The Friends of Israel
Argentina Clinic

Israel My Glory
A MINISTRY OF THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL GOSPEL MINISTRY, INC.
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NOTE: For a complete list of the footnotes referenced in this magazine, please write to Mrs. Vera Bowker, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
Among the most difficult phases in the life of any Christian organization is the transition of leadership. We all, of course, recognize that it is a necessary yet sometimes hazardous undertaking. That time has come once again at The Friends of Israel. As of April 30, Elwood McQuaid will step down as the executive director of FOI. Elwood has served in this position for the past 12 years. To say the least, it has been an unparalleled time of growth and development for our worldwide ministry.

Serving alongside Elwood during these years has been Bill Sutter, a name familiar to most of our readers. Bill has been associated with The Friends of Israel since 1982. He was appointed as the executive vice president of the organization in 1996. In this position, Bill has become intimately familiar with all aspects of the operation.

Bill graduated from Faith Theological Seminary with a master of divinity degree and was ordained to the gospel ministry through his local church, Bethel Bible Chapel of Huntington Valley, Pennsylvania, where he and his wife, Annette, and their family have been active for many years. His service began with Philadelphia College of Bible and has since included a number of leadership positions with prestigious organizations.

For many years Bill has been active on behalf of The Friends of Israel in Christian circles and among members of the Jewish community. He is well known for his activities in support of Israel and in opposition to anti-Semitism. In fact, in recent years Bill has become a key figure in Jewish/Christian relations and is an outstanding spokesman for evangelical Christians in the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel. We know of no one in the evangelical world who is held in higher esteem by the Jewish community than our Bill Sutter.

For his part, Elwood is not leaving The Friends of Israel. He will continue to serve as editor-in-chief and as director of publications and media ministries. This will include the oversight of Israel My Glory and his continuation as host of radio and television productions. The new arrangement will give Elwood more time to devote to writing and international media ministry.

We want all of our friends to know that this is not a revolution but rather, an inevitable evolution in the leadership of FOI. The opportunities open to our work have never been greater. The staff has never been more cooperative and united. The credibility of The Friends of Israel has never been more recognized nationally and internationally. In short, we can say that we are strategically positioned as never before to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

We ask for your prayers, continued loyalty, and support for the ongoing work of the board, administration, and staff. For the past 12 years we have worked by the credo, “no surprises, no disunity, no deviation from the founding principles and practices of The Friends of Israel.” Bill Sutter and the entire staff are totally committed to this credo.

For The Friends of Israel, the future is as bright as the promises of God. We trust you share this conviction with each of us as we move forward together in the work of the Lord.
These that have turned the world upside down are come here also (Acts 17:6).

Those words were uttered during a riot in the ancient city of Thessalonica 2,000 years ago. The objects of the scorn and turmoil were Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah who had come with the message of the gospel. The riot that broke out testified that, indeed, their fame had preceded them.

Shortly before this incident, the apostle Paul had received a message that would change the course of history. He had intended to take the news of the Messiah into Asia. But a nocturnal vision dramatically changed his plans.

*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: there stood a man of Macedonia, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us* (Acts 16:9).

He responded immediately:

*And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them* (Acts 16:10).

By turning westward into Europe, Paul and his followers truly would “turn the world upside down,” changing the face of the Western world and breaking paganism’s death grip on humanity for millennia to come. Judeo-Christian norms revolutionized the continent and reached into the New World far beyond Europe. Christian spiritual and moral standards, social and ethical conduct, legal systems, and a new order and civility molded the future. Ultimately, Europe and the Americas attained a level of freedom, power, and affluence never before seen on the face of the planet.

Then something happened. Subtly at first, yet with ever-gathering ferocity and commitment, came a barbarian-like hoard dedicated to secular revolution and determined, in its own way, to “turn the world upside down.”

**Mother Earth and Her Children**

Throughout history, human beings consistently have demonstrated a complete inability to cope successfully with material abundance. Every great empire that achieved a significant measure of affluence, in the end, crumbled under the weight of it. In the West, the very message and consequent moral and social order that brought about the progress we enjoy
are being condemned as corrupting, bigotry inducing, and incompatible with the “big hug” obsession of a faceless, global community peopled by the sallow children of Mother Earth. However, it is true that there is nothing new under the sun; ancient Israel is a case in point.

