emphasis added). The issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the awarding or withholding of believers’ rewards (Mt. 5:12; 6:4; 10:41; 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:14; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12). Indeed, our individual works will be the basis of our judgment (1 Cor. 3:12–15; Rev. 2:23). Some people will “suffer loss,” but they themselves “shall be saved, yet as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15, suggesting a narrow escape from the flames). No doubt, they will be “ashamed before him at his coming” (1 Jn. 2:28).

Identity of the Judge. The Lord Jesus asserted that the Father had committed all judgment to Him (Jn. 5:22). The apostles acknowledged Jesus as “the righteous judge” (2 Tim. 4:8), “ordained by God to be the Judge of living and dead” (Acts 10:42) “without respect of persons” (1 Pet. 1:17; cf. Isa. 11:1–3; Jn. 5:26–27) and in perfect truth (Rom. 2:16; Heb. 4:13; cf. Prov. 15:3; Lk. 12:3). Indeed, He alone is perfectly qualified to sit in judgment. Because He was God from eternity, He can judge with perfect authority. And because of whom He chose to become when He emptied Himself, became obedient to the point of death (Phil. 2:7–8), and learned “obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8), He can judge with perfect sympathy.

The Basis of Judgment. The criteria of judgment are most specifically defined in 2 Corinthians 5:10, where Paul states,

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The verse affirms that the purpose of the bema seat is to reveal the true heart of each believer. (The verb appear means “to be made manifest, laid open for all to see.”) The term translated “bad” in this verse is unusual; it denotes not moral corruption or intrinsic evil but that which is useless, vile, hopelessly good for nothing.

In his earlier Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul characterized such worthless works as “wood, hay, stubble,” which the fire of divine scrutiny certainly would consume (1 Cor. 3:11–15). He contrasted such works to “gold, silver, precious stones,” which such a fire would refine. The point is, the Judgment Seat of Christ will demonstrate that some works, though superficially noble and selfless, were born of wicked motives, animated by the desire for self-aggrandizement, and/or empowered by fleshly devices (1 Cor. 4:5). These will be discarded as worthless and ignoble.

In this regard, some confusion exists as to whether every believer’s unconfessed sin will be displayed at the judgment seat. Will a mammoth movie screen be stretched across the heavenlies, so that an astonished world can sit and watch as all the wicked thoughts and deeds done in the secret of a man’s heart and life are replayed as a means of judgment? Absolutely not! God has declared that the sins of believers have been forgiven and forgotten (Ps. 103:12) and that He will remember those sins no more (Heb. 10:17).

But let there be no pernicious solace in this fact for the careless Christian. Such wickedness in the mortal lives of believers will produce shame (1 Jn. 2:28), not because the deeds will be rehearsed before a leering multitude but because believers will
have wasted their opportunities to serve and honor their Redeemer. Unfortunately, once squandered, such opportunities can never fully be regained (Lk. 19:20–26).

Partial, specific criteria for judgment may be found in the “crows” that are identified in the New Testament: (1) the incorruptible crown for those who run the race of life acceptably (1 Cor. 9:25), (2) the crown of life for those who resist temptation (Jas. 1:12), (3) the crown of rejoicing for those who reach others for Christ, (1 Th. 2:19), (4) the crown of righteousness for those who anxiously await the coming of Christ (2 Tim. 4:8), and (5) the crown of glory for the faithful undershepherds (1 Pet. 5:4). The word for “crown” in each of these passages is stephanos, the victory wreath given either to signify triumph in the games (1 Cor. 9:25) or as a public honor for a distinguished act of courage. Such a crown is not valuable in itself; it is precious, however, because it reveals the delight of the judge who awarded it. By contrast, diadem (also translated “crown” in most English versions; cf. Rev. 19:12) speaks of a kingly crown. The crowns promised to faithful believers—those seen on the heads of the worshipers surrounding Yahweh’s throne (Rev. 4:4) and which those worshipers ultimately cast before the throne of the Lamb (Rev. 4:10)—are stephanoi, laurel wreaths granted faithful believers by a righteous and loving Judge.

**A Difficulty**

For many Christians, the concept of the judgment seat presents a difficulty. They feel that the notion of striving for rewards—of struggling toward maturity for the sake of being honored and rewarded at the bema seat—is intrinsically and irretrievably self-serving and thus an ignoble and unbiblical concept. I would respond to such a concern with three simple propositions.

First, the Bible is explicit: There will be a day of accounting; some will receive rewards while others will suffer loss (i.e., not receive the rewards they might have received [1 Cor. 3:14–15]). Furthermore, Scripture appeals to those rewards many times as incentives to faithful, Christian living (Mt. 5:12; 6:4; 10:41; 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:8; Col. 2:18; 3:24; Heb. 11:26; 2 Jn. 8).

Second, the issue is not competition but faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2). The “runners” in this race are not competing against one another; they are struggling against a common enemy determined to frustrate every attempt to run according to the rules (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 4:4). One believer does not strive to defeat another. We take no joy in the fall of our brethren. The objective is not to excel beyond all others but to please the One who will sit on the bema seat at the conclusion of the event.

Third, the rewards believers seek are not baubles to be displayed in some celestial trophy case; they are a greater capacity to serve and honor God in the Kingdom to come. This is suggested in Revelation 4:10 where the victors’ crowns are cast at the feet of the Lamb. Clearly, the crowns do not glorify the recipient; they glorify the Giver. Further, Jesus made this point directly in the parable of the nobleman and the stewards (Lk. 19:11–27). The faithful stewards did not receive trophies to display; they received charge over a number of cities (vv. 17, 19).

The popular misconception of heaven as a place of uninterrupted indolence and slumber contributes to the consternation that arises from the perceived selfishness of any sort of reward program. If the eternal life promised to believers were only a place to parade medals, it would be difficult to conceive of any selfless reason to strive after those medals. The life to come, however, is a busy, productive Kingdom, ruled over personally by Messiah Jesus. Faithfulness in the life we are now living will produce maturity and selflessness and thus qualify us for greater responsibility in that eternal Kingdom. Sin will have been removed from the human experience, so there will no longer be jealousy or resentment. But there will be various capacities to serve and honor the King. A true heart of love for that King should cause us, in this mortal life, to long for and strive toward serving Him to the best of our abilities, so we will be unashamed when He returns and can receive bountifully from His hand at the bema seat.

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**The issue is not competition but faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2). The “runners” in this race are not competing against one another; they are struggling against a common enemy.**

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Douglas Bookman is a Bible Teacher and National Conference Speaker for The Friends of Israel.
As a teacher of Scripture in a college classroom, I sometimes am asked “what if” questions. Each year, when I teach Genesis, someone inevitably raises a hand and asks, “What would have happened if Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit?” My lighthearted answer is, “We would not be in this class right now!” My serious answer, however, is, “The question does have relevance.”

The Old Testament prophets described a future that looks very much like a reversal of sin’s curse. These godly sages foresaw a world without war, poverty, or natural disasters. They looked
forward to ecological balance characterized by an animal kingdom in harmony with human beings. They envisaged all the nations of Earth worshiping God and living in fellowship with one another. Israel will be regathered and restored to her land, said the prophets, and will lead the Gentile nations in worship of God, who will reign from Jerusalem. Thus the coming Kingdom of God on Earth will be “like the garden of Eden” (Ezek. 36:35).

Is this how you might envision the world to come? Most people, in fact, desire a better world for themselves and their children. Yet the Bible places all those benefits after one great event—the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Before Jesus returns to Earth in glory, an evil leader will direct humanity into a massive rebellion against God and persecution of the Jewish people. This time of Tribulation will conclude when Jesus Himself visibly breaks into human history and returns “with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30). As the undisputed King of kings, Jesus Christ will assemble all living men and women from all the Gentile nations on Earth at that time. Then He will pronounce judgment. Genuine believers will gain His approval and enter the Kingdom. Unbelievers will be condemned and will not. It is this encounter that Jesus describes in Matthew 25.

The judgment that Jesus describes in Matthew 25, however, is for those who are alive at His Second Coming. These individuals, from all the nations of the earth, will consist of both unbelievers and believers. The believers will become the first people to populate the earthly Kingdom. They will consist of righteous Gentiles living with righteous Israel in its restored Kingdom.

The Time Of This Judgment

Jesus declared, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, . . . then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” (Mt. 25:31). This verse clearly describes our Lord’s Second Advent at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. This climactic event will display His powerful reign over the earth. For centuries believers have longed for this visible manifestation of their Savior’s glory; and they still cry, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

This New Testament truth finds roots in Old Testament prophecy. For generations the people of Israel longed for a godly king who would reign on Earth and reverse the curse of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; 49:10). David received God’s promise that, through David’s own line, God would raise up such a ruler (2 Sam. 7). This Davidic Covenant became the bedrock of faith for the future:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth (Jer. 23:5).

Although Jesus came once, His reign of justice on this earth has not yet begun. He spoke of His return when that reign will commence. Then all the prophets’ prophecies will find fulfillment when the Messiah, the son of David, reigns in Jerusalem (Isa. 9:6–7; Hos. 3:4–5; Dan. 7:13–14; Zech. 9:9–10).
How could Jesus evaluate these Gentiles when they never personally met Him on Earth? His response is a shock: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (v. 40).

Who are the people whom Jesus calls “my brethren”? Since the context indicates the time immediately following the Tribulation, they apparently constitute a third group in addition to the Gentile sheep and goats. These “brethren” of Jesus will be the Jewish people. Only Gentile believers in Jesus will dare to provide for their physical needs (food, clothing, and housing) and even visit them in prison.