The prophets of old often lamented Israel’s recurring repudiation of righteousness and justice. Many times they warned in vain of the inevitable, violent collisions that would ensue if the Israelites continued down the path of self-deception, excessive pursuit of physical comfort, and creature worship. Today evangelical Christians in the Western world are hurtling in a similar direction. A smashup of major proportions is waiting at the next intersection because the majority of Christians, I fear, are asleep at the wheel.

The World of the Prophets

A telling entry in the Old Testament appears in the book of Habakkuk. During Israel’s periodic excursions into national and spiritual decline, Habakkuk wrote, Why dost thou [God] show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me; and there are those who raise up strife and contention. Therefore, the law is slacked, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore, justice goeth forth perverted (1:3–4).

The tenderhearted prophet squinted out on a world that was turning upside down. What people formerly had believed to be true they now regarded as false. Righteousness had transmuted into predatory ungodliness. Good was called evil, and what men had considered justice they now considered injustice. God and His ways had passed from vogue as certainly as they had passed from the minds of upscale Hebrews. The nation soon would learn that turning the world upside down brought extremely undesirable consequences.

The New Orthodoxy

In his insightful book The Abolition of Britain: From Winston Churchill to Princess Diana (Encounter Books), Peter Hitchens chronicles what he describes as the stunning decline of his native Britain. He traces the impact of a generational revolution that is turning the norms and traditions of England upside down.

In the relatively short time since larger-than-life figures, such as Churchill, have disappeared from the scene, England has descended into a tabloid era of rock-star worship, empty churches, and trouble-making football hooligans roving Europe to the detriment of their countrymen.

Hitchens speaks to a new social orthodoxy akin to what the prophets of old railed against. He speaks of the “strange new orthodoxy on homosexuality” and inveighs against the “new morality” that came with the advent of television:

We have become a people dependent on television for a stimulation of social contact in our leisure hours. Yet few seem to realize the power of a medium which stole into our lives while we were not paying attention. Early television was nothing like the modern force which has now displaced all other forms of culture and entertainment. Its effect on the imagination has been the motor of the new morality and the new conformism.1

New Orthodoxy—American Style

In reading statements by people like Peter Hitchens, it is impossible not to compare the British situation with the American experience. In fact, much of what afflicts Britain was, unfortunately, imported from the United States.

During the recent confirmation hearings of U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, we saw how entrenched the new orthodoxy actually has become. Despite liberal protestations to the contrary, the core issue in the controversy over the former senator’s appointment was the fact that he is a committed, evangelical Christian. Liberal subscribers to the nation’s new orthodoxy were outraged that a man with conservative Christian views would be offered the nation’s chief law enforcement post.

Ironically, this country has so turned itself upside down that only those individuals who hold to the fundamental doctrines and beliefs on which this republic was founded are deemed unfit to hold influential positions in our government. A Jewish columnist was recently quoted as saying the only religious
The demand for religious institutions to be more attuned to entertaining, problem solving, and soothing bruised egos has stripped thousands of churches of a dedication to doctrine and discipleship.

The most vulnerable victims of the neopagan obsession are, of course, the children. After exhausting weekends spent watching mock or real exhibitions of violence at “sporting events,” many would much rather sleep in than attend Sunday school or church. In fact, many of these events take place in direct conflict with worship services and weeknight church activities.

Viewing the situation now developing at breakneck speed in our society, you can well understand Paul’s lament over people who, “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). As a result, their darkened hearts affected their offspring, who ultimately suffered the consequences. What was true of them will be no less true of us.

Of course, we’ve seen it all before. Babylon, Greece, Rome, and a myriad of lesser nations have all passed this way. We are returning to the last days of the dying empires of Rome and Greece, where violence was the stock in trade. Affluence, that great deceiver, has gripped us, too, by the throat. The question now is, How long can we survive as a viable society?

Is There an Answer?

Yes, my friend, there is an answer. God illuminates it for us repeatedly in His Word. In these last days, we cannot expect the self-indulgent to respond positively. They never have. These people are oblivious to eternal realities. But, thankfully, there is a remnant.