The true faith of Gentiles who survive the Tribulation will be evidenced by their treatment of Jewish people during the Tribulation period. This mark of true salvation shows the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with His people, their union with Him, and their union with one another. That is why, when the Lord confronted Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, He described Saul’s attack on Christians by saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4, emphasis added).

Salvation, however, is not contingent upon good works. Nowhere does Scripture uphold such a teaching. People are justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). Since the faith that brings salvation comes by God’s free grace, it is no surprise that believers actually are destined and created to do good works (Eph. 2:8–10). Believers are admonished to be concerned for the physical welfare of other Christians:

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (Jas. 2:15–17).

Anti-Semitism will run rampant during the Tribulation. Apart from genuine faith in the Jewish Messiah, no Gentile will dare to befriend a Jew. Yet the bond between believers in Christ runs deeper than race. True Christianity and anti-Semitism are as opposite as righteousness and sin. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 Jn. 3:14). Selfless love for fellow Christians and Jewish people is an act of love for our Savior and Lord.
The Results
Of This Judgment

Jesus said that the righteous will “inherit the kingdom” (v. 34) as well as enjoy “life eternal” (v. 46). These righteous Gentile believers who survive the Tribulation will enter the initial phase of God’s Kingdom, the Millennium, with natural, unresurrected bodies. This generation of believing Gentiles also will begin to populate the earthly Kingdom. They will form the Gentile nations that will worship God in Jerusalem, as prophesied by Isaiah:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob (2:2–3).

At the conclusion of Christ’s 1000-year earthly reign, these believing Gentiles will live for eternity with glorified bodies in the new heavens and Earth.

The goats, whose lack of true faith in Christ will have been evidenced in their persecution of His “brethren,” will be condemned to “everlasting fire,” the same eternal punishment “prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). This time of punishment will have no end. Ironically, the same word, eternal, describes both the bliss of the believers and the condemnation of the accursed.

Long ago God promised Abram, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen. 12:3). These words find their fulfillment in the judgment of the nations. Gentiles who bless the Jewish people during the coming Tribulation will themselves be blessed. And those who do not will regret it forever.

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We live in a world where life moves on, sometimes with equanimity, sometimes with trouble. Unfortunately, many people think life moves on, comes to an end, and that’s it.

That is not it! The Bible teaches that everything we say and do will one day be evaluated. Judgment Day is coming! But there’s not just one judgment; there are seven told about in Scripture.

Believers’ Sins at the Cross

The first is the judgment of the believer’s sins at the cross. To understand this truth is to begin to understand what Christianity is all about. Jesus spoke about this judgment when He prayed, 

Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die (Jn. 12:31–33).

Christ knew He was moving toward His crucifixion. But when Jesus went to the cross, He bore judgment for the sins of mankind. In that moment, God reached through the annals of time and gathered from every broken heart, every dissolute life, and every despairing spirit the sins of all humanity and placed them on His Son. The Bible says, 

For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we...
might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21).

You are saved by the righteousness of God, not by your own righteousness: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti. 3:5).

People talk about Christianity and eternity, yet they don’t understand what either is all about. They say, “When a man lives a terrible life, he goes to hell.” “She is such a wonderful person, she’ll be in heaven someday.” Friend, you don’t go to heaven because you live an honorable life. You don’t go to heaven because you’re sweet, nice, and kind. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

You go to heaven for one reason alone: You have believed on God’s Son as your personal Savior—you have accepted the fact that your sins already have been judged and atoned for by His sacrifice on the cross.

Believers’ Self-Judgment

The second judgment is the believer’s judgment of himself. The apostle Paul spoke about the excesses that had developed at Corinth. Many Christians were drunken and dissolute. So he said, For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:30–32).

As Christians, God calls us to perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It means daily saying yes! to God and no! to the Devil. Spiritual victory isn’t really that profound. It’s attained by causing our lives, choices, and decisions to conform as much as possible to the image of Christ. In Corinth, however, people started to treat the communion service not as a great memorial feast but as a time of personal indulgence. We can be Christians, saved by the grace of God, but still be very real disappointments to the Lord and to His people. In fact, the Bible says, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

The Christian life involves saying no to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn. 2:16) and saying yes to the great purpose of God. It takes spiritual discernment and personal judgment.

Believers’ Works

The third judgment is called the Judgment Seat of Christ:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

The Judgment Seat of Christ is an awesome appointment that every Christian has. Will the issue there be, “Am I saved, or am I lost?” No! That matter was decided the moment you believed in Jesus and took Him as your personal Savior. The issue here will be your works: What have you done for Christ since you were saved?

Can you imagine standing in the towering, magnificent presence of the throne of Jesus Christ? There, before a myriad of believers, Christ will ask you, “What did you do with time and treasure and talent? What did you do with the opportunities I gave you?”

Some will have a great report before the Lord. They will present to Him “gold, silver, precious stones” (1 Cor. 3:12): the gold of a life lived for Christ, the silver of souls won to the Savior, the precious stones of spiritual accomplishment. The Bible says Christ will speak to those individuals and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mt. 25:21).

But the Bible also says some will have only “wood, hay, stubble” to present to Christ. Those materials will disappear in an instant:

And the fire shall test every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire (1 Cor. 3:13–15).

That’s the Judgment Seat of Christ. What an awesome experience!

Judgment of Gentiles (Nations)

The fourth judgment pertains to the Gentile nations:

And before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:32–34).

Jesus Christ is the King of the Jews. He is also the King of the world. And one day, as King of the Jews, He will sit on the throne, judging the nations
of the world. The basis of that judgment will be as follows:

For I was hungry, and ye gave me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Mt. 25:35–40).

Many times people quote this passage as a mandate to care for the children of the world. I don’t violently object to this use; but if we are going to stay with sound exegesis, we must recognize that Christ is not talking about all the children of the world. He is talking about the least of these my brethren. And the brethren of Christ are the Jewish people. During the early days of the Millennium, the nations will be required to answer the question, “What have you done to the Jewish people?”

5 Judgment of Israel

The fifth judgment is the judgment of Israel. Israel has come under many cycles of discipline. But one final judgment is yet to come. When Christians are taken out of the world at the Rapture of the church, the Tribulation will begin. The Tribulation is “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). During those days, Israel will come under the terrible oppression of the Antichrist. The Jewish people will be so pressed, so chagrined, that they will ask, “Why is this happening? Where is God now when we need Him?” They will come to the end of their rope. So the Bible says,

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1).

The Jewish people will recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and all Israel will be saved. That will be quite a moment! “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom. 11:15).

6 Judgment of the Angels

Scripture also mentions a judgment that will come on the angels. Angels are great in power and might—much stronger than humans. God created them to be His special servants, but some rebelled. About them, Jude wrote,

And the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6).

Those angels are already in prison, awaiting that Judgment Day. Who will judge the angels? Well, the apostle Paul wrote,

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2–3).

We Christians will judge the angels. That’s a fantastic statement, but it’s true. The angels will stand before you and me in judgment. To fully understand this fact gives us a glimpse of the exalted position of redeemed humanity in eternity.

7 Judgment of the Wicked Dead (Great White Throne)

Finally comes the judgment of the wicked dead. It’s hard to read this passage without becoming greatly moved concerning the awful fate of the wicked:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12, 15).

The Bible states this fact with finality. Think of the people running around in today’s world saying, “I don’t need God. He’s totally irrelevant. What has He ever done for me?” What inane and preposterous arrogance!

He’s given you life. He’s offered you salvation. He is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb. 7:25). We need to hear it again: If a person knows Jesus Christ as personal Savior, he’s going to heaven. If he doesn’t, he will be cast into the lake of fire. At the Great White Throne, the question will be, “Is my name written in the Book of Life?” It gets there by believing in Jesus Christ and accepting Him as your personal Savior. If you haven’t yet said that wonderful yes! to Jesus Christ, do it today. I pray that you will.

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I won’t mind going to hell. All my friends will be there.” With this flippant comment, along with others like it, some unbelievers joke about eternity. Comedian Woody Allen once commented, “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying!” Everyone dies, however; and what the Bible says about eternal punishment reveals that it is no joking matter.

The concept of judgment day often crops up in conversation. Before I became a Christian, I thought God had two gigantic heavenly scales and judgment day for me would be when He weighed all the bad things I did on one scale and all the good things I did on the other. Whichever was heavier would determine whether I went “up” or “down.” The Bible, however, reveals that the truth is quite different. What most people refer to as the “great judgment day” is what the Bible calls the Great White Throne judgment.

 Appropriately, the description of this last great assize appears toward the end of the Apocalypse—the unveiling of “things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1).

The Person on the Throne (v. 11)

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

The word throne appears often in the Apocalypse, but we must distinguish between its different appearances. For example, the throne in chapters 4–5, as well as the one in chapter 7, is a throne of grace and mercy. Here stand the redeemed. They have been washed by the blood of the Lamb and offer their worship, praise, and thanks (5:8–10; 7:9–17). The throne in 20:11–15, however, is one of justice and pun-
will question the Lord's decisions because, as Paul states clearly,
  But after thy hardnes and impeni-
  tent heart treasurest up unto thy-
  self wrath against the day of wrath

The word death probably refers to the location of the body,
whereas hades refers to the location of the immaterial part of
man—his soul.

The Persons
About the Throne
(w. 12–13)

And I saw the dead, small and
great, stand before God, and the
books were opened; and another
book was opened, which is the
book of life. And the dead were
judged out of those things which
were written in the books,
according to their works. And the
sea gave up the dead that were in
it, and death and hades [hell]
delivered up the dead that were in
them; and they were judged every
man according to their works.

The people described here, at the
Great White Throne, are the
unsaved dead. No one who has
received Christ as his or her person-
al Savior will be there. There is no
blowing of the trumpet, no white
robes, no clean linen, no garments
of righteousness—all characteristics
of the presence of believers. (See 1
Thessalonians 4:13–18 and Revela-
tion 19:8.) Scripture teaches that the
final resurrection will not be a gen-
eral resurrection but a resurrection
with two stages—one for the saved
and one for the unsaved.

Consider this statement of Jesus:
Marvel not at this; for the hour is
coming, in which all that are in
the graves shall hear his voice,
And shall come forth: they that
have done good, unto the resurrec-
tion of life; and they that have
done evil, unto the resurrection of
damnation (Jn. 5:28–29).

Earlier in chapter 20, the resur-
rection of believers was described:
And I saw thrones, and they sat
upon them, and judgment was
given unto them; and I saw the
souls of them that were behead-
ed for the witness of Jesus, and
for the word of God, and who
had not worshiped the beast,
neither his image, neither had
received his mark upon their
foreheads, or in their hands;
and they lived [came to life]
and reigned with Christ a thou-
sand years. But the
rest of the
dead lived not again [did not
come to life] until the thousand
years were finished. This is
the first resurrection (vv. 4–5,
emphases added).

If the believers are raised
before the Millennium and the
text states that the rest of the
dead (the unsaved) will not
come to life until after the
Millennium, then these dead
ones in Revelation 20:12–13 must

ishment. Those who stand there will
face only judgment. There we find
no praise, no joy, no singing—only
silent gloom as wrath is displayed
and judgment meted out.

And who will sit on the throne of
judgment? Scripture makes it clear
that it will be the Lord Jesus Christ.
Jesus Himself said in John 5:22, “For
the Father judgeth no man, but hath
committed all judgment unto the
Son.” It is the Lord Jesus, the
despised Nazarene and lowly car-
penter, who will occupy the judge’s
“bench” on that day. The apostle
Paul stated, “I charge thee, therefore,
before God, and the Lord Jesus
Christ, who shall judge the living
and the dead at his appearing and
his kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1). He will
judge the living in the Judgment of
the nations at the beginning of His
Millennial Kingdom (Mt. 25:31–46);
and at the end of the Kingdom, He
will judge the “dead” at the Great
White Throne.

How appropriate that the One
who died so we should not suffer
punishment actually will judge
those who have rejected His grace.
In a powerful sermon on this
text, the great 19th-century Eng-
lish preacher, Charles Haddon
Spurgeon, declared,
He shall be the judge. He shall
lay open the thoughts and
intents of the heart. There will be
no witness needed to convict
you, for the Judge will know all
the evidence. The Christ whom
you despised will judge you; the
Savior whose mercy you tramp-
ped on, in the fountain of whose
blood you would not wash, the
despised and the rejected—it is
He who will judge you.¹

Since the Judge will be the Lord
Jesus Christ, you can be sure the
judgment will be fair and just,
unlike the one He received at the
hands of Pontius Pilate. No one

¹The word death probably refers
to the location of the body,
whereas hades refers to the
location of the immaterial part of
man—his soul.

and revelation of the righteous
judgment of God, Who will render
to every man according to his
deeds. For there is no respect of per-
sons with God (Rom. 2:5–6, 11).
be the unsaved dead mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Death and judgment are the great levelers. No privilege of rank or wealth will separate these people awaiting a common doom. No matter what their place was in society, if they died without Christ, they shall stand exposed before the Judge on that fateful day. The genteel but unconverted prince will be right beside the pagan savage.

Revelation 20:13 says “death and hades” will give up the dead they have harbored. The word death probably refers to the location of the body, whereas hades refers to the location of the immaterial part of man—his soul. As with believers in the first resurrection, the material and immaterial will be reconnected, not to receive glory but to receive “shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). Even the icy depths of the oceans will “give up” those who were buried there.

The second death is for all those who were born only physically in their lifetimes. They were not born again spiritually (Jn. 1:13; 3:6–7). The second death will involve a conscious and tormenting existence in the lake of fire. The term lake of fire is a metaphor for a place that is too horrible to be imagined. Human language can only compare it to something we can faintly comprehend. The reality will be far worse than anything we can think of.

But what is the “book of life” mentioned in verse 15? And what is its relationship to the “books” (scrolls) that were mentioned in verse 12? The book of life contains the names of all who have been saved from the second death. They belong to Jesus Christ, the Lamb who purchased their redemption.

Other references to this book are Revelation 13:8 and 21:27:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And there shall in no way enter into it [the New Jerusalem] anything that defileth, neither he that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

The “books” of 20:12 record all the evil deeds of the individuals standing before the Great White Throne. They are judged according to their “works,” or deeds. When their names are not found in the book of life, they will have no basis for objecting to the fairness of the Judge for omitting them. The “other” books will give evidence from their lives to demonstrate their culpability and the fact that they deserve the punishment they receive in the lake of fire.

The “books” will play one more role also: They will indicate the degree of punishment these people will receive. Although all will be “lost,” the measure of their punishment will coincide with the degree of spiritual truth they received and rejected in their lifetimes. (For a fuller understanding of this aspect of eternal punishment, see Matthew 11:23–24; Luke 12:41–48; and Hebrews 10:29.)

These passages are not meant for mere debate. They are meant to be pondered deeply by everyone who reads them. What is your condition before a Holy God, my friend? Will you be at this judgment, trembling before your Maker at the Great White Throne because you never received His grace provided for you in His Son, the Lamb? I urge you to trust in the blood of the Lamb today, so you will not have to face His wrath tomorrow. The compassionate words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon are my closing words to you:

See now, my whole weight leans on the front of this platform. Should this rail give way, I fall. Lean on Christ in that way. If you get a grip of the cross, and stand beneath the

The Purpose of the Throne (vv. 14–15)

And death and hades [hell] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The “first death” is physical death—something we all must experience (except, of course, for the generation of believers who will be transported into the presence of the Lord via the Rapture). The first death involves separation of the soul from the body. The second death (described in Rev. 20:14–15), will be the eternal separation of unbelievers from God. It has been said, with appropriate candor, “If you are born once, you will die twice; if you are born twice, you will die only once.”

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Chosen for What?

Were you ever the first one onto the baseball diamond but the last to be chosen for a team? Or worse, maybe you were never chosen at all? Maybe, though, you were the best player on the field and were always chosen first. For some of us, it was routine for a teacher to choose us to run an errand or perform a special service. Then again, others among us might identify better with the person who volunteered for everything, yet never was selected to do anything. What a wonderful feeling it is to be chosen—to realize you made the team or were selected for something special. Conversely, the pain and humiliation that sometimes come to those who are not chosen can be immense.

Hopefully, this illustration helps explain why the biblical concept of a chosen people evokes such varied responses. Reactions run the gamut from vehement denial and displeasure to excitement and euphoria. And between these extremes, you can always find the people who ask, uninterestedly, “What difference does it make anyway?” This spectrum of reactions comes from Jewish people, Gentiles, and Christians.

Many years ago in Hebrew school, I learned a fanciful Talmudic story that tried to explain how the Jewish people came to be “chosen.” God supposedly went to all the
nations of the earth, individually, to offer them the opportunity to embrace Torah (five books of Moses). Each nation refused to accept the offer because of a difference or disagreement with some aspect of the law contained in the Torah. But when God came to little Israel with His offer, the response was swift and immediate. It was received with great joy.

The textbook we used during those days was titled *A Treasure Hunt in Judaism*, published by the Hebrew Publishing Company. It explained the concept of Israel as God’s Chosen People this way:

Think of the world as a large classroom, with God as the teacher. He calls a small pupil, named Israel, to the front of the classroom and says, “Here are ten rules I want the class to observe. Will you please write them on the blackboard so that everybody may see and copy them.” And while the class copies from the blackboard, the Teacher sits in a back seat and watches the progress of His pupils. And when I think of this, I get the feeling that perhaps we should be called the Chosen Pupil, who is trying his best to help his Teacher.

Both explanations helped me to understand clearly that it was God who took the initiative. He chose us. It was up to us to understand the great privilege we had and the responsibility that came with it in order to please Him. Noted author Abraham Hershel affirmed this truth when he said, “There is no concept of a chosen God but there is the idea of a chosen people.”

Some Jewish people disagree. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983) was one. Kaplan founded the Reconstructionist movement within Judaism. He urged his fellow Jews to erase the concept of chosenness, reasoning that being a special people set the tone for a racist ideology and denoted arrogance. In addition, he believed such thinking was divisive, causing distrust and difficulties between people groups.

Many Jewish people agree with Rabbi Kaplan. They either have seen or experienced terrible persecution and know that for hundreds, even thousands, of years, the Jewish people have felt the sting of anti-Semitism. That is why so many Jews invariably ask, “If this is what being ‘chosen’ means, why couldn’t God have chosen somebody else?”

Other Jewish people see the idea of chosenness from an entirely different perspective. A first-century rabbi stated bluntly that God did not choose Israel but, rather, Israel chose God.

Why would Jewish people believe they are the Chosen People? In his well-known book *This is My God*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Herman Wouk, an Orthodox Jew, gives the clearest and most accurate explanation: “It is the Holy Bible that so describes the Jews. The quotations run into the thousands, the theme rules Scripture.”