Peter appeals to it and to us as he addresses the problems of the last days:

Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth (2 Pet. 1:12).

The answer for contemporary Christianity is the same as it was for ancient Israel: Return to the basics that saved, inspired, and moved you in the early days of your Christian experience. In other words, repent—and return to your first love. It is a simple yet profound admonition. Is the new orthodoxy apt to be reversed? Not likely. But true believers can make a difference in the lives of multitudes of individuals.

Not long ago I received a letter from a Jewish woman who happened to hear our radio broadcast. She said, in essence, “I had given up on ever hearing the truth about what is going on in Israel and the Middle East. I was thrilled to hear someone who is telling the truth. Keep it up!” Many thousands of people feel the same way.

Just as those early saints brought a message that the people at Thessalonica said was “turning the world upside down,” so, too, should we. The antidote for the new, satanically driven orthodoxy is the age-old message of the gospel. We must never forget that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

In the words of an old and valued friend, now in heaven, “Nothing is easy. Keep on keeping on.”

Elwood McQuaid is Editor-in-Chief for The Friends of Israel.
Unlike most nations, Israel's earliest form of government was a theocracy. God Himself ruled the nation through a number of patriarchs, beginning with Abraham. After Moses died, the mantle of leadership went first to Joshua, then to a series of judges, ending with Samuel. But Israel grew weary of the judges and desired a day when it would have a king like other nations.

Many historical changes contributed to Israel's demand for a king. The nation was oppressed by neighboring nations and was politically disunited, unstable (Jud. 21:25), and morally corrupt (1 Sam. 2:17–36). Samuel, a godly judge, prophet, and priest, had made judges of his two evil sons who perverted justice, thus making them unworthy to lead Israel (1 Sam. 8:1–3). So the elders in Israel approached Samuel, asking that he step aside as their ruler and establish a king to govern them.

Samuel was reluctant but did so at God's command. Nevertheless, he warned the Israelites of the tragedy that would befall them if they chose to be ruled by a king rather than by God.

THE People's Request

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first-born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba (vv. 1–2). Samuel evidently did not retire from his judgeship. He simply appointed his sons to help administrate justice on the southern border of the land in Beer-sheba. This fact is confirmed by an earlier statement, “Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam. 7:15).
However, Samuel’s sons were unqualified for the job. “And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after money, and took bribes, and perverted justice” (v. 3). They misused their positions by accepting bribes and making judicial decisions based on financial gifts—something condemned by the Mosaic Law (Ex. 23:6, 8; Dt. 16:19). They perverted justice by ruling in favor of the highest bidder. Thus the rich received honor, but the poor suffered the worst kind of oppression and deprivation of rights.

The injustices Joel and Abijah practiced drove the elders of Israel to confront Samuel about the deteriorating situation:

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations (vv. 4–5).*

A closer look at the text reveals that the corruption of Samuel’s sons was only a convenient pretext. The elders’ real motive was to rid Israel of the theocratic system of rule in favor of a human king. The phrase *like all the nations* revealed that Israel’s leadership was rebelling against God’s rule.

From its inception as a nation, Israel was to be different from other nations. It was to be ruled by God Himself as His unique possession (Lev. 20:26). The elders needed Samuel’s approval because they knew that to set up a king without it would bring God’s wrath on the nation.

Before Israel even had entered the land of Canaan en route from Egypt, Moses had prophesied that the nation would request a king (Dt. 17:14); and he provided God’s guidelines for one. The king had to be an Israelite of God’s choosing, not a foreigner. He was not to amass horses, wives, or great wealth for himself. He was to read the Law of Moses and be obedient to God with reverential fear (Dt. 17:14–20).

Thus the nation’s desire for a king was proper; . . . However, it was improper to request a king then. The demand was made at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons.

**THE Prophet’s Prayer**

Samuel’s response was predictable: “But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD” (v. 6). The Hebrew word for “displeased” means “to see the evil in something.” Samuel knew that Israel’s desire reflected its discontent. He also knew that having a king would mean forfeiting many of the freedoms enjoyed under theocratic rule. A monarch eventually would suppress the people and enslave them. Nevertheless, Israel was determined to have a king without consulting God.