One such verse is Deuteronomy 14:2:

> For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Martin Buber, a noted Jewish philosopher and theologian, believed that the Hebrew term *am segula*, translated “peculiar people” (Dt. 14:2; 26:18) and “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5), was derived from the Akkadian word meaning “cattle” or “property.” He explained that, just as cattle was man’s treasured or chosen property in nomadic times, so Israel was considered God’s treasured possession.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch commented on the verse in Deuteronomy this way:

> God’s choice of Israel does not imply Israel’s exclusive possession of divine love and favor. On the contrary, it means that God has exclusive claim to Israel’s service. The most cherished ideal of Israel is that of universal brotherhood. Israel’s character as the chosen people does not involve the inferiority of other nations. It was the noble obligation of the God-appointed worker for the entire human race.

When the Jewish people think about “chosenness,” they emphasize the spiritual aspect:

> Being God’s chosen people carried with it greater spiritual responsibilities and implied more demanding standards and the necessity to develop a spiritual vigor worthy of those whom God had selected to preserve and transmit his revelation to all the world.

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1. Many biblical Christians recognize that God not only chose the Jewish people . . . but that He has a plan and

That is why so many Jews increasingly ask, “If this is what being ‘chosen’ means, why couldn’t God have chosen somebody else?”

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> God’s choice of Israel does not imply Israel’s exclusive possession of divine love and favor. On the contrary, it means that God has exclusive claim to Israel’s service. The most cherished ideal of Israel is that of universal brotherhood. Israel’s character as the chosen people does not involve the inferiority of other nations. It was the noble obligation of the God-appointed worker for the entire human race.

5. When the Jewish people think about “chosenness,” they emphasize the spiritual aspect:

> Being God’s chosen people carried with it greater spiritual responsibilities and implied more demanding standards and the necessity to develop a spiritual vigor worthy of those whom God had selected to preserve and transmit his revelation to all the world.
Thus the idea that Jews believe they are superior to other people is absolutely false. They realize God could indeed have chosen someone else, but He did not. Thus they are obliged to carry out His will and follow His marching orders.

So why did God choose the Jewish people? Again the text of Torah, the Jewish Scriptures, provides the answer:

_The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers (Dt. 7:7–8)._  

God chose Israel based not on her inherent strength but, rather, on her distinct weakness.

According to Jewish thinking, God chose the Jewish people to be the source of light in the world. They were to study the rule of law given to them and obey it—to take the 613 mitzvot (365 “thou shalt nots,” 248 “thou shalt nots”) and incorporate them into their daily lives.

Does this kind of thinking affect the way Jewish people view non-Jews? Is there a Jewish expectation for the way Gentiles are to live before God? Religiously observant Jewish people often believe God has placed a minimal biblical standard on all men. “They [Jews] are obligated to observe the whole Torah, while every non-Jew is a ‘son of the covenant of Noah’ and he who accepts its obligations, is a gertoshave (resident stranger).”

Maimonides, a 12th-century rabbi who is considered one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of all time, declared Gentiles as hassid, or righteous, if they follow these seven laws:

1. Behave equitably in all relationships and establish courts of justice.
2. Refrain from blaspheming God’s name.
3. Refrain from practicing idolatry.
4. Avoid immoral practices, specifically incest.
5. Avoid shedding the blood of one’s fellow man.
6. Refrain from robbing one’s fellow man.
7. Refrain from eating a limb torn from a live animal.

Orthodox Jewish people used to cite these seven rules as their reasons not to “evangelize” or seek converts to Judaism. They felt it is better for someone to be a righteous Gentile than an unobservant Jew. It is no wonder that a Yiddish proverb states, in utter simplicity, “It is hard to be a Jew.”

Noted rabbi and author Joseph Telushkin wrote, _Because of the Jews’ small numbers, any success they would have in making God known to the world would presumably reflect upon the power of the idea of God. Had the Jews been a large nation with an outstanding army, their successes in making God known would have been attributed to their might and not to the truth of their ideas._

Historically, evangelical Christians have heartily embraced the biblical teaching that God chose the Jewish people. For them, such issues are settled in God’s Word. If God said it, they believe it, and that’s all there is to it. The fact that God chose a people to be His own neither intimidates nor infuriates them. To the contrary, many biblical Christians recognize that God not only chose the Jewish people and calls them “the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8) but that He has a plan and purpose for them, just as He has a special plan and purpose for His church.

David’s attitude before he became king reflects how so many Bible-believing Christians feel toward the Jewish people. David was doing his best to keep one step ahead of being murdered by King Saul. He had numerous opportunities to kill the king. But he refused to do so. Why? He gave the reason to his nephew, Abishai, Joab’s brother, in 1 Samuel 26:9: “Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?”

David recognized Jehovah as the Sovereign of the universe. God was in charge, and He could choose any king He wanted. David was more fearful of Jehovah than of any Israelite king. He was not going to interfere with God’s choice.

Christians should feel the same way about Israel. We know that the same God who chose Israel also chose individual Jews and Gentiles to become part of the body of Christ through faith. Like Israel, there is nothing inherent in any of us that would merit our being chosen and receiving the forgiveness of sin that comes with salvation. It is strictly the gracious and merciful act of an infinite and loving God who is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Ultimately, the most important question, perhaps, is not, “Why did God choose the Jewish people?” but, “How can I become chosen?” The answer to that is easy:

_If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9–10)._
Richard Halverson, former chaplain of the United States Senate, once wrote, “There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, nor is there anything you can do to make God love you less! His love is Unconditional, Impartial, Everlasting, Infinite, and Perfect.” This description aptly expresses God’s love for Israel.

God appears in this chapter as a loving Father grieving over Israel, His rebellious son. Israel’s rebellious attitude was inexplicable in view of all that God had done for the nation. God birthed Israel; and through the centuries, He nourished, instructed, and protected the nation. But Israel proved to be an ungrateful son who insulted God by acts of immorality, idolatry, and indifference. Like any wayward son, Israel needed chastening. In His sovereign love, God corrected the prodigal nation in order to restore it to a loving relationship with Himself.

**God’s Call**

God demonstrated His love for Israel from its inception as a nation. Hosea said, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (v. 1). God is pictured as a tender, loving father who adopted Israel to be His son and entered into a covenant relationship with the nation. His choice of Israel was an act of pure, sovereign grace, not due to any merit within the nation (Dt. 7:6–8). He displayed His love by delivering Israel from 400 years of Egyptian bondage. The prophets repeatedly used this deliverance as an illustration of God’s power on behalf of His people.

The phrase *called my son out of Egypt* also is applied typologically to Jesus Christ in Matthew 2:15. Israel, the covenant people, is the type; and Jesus the Messiah is the antitype. Both Israel and Jesus went to Egypt for protection—Israel because of a severe famine in Canaan during the days of Joseph; Jesus because of Herod’s threat to kill all children two years and under in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Hosea’s statement is a historical reference to Israel’s physical redemption from Egypt. Matthew’s statement refers to
Jesus the Redeemer who provides spiritual redemption from the bondage of sin and eternal death.

The nation responded to God’s love like a wayward son. To correct Israel’s waywardness, God sent prophet after prophet who pleaded with the nation to repent and return to the Lord. Hosea said, “As they called them [the prophets sent by God], so they [Israel] went from them; they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to carved images” (v. 2). The more God called, the more Israel rejected Him and rebelled against His love. Turning a deaf ear to God’s prophets, the nation chose to practice idolatry instead.

God’s Care

Like a loving father, God had cared tenderly for the nation during its journey through the wilderness: I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid food before them (vv. 3–4).

This statement of guiding and guarding Israel through the wilderness is tender and touching. The Lord took Israel by the arm to guide the nation over difficult obstacles, so it would not stumble and get hurt. When Israel fell during times of testing, God was there to heal its wounds.

God’s love and compassion for Israel is like that of a herdsman who cares for his heifer. The herdsman repositions the yoke’s strap under the ox’s jaw, enabling the animal to eat its food with ease. With a handful of grain, the herdsman bends down and tenderly feeds his animal. God did not lead Israel like a dumb animal, with ropes and halters. He guided Israel with cords of tenderness, kindness, and love; compassionately and continually, he eased the nation’s strain and burden. For 40 long years, God graciously provided food and water for Israel during its wilderness wanderings.

Israel was more than willing to enjoy God’s generous gifts and gracious love. But like an ungrateful son, Israel took God for granted, disobeying His commands and disregarding His will.

God’s Chastening

Although God is long-suffering, His patience has limits. As any good father should, He had to correct wayward Israel for its ingratitude and rebellion. Hosea said, “He (Israel) shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return” (v. 5).

Egypt is a symbol for the new type of exile Israel would face in Assyria. With the collapse and capture of Israel’s political leadership, the king of Assyria would control the nation’s government. Thus Israel would have no king (cf. 10:3, 7, 15). Because the Israelites refused to repent, their bondage at the hands of Assyria would be far more severe and last longer than their time of slavery in Egypt.

Judgment hovered over Israel like the legendary sword of Damocles and, in God’s time, would strike the nation: And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches [i.e., villages], and devour them [i.e., demolish the bars and bolts of their gates], because of their own counsels (v. 6).

The sword would whirl around as it swept the land, devouring Israel’s cities, villages, and defenses. Destruction would come on Israel because it went to Canaanite deities, such as Baal, for deliverance from Assyria, rather than going to the Lord.

Another reason for Israel’s destruction was its continual backsliding. God said, “And my people are bent [hung up on] to backsliding from me; though they [God’s prophets] called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him” (v. 7). No one in Israel heeded the prophet’s message because sin had lured the nation into such deep moral apathy that its ears were dull of hearing.

God’s Compassion

The Law of Moses required that every rebellious son who would not obey his father or heed his reprimand be put to death (Dt. 21:18–21). Israel was such a son.
He flaunted God’s love, took for granted God’s mercy and compassion, ignored the many warnings of judgment, and deserved to be annihilated. But God’s great love for His covenant people would not allow Him to abandon Israel.

God expresses His lament and deep love for Israel in four rhetorical questions:

**How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver [surrender] thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboiim? Mine heart is turned within me; my compassions are kindled together (v. 8).**

Admah and Zeboiim were two cities that were annihilated with Sodom and Gomorrah when God rained fire and brimstone on them (Dt. 29:22–23). Though Israel deserved the judgment of Admah and Zeboiim, God’s heart revolted within Him at such a thought. Instead, He turned from His fierce anger to show Israel mercy and compassion.

God has an eternal relationship with Israel. He chose her, called her, cared for her, and chastens her when necessary; but it is not His divine purpose to destroy her:

**Thus saith the L ORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the L ORD (Jer. 31:37).**

God will never annihilate Israel because of the promises He made in the Abrahamic Covenant. Although Israel will be severely punished for her sin, God always tempers His justice with divine compassion and will not obliter ate the nation: “I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not enter into the city” (v. 9). Nor will God return to destroy Israel as He did during the Assyrian invasion. On the contrary, He tempers His chastening with compassion and covenant love, in hopes that His punishment will result in Israel’s restoration and redemption.

Keep in mind that God’s judgment on Israel, His son, is both punitive and remedial. Everything that befell Israel was intended to chasten the prodigal nation back to God. No man can question God’s actions because the Lord is “God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of [Israel].” God always does what is just and right, whether we understand it or not.

Abruptly, the subject switches to a future time when God will summon Israel back to the land for the Kingdom blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. Hosea used a number of metaphors to express Israel’s return: “They shall walk after the L ORD; he shall roar like a lion; when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west” (v. 10). In the past, God destroyed Israel like a roaring lion (5:14); in the future, He will call Israel back to its land with His roar. During the return, “they shall tremble like a bird out of Egypt, and like a dove out of the land of Assyria, and I will place them in their houses, saith the L ORD” (v. 11). No longer will Israel be like a “silly dove” (7:11), flitting around in confusion, but will be like a dove flying home, trembling with excitement, as it returns in haste to its nest. In the future, the people of Israel will return swiftly to their land from all over the world to experience God’s blessing in the Millennial Kingdom. This promise is affirmed by the words, “saith the L ORD.”

Chapter 11 ends with God representing Himself as a man enveloped by Israel’s sin. “Ephraim encompasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints” (v. 12). Hosea had exposed Israel’s unfaithfulness and hypocrisy through lies and deceit. The nation had pretended to worship Jehovah while practicing idolatry. Although the King James Version contrasts the faithlessness and insincerity of Israel to the faithfulness of Judah, Jewish Scriptures render the last verse differently. They show Judah as defiant also. The Hebrew word *rud*, translated “ruleth” (v. 12) means “to wander restlessly” or “to be unruly” against God. Judah, despite all her privileges (Temple, priesthood, covenant promises), was like a restless, unruly animal that cast off all restraints and wandered away from its master—just like Israel. Most commentators accept this interpretation, which seems to be the teaching of verse 12.

On the other hand, God faithfully keeps His covenant promises of redemption and restoration to “the saints” in both Israel and Judah. Likewise, God will bring redemption and restoration to a generation of Jewish people who will come to Him in repentance. In the Kingdom Age, Israel’s sorrow will turn to joy as the once-wayward son experiences spiritual renewal through God’s loving compassion.

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MOTHER RACHEL  
(Part 1)

They come by the thousands, bringing their prayer books, their handkerchiefs, their heartaches and tears. Some weep quietly; others cry uncontrollably. But almost all of them cry. These are the Jewish women who come to the outskirts of Bethlehem to pray at Kever Rachel (Rachel’s Tomb), the third holiest site to the Jewish people of the world.

Often they come by the busload. Sometimes they are barren women who can’t have children. They pray at Kever Rachel, swaying back and forth in traditional Jewish fashion as they recite the Psalms, convinced that God has heard their prayers and they will bear children. Miraculously, some of them do.

Not many holy places remain these days for the descendants of Jacob. The second most revered site, the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives are thought to be buried, is in Arab hands on the West Bank and has a mosque on it. Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus, also in Palestinian hands, was relinquished by the Israel Defense Forces on October 7 last year after the Palestinians stormed it, destroyed it, and eventually hoisted a Palestinian flag atop it. Now it, too, has a mosque on it.

And the holiest site in all Judaism, the Temple Mount, which includes the Western (Wailing) Wall, is today on the precipice of being snatched away from Israel and handed to the Palestinians by a world that couldn’t care less about the Jewish people. So what else is new? It has had a mosque on it for years.

But Kever Rachel is different. Jewish people—particularly the religious women—have revered this site for 3,000 years. In 1995 the Israeli government heeded the enormous outcry of its people and established a yeshiva (Jewish school) there shortly before it ceded Bethlehem to the Arabs. For the first time in 150 years, a Jewish building was erected there. It is called the Yeshiva of Rachel’s Tomb and maintains a continuous, Jewish presence.

But more trouble came in 1996 when the Israelis rioted, stormed Rachel’s Tomb, and tried to capture it. The Israeli government shut down the familiar white-domed site, spent $2 million to build a high concrete wall around it with guard towers, enlarged the prayer area, and reopened it in 1997 on the 11th of Heshvan (November), the traditional anniversary of Rachel’s death and a type of Mother’s Day in Israel.

What is it about Rachel that Jewish women hold so dear? What about Leah? Both built the house of Israel through their children (Ruth 4:11). But no one refers to Leah as Mother Leah. It is only “Mother Rachel.”

Leah and Rachel were the children of Laban, a scheming, greedy, deceitful man who apparently valued sheep and goats more than his daughters. Their story is probably one of the best-known in Scripture—and also one of the saddest.

It began at a well at Paddan-aram in Syria, south of Turkey. Jacob had arrived there after a long journey from his home in Canaan, which he fled after pretending to be Esau and tricking his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing due the first-born. In Paddan-aram, Jacob met his mother’s family for the first time. As he stood by the well, his cousin Rachel approached with her father’s sheep. The Bible says, “When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, . . . Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept” (Gen. 29:10–11). Jacob was 77 at the time. (His age can be determined from Genesis 31:41; 41:46, 53–54; 45:11; 47:9.) Rachel, no doubt, was substantially younger. If she was the age of most marriageable girls then, she could have been as young as 14 when they met.

Laban took his nephew in, and soon Jacob fell deeply in love with the beautiful Rachel. Jacob worked for Laban seven years to obtain Rachel. But when the time came to receive her, Laban substituted her older sister, Leah. So Jacob married Leah, thinking she was Rachel and, the next morning, discovered that he had been deceived. He had reaped what he had sown.

On Laban’s part, it was a crafty move. By withholding Rachel, he extracted seven more years’ labor from Jacob. “Fulfill her [Leah’s] week,” Laban said, “and we will give thee this [Rachel] also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years” (29:27). So Jacob lived with Leah seven days, then received Rachel also (29:28) and worked seven years more. Thus Laban gave Leah to a man who neither wanted her nor loved her (29:30–31); and he pitted two sisters against each other, making them rivals for the affection of one man.

For 13 years, they competed with each other. Leah bore Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. And with almost every birth, she articulated her longing for her husband’s love. Rachel had Jacob’s love, but she could not have his children. The Scripture says, “When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die” (30:1).

(To be continued in the next issue.)

Lorna Simcox is the Senior Editor for The Friends of Israel.
Muslim warriors approach the village of Duma in the Maluku Islands, Indonesia, prior to an attack that killed more than 100 Christians.

The supreme leader of Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban movement warned on Monday that any Afghan converting to Christianity or promoting other religions will be executed. . . . Therefore, all countrymen are seriously notified that any Muslim Afghan will be sentenced to death if he accepts Christianity and has converted to this nullified religion or is seen inviting people to Christianity and Judaism as well as propagating and distributing their books.

The above was reported by both Reuters and the Associated Press on January 8, 2000. This may seem like a strange decree in this new millennium; but it is quickly becoming the order of the day, especially in radical, Muslim-dominated areas. Yet whenever this fact is pointed out, the Muslim community and Western liberal apologists quickly counter by claiming that Islam is a loving, tolerant religion. In many ways, that may be true. But if it is, you must wonder, Why the silence? Why are responsible people in the Muslim world and Western society failing to join forces to stop the slaughter of innocent Christians?

Sometime after this execution edict was announced, an event took place in Afghanistan that speaks volumes. The same Taliban government that issued the edict to execute converts to Christianity and Judaism declared that Buddhist statues, some hundreds of years old, were an offense to Islam. Consequently, they would be destroyed. Protests poured in from all over the world, calling for the valuable artifacts to be saved. They were not, however; and the world press dutifully ran film clips of the explosions that signaled their demise.

Meanwhile, hardly a word was reported on the Taliban order to execute Christians! Evidently, inanimate, stone idols carry a higher value than Christians who are living in the shadow of certain death. It is a chilling sign of the times.

Shortly before I wrote this piece, the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon came to the United States to plead for help for Christians who are suffering in that country. The Washington Post reported on March 9, 2001, that he sought meetings with top U.S. officials. He was refused a hearing. The American Embassy in Beirut and other advisors in Washington reportedly were “nervous about alienating Syria and its Lebanese allies.”