So Samuel did what he always did. He “prayed unto the LORD” (v. 6). Prayer did four things for Samuel. First, it provided God’s guidance on how to respond to the elders’ request. Second, it provided God’s instruction on how to respond to the request. Third, it gave him strength to proceed with God’s will on the issue of granting a king to Israel. Fourth, it brought God’s peace for the transition from a theocracy to a monarchy.

God answered Samuel’s prayer by instructing him to grant Israel its request (vv. 7, 9, 22):

*Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee (vv. 7–8).*

The elders’ request cast aspersion on Samuel’s leadership and constituted a rejection of God’s rule. Such had been Israel’s attitude since the day the Israelites left Egypt.

God said to Samuel, “Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice; howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king who shall reign over them” (v. 9). The phrase *protest solemnly unto them* means God told Samuel to warn the elders of the dangers of a king and the price they would pay by demanding one. Samuel was faithful and “told all the words of the LORD
unto the people who asked of him a king” (v. 10). The high priority Samuel placed on prayer in his life gave him the power and peace needed to proclaim obediently the Lord’s command.

**THE Payment Required**

Samuel told the Israelites the great cost of having a king. First, a king would demand compulsory service from their children:

*He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself captains over thousands, and . . . fifties; and will set them to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your choicest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work* (vv. 11–13, 16).

Thus a king would strip them of self-rule, individual freedom, and the personal dignity they had enjoyed under God’s theocratic reign.

Second, a king would confiscate their land—their fields, vineyards, and olive yards. Not just any land would be acquired from them, but “the best” land (v. 14).

Third, a king would demand compensation from their produce:

*“And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. He will take the tenth of your sheep; and ye shall be his servants”* (vv. 15, 17). All these sacrifices would be necessary to pay for building and maintaining a monarch’s kingdom.

Fourth, the Israelites eventually would complain about the cruelty imposed by the monarch’s rule:

*“And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen; and the LORD will not hear you in that day”* (v. 18). Samuel warned Israel that it would beg the Lord for deliverance; but by then, the theocratic rule it had enjoyed would be gone. Israel would reap the consequences of its sinful decision.

When Saul was anointed king over Israel, these prophecies began to be fulfilled. The evils of human rule intensified during the reigns of the kings in Israel and Judah. Israel turned away from God; and, consequently, God turned away when the nation cried for help.

Samuel’s counsel went unheeded: *Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles* (vv. 19–20).

Israel’s spiritual dullness and self-deception prompted her persistence in demanding a king. If the Israelites had waited for God’s timing and choice, they would have received David as their king. Instead, God gave the nation Saul.

Notice the progression in Israel’s demands. First, the elders said, “Give us a king” (v. 6). Then they defiantly told Samuel, “We will have a king” (v. 19). Interestingly, Israel’s most formidable enemy had no king but was ruled by an oligarchy (five princes). The Israelites mistakenly assumed that having a king to judge them and fight their battles would give them security and success in defeating their surrounding enemies. Nothing could have been further from the truth!

God granted Israel its desire. “Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city” (v. 22). Samuel yielded to God’s response to his prayer and granted Israel its request. He dismissed the elders, and each returned to his city.

Details of the new monarchy and its system of rule were left for Samuel to work out with the Lord (10:25). Samuel remained a prophet even though Saul was anointed king, for Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

Although Israel has not lived under theocratic rule for many centuries, one day another theocracy will be established under the messianic rule of Jesus Christ. With Christ reigning as King, Israel will

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Against all odds, a man of humble origin, little experience, and slender qualifications is thrust into the highest office in the land. Circumstances afford him an unlikely but happy opportunity to leave a noble mark on history. But tragedy ensues. Deep character flaws, consuming self-absorption, evil choices, and deliberate rejection of godly counsel turn hope into disappointment. The nation is left frustrated and dishonored, its security compromised and its spirit broken.

Such a sorry drama may sound like familiar news today, but it took place more than 3,000 years ago in the life of a young Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin.

Saul, son of Kish, was the first king of Israel. His reign of forty years is recorded in 1 Samuel and can be traced under three divisions: success, sedition, and struggle.