The source of their “nervousness” centered on the requests brought by the religious leader. He was here to ask the United States to protest and bring to public attention the kidnapping and murders of Christians in Lebanon. Obviously, the United States is concerned about maintaining cordial relationships with other nations. And well it should be. But doesn’t the slaughter of innocent Christians count for anything? Aren’t their continued on page 34
Arafat’s war against Israel has shattered nearly as many old certainties as lives. One of the most seemingly solid of the certainties was that no one could attack Israel’s capital and live to tell the tale. Yet what ten weeks ago was both unthinkable and intolerable has now become a matter of everyday routine.

Just before dusk each night, members of the Tanzim, Yasser Arafat’s private militia, invade the Christian Arab village of Beit Jalla. These heavily armed Muslim militiamen enter the once quiet Palestinian controlled town from the south and quickly make their way to its northern edge. There, they commandeer their way into homes, almost all of them owned by Christian families, that offer good lines of sight into the living rooms and kitchens of the Jewish neighborhood of Gilo, on the southern edge of Jerusalem, just across a small valley from Beit Jalla.

Once darkness descends, sometimes even before, the shooting starts. Thousands of rounds of heavy machine-gun fire pour into houses on Gilo’s picturesque Ha’anafa...
It takes Israeli army sharpshooters a few minutes to calibrate their sophisticated tracing equipment to home in on the exact source of the shooting and fire back to prevent any further “collateral damage,” as the Israeli army calls it. The battle rages inconclusively until the militiamen run out of ammunition. Then they pack up and go home.

To date, Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s strategy for dealing with Arafat’s war has prevented the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from doing anything more than respond to specific acts of violence. Heeding White House warnings, Barak maintains that “unleashing” the army to defend Israeli civilians could ignite a regional war. Yet ironically, Barak’s policy of military “restraint” plays right into Arafat’s hands and actually increases the risk of igniting the very war Barak wants to prevent. The Palestinians’ choice of Beit Jalla as the staging ground for attacks on civilians in Jerusalem is anything but random. It is part of a carefully laid and brilliantly executed Palestine Liberation Organization strategy to get the international community, and in particular the United States, to intervene on the side of the Palestinians and impose the “solution” Arafat failed to secure at the negotiating table.

Arafat’s new plan is to get the international community to force Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 lines without the Palestinians making concessions of their own or formally ending their war against the Jewish state. Arafat knows that in order to persuade the international community to deploy a military force that would impose this solution, he must win sympathy. To this end, he was first willing to provoke the killing of hundreds of his own people, the younger the better. The Palestinian Authority, which Arafat controls and the United States funds, offered up to $2,000 to families who “sacrificed” a child in what the Palestinians are calling the “Al-Aksa Intifada,” the war for Jerusalem. Palestinian media and high ranking officials encouraged children to attack Israeli positions far from Palestinian population centers with rocks, guns, and firebombs.

The purpose of these attacks was never to overrun the Israeli positions, only to provoke Israeli soldiers to kill Palestinian children for the benefit of television viewers. By offering up his own people, Arafat was able to cancel all the good will that Barak’s unprecedented Camp David concessions had generated for Israel just weeks before and return Israel to its familiar role of international villain. Throughout the crisis, Arafat has displayed an uncanny ability to transform Israel’s democratic institutions into Palestinian assets. In the uprising’s early days, his scheme of provoking Israeli soldiers to kill Palestinian children proved spectacularly effective at whipping the Islamic world into a frenzy against Israel. While it also went a long way toward convincing the West that Arafat may need international protection, it did not close the deal. What would?

What if Arafat could market the message that Israel was “killing Christians” as effectively as he had sold the world the notion that it was “killing children”? Surely then Arafat’s international protection force would be all but assured.

Thus, every night in Beit Jalla, Arafat orchestrates attempts to induce Israeli soldiers to kill Christians. As obvious as the ploy is to observers here, the yawning question Israelis are asking is, Why on earth does Prime Minister Barak allow himself and his country to be so cynically and dangerously exposed to fulfilling Palestinian objectives?

Almost everyone here agrees that the Israeli army could permanently end the firing on Gilo and the return fire into Beit Jalla in a matter of hours, if not minutes, and perhaps without a single casualty, Christian or Jewish. It could simply close the access roads from the south and deploy paratroopers to secure the streets used by Palestinian gunmen—in short, retake the town. This is no more than any nation on earth
would long ago have done to stop a military assault on its capital city. And it would not only free Israeli citizens from the terror of war; it would also liberate 5,000 Christian Arabs now hostage to Arafat’s machinations.

Rather than precipitating a greater conflict, the retaking of Beit Jalla might be the single most stabilizing action Israel could take, depriving Arafat of the means of provoking a massacre of Christians, while at the same time demonstrating that Israel’s patience has its limits. Barak, unable to respond either to Arafat’s assault in Israel’s heartland or to Hezbollah’s provocations on Israel’s northern border, leads a gun-shy, lame-duck government. Some of its members are saying publicly that the only way the prime minister could muster the strength to take this step would be if he were subjected to coordinated political pressure from concerned Christians around the world, particularly in the United States.

Because Israel’s retaking Beit Jalla would win support from more than 90 percent of Israelis, not to mention the Christians of Beit Jalla, that step would be not only the right thing to do, but also the political shot in the arm the beleaguered prime minister so desperately needs. Israel has long been forced to act under pressure from Islamic radicals. Perhaps it is time that Christians spoke up for themselves.

**Editor’s Note:** Shortly before press time, IDF forces fought a heavy gun battle with terrorists who fired on Gilo from Beit Jalla. The IDF has increased its presence in the area to protect motorists traveling from Gush Etzion to southern Jerusalem.

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**Christian Persecution from page 31**

lives worth serious discussion? Given the silence of the Western media and the political establishments, apparently not.

We already have witnessed the appalling murder of the Nuba Christians in the South of Sudan by the National Islamic Front government in Khartoum. Islamic Sudanese leaders attempt to pass off that tragedy as an internal civil war. The facts, however, speak for themselves:

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**Why are responsible people in the Muslim world and Western society failing to join forces to stop the slaughter of innocent Christians?**

To eradicate the Christian and non-Muslim population, the Sudanese government and its agents have bombed, burned and looted southern villages; enslaved women and children; kidnapped and forcibly converted Christians and other boys and sent them into battle; relocated entire villages into concentration camps called “peace villages”; and withheld food aid to starving Christian and animist communities until they converted to Islam.

Individual Christians, including clergy, have been assassinated, imprisoned, tortured, and flogged for their faith. There have been numerous reports of Christians being crucified in remote areas.1

The question we will ask in this space and with each issue is, Why do evangelical Christians in the West seem so indifferent to the horrors and persecution being borne by our brethren in other parts of the world? Ironically, some of our Jewish friends are sounding the warning bell, trying to alert us to what might, indeed, be in store for those of us who have enjoyed so much in this age of unparalleled affluence.

In his introduction to Paul Marshall’s book Their Blood Cries Out (Word Publishing), journalist Michael Horowitz wrote,

The mounting persecution of Christians eerily parallels the persecution of Jews, my people, during Europe’s history. Today, minority Christian communities have become chosen scapegoats in radical Islamic and remnant Communist regimes, where they are demonized and caricatured through populist campaigns of hate and terror.

The silence and indifference of Western elites to the beatings, looting, torture, jailing, enslavement, murder, and even crucifixion of increasingly vulnerable Christian communities further engages my every bone and instinct as a Jew. The ignorance and silence displayed by Western Christian communities toward the suffering of fellow believers completes the litany of parallels to earlier, sordid chapters of world history.2

The question is, What will history say about us?

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Tom Rose is the publisher of The Jerusalem Post in Jerusalem, Israel.
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At the height of the recent Al-Aqsa Intifada, Palestinians and Israelis bemoaned the suffering it caused. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, determined to widen the war and force international intervention on his behalf, has kept the green light on for a cadre of terrorists and paramilitary forces wreaking havoc and shedding innocent blood. He did this despite the fact that the violence prevented thousands of Palestinians from going to their jobs in Israel because of closures imposed by the Israelis. Israel instituted these closures as a direct result of the unrelenting and indiscriminate Palestinian attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians via suicide bombers, mortar rounds, sniper fire, and a wide assortment of deadly devices imported from Palestinian-controlled areas.

Included in the list of murdered Israelis is a 10-month-old baby who was shot to death in April by a Palestinian sniper who deliberately framed her in his telescopic sight, then killed her.

A correlative casualty of the conflict has been tourism, which has slowed to a trickle because of the fighting. Consequently, both Israelis and Palestinians, many of whom work in Israel’s hotels, restaurants, and other segments of the massive tourist industry, have been denied gainful employment.

Ironically, even religious commemorations were hit by the storm of controversy as people tried to blame the conflict on one side or the other. The 2001 Easter celebration was badly marred. A “message for Easter,” released by a local Jerusalem group of Christian clergymen, was more a political position paper than a bearer of the good news of the resurrection. As reported in The Jerusalem Post (April 13, 2001), the statement castigated Israel by calling for, among other things, “the immediate end of all collective punishments, especially for the lifting of the closures of Palestinian towns and villages.” It demanded that Israel shape up and obey international and UN resolutions.

The clergyman who preached the annual Easter sermon at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where hundreds of locals and pilgrims from abroad gathered, delivered more of the same. In a verbal tirade that sounded more like a message you would hear in a mosque than a church, the speaker lashed out at Israel: “The force, which can impose itself through sieges, bombardments or killings,” he said, “are [sic] means which destroy houses, kill human persons, but cannot kill the soul of a people.”

These egregious demonstrations of political partisanship prompt two observations. First, the world in general has failed to relate honestly to the situation in its entirety. Why does Israel enact these closures? Because of the violence perpetrated by Palestinian leaders bent on destroying the Jewish state. When the violence and terror end, so will the closures. Israeli businesses need Palestinian workers as much as Palestinians need their jobs in Israel. Of necessity, however, Israel has always instituted closures in times of unrest.

Second, these various clergymen forfeited their spiritual obligation to communicate the central message of the season. Millions of Christians aspire to visit the Holy Land someday. Just as Jewish people each Passover recite the words “next year in Jerusalem,” Christians express the same desire. At Easter, Jerusalem becomes the center of the spiritual universe for many Christian believers. It was there, from a garden tomb, that the resurrection of Jesus took place. He had been crucified, laid in the tomb for three days, and then triumphantly arose from the dead. It was in Jerusalem, on the first Easter morning, that the three central elements of the gospel came together. Therefore, for Christians, the single, greatest event in time and eternity was accomplished.

To talk politics and vent partisan prejudices to individuals who assembled to hear and somehow personally share the wonder of what transpired 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem was more than an irritation. It was a desecration of the sacred message of the season and an abdication of the responsibility to convey that message to those whose hearts were longing to hear again of the miracle associated with the words, “He is not here; for he is risen, as he said” (Mt. 28:6).

The world would have been much better served by reports of that “message for Easter” from Jerusalem, rather than condemnationary and divisive political rhetoric. After all, embodied in the words “He is risen” is the life-transforming message of real peace and true reconciliation.
The Means of Knowing Truth About God

Introduction
How can mankind know if God is a reality or a figment of human imagination? If God is a reality, how can His nature; thoughts; ways; actions; and relationship to the universe, planet Earth, mankind, and individual persons be known? The only means of knowing these things is divine revelation. Scholar Raymond C. Van Leeuwen says that God “is known only as he makes himself known.” Has God demonstrated the reality of His existence and uncovered other knowledge about Himself by giving revelation to human beings during the course of history? Let’s investigate.

The Biblical Claim of Divine Revelation
Despite the fact God is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17) and, therefore, His actual being, essence, or person has never been seen by mortal human beings (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12), the Scriptures claim that God has revealed Himself to mankind. For example, 1 Samuel 3:21 states, “the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh.” In Exodus 6:3, God said, “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob”; and Exodus 3:16 claims that God appeared to Moses. According to scholar Wilhelm Michaelis, the verb translated “appeared” in these Exodus statements does not signify that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses saw the actual being or essence of God with their eyes. Instead, the form of the verb indicates that God made His presence known to them in some other way.

Exodus 33:11 states, “the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” The expression face to face does not mean that Moses actually saw God’s face because the Lord clearly told Moses, “Thou canst not see my face” (Ex. 33:20). Instead, it refers to clear, open speech and friendship (cf. Num. 12:8).

The Lord told Moses, “thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (Ex. 33:23). Old Testament scholar Jacobus A. Naude points out that “the face of God denotes the very person of God.” This fact is evident because the Lord equated “see my face” with “see me” (Ex. 33:20). Thus He was saying that Moses would not see the actual person of God.

According to R. Laird Harris, nowhere else is the word that is translated “back” in Exodus 33:23 used “for the back of a person’s anatomy.” In all other instances, it “means ‘back’ in the sense of direction.” It appears, then, that what Moses saw was the afterglow of God’s glory “behind the Lord as he passed by,” not God Himself. Walter C. Kaiser (in “temuna,” Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament) indicates that God’s statement that Moses would behold “the similitude of the Lord” (Num. 12:8) conveys the same concept.

Jehovah said, “there shall no man see me, and live” (Ex. 33:20). The fact that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and other people continued to live after the Lord “appeared” to them indicates that they did not see the actual being, essence, or person of God in those appearances. This fact prompts the following conclusion: Through the use of other means, God revealed or demonstrated the reality of His existence to mortal human beings as fully and convincingly as if His actual being, essence, or person had visibly appeared to them.

The Scriptures also claim that God revealed secret or hidden knowledge to human beings in...
the past. The prophet Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, “there is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets” (Dan. 2:28). The prophet Amos wrote, “the Lord GOD . . . revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets” (Amos 3:7). According to Bruce K. Waltke in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, the Hebrew word gala, translated “revealeth” in Amos’ statement, has the basic meaning “to uncover,” with the resultant meanings “to show, to reveal.” It frequently refers to divine revelation. In one form, “it always denotes ‘to uncover’ something which otherwise is normally concealed.” The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* claims that the Aramaic word gela, translated “revealed” in Daniel’s statement, is used in the same way as the Hebrew word gala.10

In 1 Corinthians 2:4–10 and Ephesians 3:3–11, the apostle Paul asserted that he presented knowledge that had been revealed by God to him, other apostles, and New Testament prophets. Paul indicated significant facts about this revealed knowledge. It did not originate with mankind (1 Cor. 2:4–5) or the world system of the present age and its rulers (1 Cor. 2:6). God was the source of this knowledge. He determined it in eternity past (1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:9, 11) and kept it hidden from mankind, including its rulers, until He revealed it to the apostles and New Testament prophets (1 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:3–5, 9). Mankind never could discover this knowledge through the human senses or ability to reason (1 Cor. 2:9).

In both of these passages, Paul used the Greek word musterion (translated “mystery”) for this divinely revealed knowledge. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, indicate that biblical and early Christian literature used this word “to mean the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God which are hidden from the human reason, as well as from all other comprehension below the divine level, and hence must be revealed to those for whom it is intended.” They state that it refers to “a secret or mystery, too profound for human ingenuity.”11 Furthermore, Michaelis states that when divine revelation takes place, “man is always the recipient and never the author” of what is revealed.12 Thus Daniel and Paul indicated that they could not claim credit for the knowledge God revealed to them (Dan. 2:30; Eph. 3:3–4).

**God revealed or demonstrated the reality of His existence to mortal human beings as fully and convincingly as if His actual being, essence, or person had visibly appeared to them.**

**A Definition of Divine Revelation**

In light of these biblical statements and meanings of words used, divine revelation can be defined as follows: Divine knowledge is the uncovering by God for mankind of a body of knowledge formerly hidden from mankind and totally undiscoverable by mankind.

**The Means of Divine Revelation**

Scripture indicates that God has used several means to uncover the reality of His existence and other knowledge to mankind.

*Nature.* Psalm 19:1 states, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” John N. Oswalt (in “kabod,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*) claims the Bible uses the word translated “glory” in a figurative sense for “the concept of a ‘weighty’ person in society, someone who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect.” Thus glory constitutes anything that is impressive, demands recognition, gives a person influence, sets him apart, and distinguishes him from others.

R. D. Patterson asserts that the word translated “declare” means “recount” or “tell.” According to L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (in *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*), the word translated “showeth” basically means “to place a matter high, conspicuous before a person.”

Thus Daniel and Paul indicated that they could not claim credit for the knowledge God revealed to them (Dan. 2:30; Eph. 3:3–4).
Scott (in “el,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*) indicates that ancient people used this name to refer to a personal deity. The Scriptures use it to refer to the one, true, living God (2 Ki. 19:15–16; Jer. 10:10) who is invisible to mortal mankind (“’El who hides himself’ [i.e. known only by self-revelation, Isa. 45:15]).

These meanings of *glory*, *declare*, and *showeth* and the significance of the name El indicate that Psalm 19:1 claims that the heavens are recounting or telling what is impressive or influential concerning their Creator. They display what should be obvious to the human eye and mind, namely, the conspicuous, distinctive stamp of His divine handiwork. In other words, the magnitude, beauty, order, and design of the heavens testify concerning the existence and incredible wisdom and power of the one, true, living, personal, invisible God who created them. Scholar Robert C. Newman writes that the stars in the heavens “are a part of God’s self-revelation in nature, his handiwork pointing beyond themselves to God’s brightness, purity, greatness, and power.”

Psalm 19:2 declares, “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” This declaration indicates that no time limit exists on this revelation of knowledge concerning God from the heavens. According to Leonard J. Coppes (in “naba,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*), the word translated “uttereth” means “gush forth.” Its root “connotes an uncontrollable or uncontrolled gushing forth.” Twenty-four hours a day, without interruption since the beginning of time, the heavens have been gushing forth a flood of knowledge about God that cannot be restrained. Thus, regardless of when a person has lived on the earth, he or she has been exposed to this revelation.

Psalm 19:3 literally asserts, “no speech nor language, their voice is not heard.” It signifies that there is no audible speech, no language involved in this revelation from the heavens. It is a totally silent communication of knowledge concerning God. Because this revelation comes without the use of languages, no language barriers hinder its effective communication. As a result, this revelation can be understood by people of all languages.

Psalm 19:4 states, “Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” Earl S. Kalland (in “milla,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*) states that the word translated “words” refers to “the revelation of God.” Thus this statement asserts that this revelation of knowledge concerning God from the heavens is worldwide in scope. It extends to every geographical area. No matter where people live on Earth, they are exposed to this revelation. Ralph H. Alexander writes, “Creation itself gives a ‘worldwide’ witness to God’s glory (Ps. 19:4) which should result in Yahweh’s praise (Ps. 98:2).”