YEARS OF SUCCESS

Saul is Announced, Anointed, and Accepted (1 Sam. 9:12).

Saul was perhaps the most unlikely candidate for king in all the land. By his own confession, he was “a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel”; and his family was “the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin” (9:21). But Saul was as handsome as any man in Israel, and “from his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people” (9:2). The Israelites wanted a king, a man they could proudly follow into battle (8:20) as other nations did their kings. And God sometimes gives men their requests but sends leanness into their souls (Ps. 106:15).

First Samuel 8 concludes with a spirit of breathless anticipation hanging in the air throughout Israel. The elders of the nation had demanded Samuel give them a king. After consulting with King Yahweh (8:6–9) and warning the elders concerning the dangers of kings (8:10–18), Samuel, a judge, prophet, and priest, reluctantly acquiesced. When he sent the elders back to their own cities (8:22), they carried the message that Israel soon would have a king.

by Douglas Bookman
The account of Saul begins in chapter 9. As he wandered into the village of Ramah in pursuit of a lost herd of donkeys, Samuel confronted him with the incredible message that he was the one for whom all Israel longed (9:20) and told him that Yahweh had chosen him to sit on a throne over the nation (10:1).

Because of intertribal rivalry and political tension, the process by which Saul actually became king was rather extensive. First Samuel privately anointed him (9:27—10:1), then he gave him a succession of signs to confirm the truth of Samuel’s words (10:2–13). Consequently, Saul received a remarkable ministry of the Holy Spirit, which, if appropriated, was designed to make the timid and inept young man a mighty warrior and able monarch (10:6, 9–13; cf. Num. 11:17; Dt. 34:9; Jud. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13–15; Ps. 51:11).

Later Samuel convened the nation at Mizpah, and Yahweh publicly identified young Saul as king through a sacred lot (10:17–25; Prov. 16:33). Some Israelites initially refused to accept this Benjamite nobody (10:27). But when—as a result of the Spirit’s enabling—Saul boldly and effectively delivered an Israelite city from the Ammonites (11:1–11), the entire nation enthusiastically acknowledged him as king (11:12–15).

In an important prophetic address after that victory, Samuel formally surrendered to King Saul the civil rule of the nation (12:1–13). Yet he reminded the people that Yahweh was still the ultimate Monarch of Israel and that the twofold promise of blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience was still operative for God’s covenant people (12:14–19; cf. Dt. 11:26–28).

YEARS OF SEDITIO
Saul is Rebellious, Rebuked, and Rejected (1 Sam. 13 15)

Even though Saul was king, he was to remember that he served King Yahweh. The narrative of 1 Samuel 13—15 makes the case that, on two occasions, Saul rebelled against that reality.

After he was fully established in his rule over Israel (13:1), Saul became engaged in a great struggle with Israel’s neighbors and perpetual foes, the Philistines. He had every reason to be discouraged. The Philistine army was “as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude” (13:5), and Saul’s army was trembling in fright and diminishing in number (13:6–7, 15).

The king knew that the priestly office was not his, and Samuel had told him he would come to Gilgal to beseech Yahweh’s direction for the ensuing battle. But Samuel delayed his coming, so Saul violated the Law and sacrificed a burnt offering (13:8–10). Though he tried to cover his sin with excuses, the prophet Samuel pronounced Saul’s presumption indefensible. Furthermore, he announced that Saul’s dynasty would not continue. “The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and . . . commanded him to be captain over his people” (13:14). Saul’s courageous son Jonathan trusted Yahweh for a victory (14:6), and Israel won the battle (14:1–46). However, Saul had rebelled against the rule of Yahweh and had only hardened in his spirit of sedition when God’s prophet confronted him.

The second act of rebellion is recorded in 1 Samuel 15. Centuries earlier, the Amalekites had troubled the Israelites as God’s people made their way from Egypt to the Promised Land (Dt. 25:17–19). Now God revealed that the time had come to visit His promised retribution on that marauding tribe (15:1–3). The land of the Amalekites was placed under a ban (15:3); no spoil was to be taken. But Saul, motivated by self-aggrandizement, spared Agag, king of the Amalekites, and took some of the choicest spoil (15:8–9). Again Saul was ready with excuses when confronted by Samuel (15:14–21). But when they proved ineffectual, he quickly feigned repentance (15:24–27).