The expression *their line is gone out through all the earth* contains an additional implication. In the Old Testament, the word translated “line” frequently referred to a measuring line, a standard, by which other objects were measured (Isa. 34:17; 44:13; Jer. 31:39). Concerning this word, John E. Hartley (in “qaw,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*) states, “A line is basically a measuring line. It stands parallel to plummet (Isa. 28:17).” In light of this concept, the additional implication of Psalm 19:4 is as follows: The knowledge concerning God, revealed worldwide from the heavens, is the foundation for a world-life view. This foundation (the existence, wisdom, and power of one, true, living, personal, invisible God who created the universe) is the measuring line or standard by which the foundations of all other world-life views are to be measured or evaluated. Any foundations that do not agree with this standard are contrary to reality—and so are the views based upon them.

The next article will explore further the means of divine revelation.

Renald E. Showers is an Author, Professor, and International Conference Speaker for The Friends of Israel.
Iran hosts terrorists as Hezbollah vows to continue attacks

Terrorists and Muslim leaders met in Iran in April to spur each other on in their fight to destroy Israel.

At the invitation of Iran, Israel’s archenemy, members of the terror groups Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas met with parliamentary leaders of 30 Islamic countries at a two-day conference in Tehran. Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah warned Israel to expect surprise attacks and declared, “Victory belongs to us,” eliciting hearty applause.

At the outset of the meeting, Iran’s dictator, Ayatollah Khamenei, called on the Muslim world to support the Palestinians even if it means defying the United States and the West, the Associated Press reported. “Supporting the Palestinian people is one of our important Islamic duties,” he said.

Nasrallah rushed to kiss Khamenei’s hand after Khamenei finished speaking.

Hezbollah is responsible for much violence in Israel. It also has refused to let the Red Cross visit three Israeli soldiers captured in October 2000 by the Iranian-backed Shi'ite movement.

Khamenei opened the conference by denouncing diplomacy for peace and said, “The strength of Islamic resistance lies in its ability to wreak crushing blows against Israeli actions, and not in relying on diplomatic efforts and mediation of others.”

Time magazine already has reported that Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad are banding together to come up with a unified strategy against Israel, and The Jewish Telegraphic Agency has reported that a recent article in the Tehran Times stated flatly, “Tehran slowly is becoming the focal point of the struggle for the Liberation of holy Jerusalem.”

Reopening Jericho a gamble in more ways than one

A glitzy, Palestinian casino that raked in an estimated $680,000 daily before the recent intifada ruined its business has become a factor in discussions on whether Israel should reopen the Jericho area.

The Palestinians have pledged to keep the area, including the Jericho bypass road, safe, according to a report in The Jerusalem Post. The road has been the scene of many shootings and firebomb attacks.

The casino income is important to the Palestinian Authority, which opened the Palestinian Oasis Casino in a venture with an Austrian firm in 1998. Israel closed it down after Palestinian gunmen used it to shoot at nearby Israeli troops.

According to Ha’aretz, an Israeli newspaper, local Palestinians are barred from frequenting the casino, “but Israelis, who are forbidden by law from setting up casinos inside Israel, can travel 30 minutes from Jerusalem to gamble.” Most of the patrons reportedly are Israeli Arabs.

“It’s scandalous,” said Israel’s Transport Minister Rehavam Ze’evi. “If there is quiet in Jericho, why shouldn’t things also be quiet in Netzarim or Gilboa? Because they aren’t making anything off us there!”

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said casino money finances terrorism in other parts of Israel. “They will be able to continue the terror and the violence everywhere else,” he said, “at the same time that a stream of Israelis is providing them with the takings to continue financing this activity.”

The casino has roulette, blackjack, poker, baccarat tables, and slot machines. The Israeli defense establishment opposes reopening it and said no Israelis are allowed to enter Palestinian Authority areas and particularly not Jericho, the Post reported.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said lifting the Jericho blockade is part of a policy to let Palestinians lead normal lives despite the violence. “In the Jericho area, $700 million was invested in different industries . . . this plus tourism. . . . Everything has been paralyzed. Our position is to allow for a normal lifestyle unconditionally and without receiving anything in return. . . . We don’t want to harm innocent people.”

Ayatollah Khamenei, Edward R. Murrow would never agree

Iran’s supreme leader said in April that Zionists exaggerated the Holocaust to justify crimes against Palestinians.

Speaking in Tehran in April at a two-day conference of terrorists and Muslim leaders, Ayatollah Khamenei claimed Zionists “had close relations with German Nazis and exaggerated statistics on Jewish killings.” He said, “Non-Jewish hooligans and thugs of eastern Europe were forced to migrate to Palestine as Jews.”

The United States State Department condemned the comments as “outrageous and deplorable.”

At the time of the Holocaust, the British ruled Palestine and virtually forbade Jewish immigration by imposing severe and restrictive quotas. In actuality, history shows that the Palestinian Arabs cooperated with the German Nazis. The Palestinian Jews cooperated with the Allies and fought in the British army.
Did you know it’s possible to give a one-time gift to The Friends of Israel—a gift annuity—that will reap spiritual fruit among God’s Chosen People?

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**Gift Annuities**

**El Al sells jets, plans cancellations to offset $109 million loss**

A severe drop in tourism to Israel due to violence in the Middle East has hit El Al hard. The Israeli national airline has confirmed it will halt flights to 10 destinations, reduce its workforce, and sell eight old planes in an attempt to maintain financial stability in the face of a $109 million loss in revenue this year.

El Al Director David Hermesh reassured passengers that the airline will provide at least two months’ notice before dropping any destination. *The Jerusalem Post* has reported that the airline will halt service to Chicago; Copenhagen; and Manchester, England.

Cost-cutting moves are likely to lead to a firing of dozens of flight technicians and the consensual resignation of some 300 other employees, the Post said. The company, however, will use the proceeds in part to purchase a new Boeing 777.

**Their British passports were stamped “Palestinian Jew.”**

Edward R. Murrow, one of America’s most famous journalists and the head of the CBS European Bureau during World War II, was at the Buchenwald concentration camp the day the Allies liberated it.

“Murder had been done at Buchenwald,” Murrow said. “God alone knows how many men and boys have died there during the last 12 years... I pray you to believe what I have said about Buchenwald. I reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it, I have no words.”

**Did you know there’s a very special way you can express your condolences, thanks, or respect for someone?** For only $10 per tree, you can have trees planted in The Friends of Israel Forest in Jerusalem. You’ll receive a beautiful certificate that you can send as a tangible expression of your gift. Won’t you take this opportunity to provide a living memorial for a family member, friend, or associate? You may even wish to plant one or more trees in someone’s honor or on your own behalf. It is a thoughtful and meaningful way to say “I care,” and you will share in helping to make the desert of Israel bloom.

(Use the enclosed envelope to order.)

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The first time I received a Bible, I knew nothing about faith, especially about faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was 1948, during the War of Independence here in Israel. And what did I read? Even when I was far from faith and I saw a Bible for the first time in my life, I read Psalm 27:1–10, where it is written, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”

Those words encouraged me through all the wars I fought for Israel over 52 years. Today many people here live in fear and have no one to encourage them. Where I live, many new immigrants have arrived, most of them from Russia. I know their language and speak to them often. In Israel we are living on a “time bomb.” We are in constant danger, and it seems as though we may have another war.

Not long ago, I spoke with some of these immigrants. They asked me, “What will be? We are afraid. How can you sleep at night?” They know I fought in all Israel’s wars and now my children are in the military.

So I told them, “I put my trust in the Lord. As it is written in Isaiah 12:2, ‘God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.’ Because I believe this, I am not going around in fear as you are, but in confidence. You have put your trust in man, not in God.”

Then they asked me how I can speak of faith when I do not cover my head. I have heard that question many times. “It is good you asked me,” I said. “Faith does not demand we come before Him with a covered head but with a pure heart. We must do as King David did in Psalm 25 and pray, “Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me” (vv. 4–5).

I must go slowly with them, as with little children because, even though they are old, they know nothing about faith. Some of them asked me, “Do you not want to teach us about Christianity? You know that we are Jewish.”

I replied, “My duty is to bring you near the root of faith—the Bible. What is written here is holy, and no one has the right to boycott what is written by the Holy Spirit of God. Many people have come to you and have tried to confuse you. So please, take a good look at this Bible.”

So I gave them a Bible in their own language. “Read,” I told them. I opened the Bible to Isaiah 53. Before they began, I asked them, “Is this from the Bible or from a book of stories?”

“Yes,” they said. “You are showing us the Bible.”
And, just as I did 52 years ago, they began to read the words of God. When they finished, I asked, “What have you read? Can you give me a clear explanation of it?”

This time they were quiet. Then they asked me, “What is written here? About whom is this written?”

“What have the others been teaching you?” I asked.

They all answered, “That the Messiah has to come. We hear this every day.”

“What is written here?” I asked. “This says that the Messiah was already here, and ‘the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all’ (v. 6). About whom is this written?”

So I asked them to read Isaiah 7:14, where it says, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.” They know how to read, but they are far from knowing about whom these things are written. They were afraid to say the truth, even though they were thinking it. But because we are neighbors, we were able to speak more openly, as friends.

So I showed them verse after verse from the Bible alone until one of them clearly understood and said, “This is written about the Messiah.”

I said, “Yes. About Yeshua Hamashiach.”

They started to think about it and asked, “How can this be?”

I replied, “You must think for yourselves. I did not write this, did I? You see that I showed you everything from the Bible.”

They told me they will ask their ultra-Orthodox teacher about these passages. I will speak to them again. Please pray for them. They must stop being afraid to think for themselves, or they will never stop being afraid.

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