The Lord’s response to this second covenantal affront was swift and severe. Samuel reminded Saul, “to obey is better
again. Indeed, had David not formed a militia of “mighty men” and patrolled the borders (27:8–12), Israel might have been overrun entirely during the days of Saul’s preoccupation with murdering David.

That enervating and futile struggle to destroy David led to a final struggle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 28—30). Deserted by God (28:6) and horrified by a postmortem message from Samuel (28:7–25), Saul went to war against the Philistines in his own strength. By the end of that day, the once mighty king had fallen on his own sword (31:3–6); the covenant nation had fled in terror before the uncircumcised Philistines (31:7); and the victorious enemies had stripped the armor of the dead Israelite monarch, displayed it in their idol temples, and hung Saul’s body in contempt on the walls of Beth-shan (31:8–10). How appropriate was David’s lament on hearing of the ignominious death of the man who had started out his mentor but become his tormentor:

_Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! (2 Sam. 1:19, 24–25)._

King Saul is a tragic figure. He was given a gracious gift and a rare opportunity to serve the Lord and his nation. But he rebelled against the God and King who had chosen and equipped him, and thus his reign was a disaster and his life a tragedy. For all of that, he alone was accountable.

Nevertheless, none of the purposes of King Yahweh were frustrated or jeopardized. The focus and apex of Old Testament history is King David. The reign of that youngest son of Jesse is the golden age of Israel’s history, and the covenant Yahweh made with David (2 Sam. 7) is an Everest of prophetic truth in the progress of revelation moving toward Jesus the Christ. But the people of Israel needed to be prepared for King David. This fact is manifested in the 300 years of the judges—a time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes because “there was no king in Israel” (Jud. 17:6).

But if the 300 years before Saul were designed to prepare the way for David and thus for Christ, so were the forty years of Saul’s reign. Indeed, just as the period of the judges was God’s way of making the Israelites hungry for a king, so the reign of Saul was His way of making them hungry for a king of God’s choosing. Thus the God-breathed words of the apostle Paul in his sermon in Antioch:

_After that he gave unto them judges . . . until Samuel, the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of_
A gostino d’Antonio di Duccio, a 15th-century Italian sculptor, is said to have worked diligently but unsuccessfully on a large piece of marble. Other sculptors applied their skills to the same marble; but they, too, gave up. The stone was thrown in a rubbish heap where it remained for nearly forty years.

Then came Michelangelo Buonarroti. He saw the stone and had it brought to his studio. There he labored tirelessly to shape the image he had conceived in his head. He worked until it was finished. And from what was once a worthless slab of stone, Michelangelo carved one of the world’s greatest masterpieces—David.

A selected sketch from David’s life reveals how God, the true master sculptor, transformed a shepherd boy into Israel’s finest king. He lived by his prayer, “Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name” (Ps. 86:11).

David was the youngest son of Jesse from the royal tribe of Judah. Ruth, the Moabitess, was his great-grandmother. One day Samuel the prophet arrived in the simple, hill town of Bethlehem with instructions from the Lord to anoint the next king. Not knowing which of Jesse’s sons God had chosen, the aged prophet per-
formed a special ceremony in which seven of Jesse’s sons were presented to him. But none were chosen.

When Samuel asked, “Are all thy children here?” he learned that David, the youngest, was out in the fields watching the sheep (1 Sam. 16:11). So Samuel called for him. And when the response-looking youth arrived, the Lord spoke and said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he” (1 Sam. 16:12).

As Samuel poured the oil on David’s head, the Spirit of the Lord came on David. God often honors and blesses those whom the world views as insignificant. David later sang, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Ps. 8:4). Unlike those who discarded the marble stone, God saw in David the raw material of a godly king, a man truly after God’s own heart.

As a humble shepherd, David worked long, lonely hours. Yet it was time well spent in sacred reflection and meditation. During the warm summer nights, he slept under the open sky as he cared for the sheep. The canopy of brilliant stars before his eyes left him with a lasting impression of the majesty of God in creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

In winter, he no doubt rested in a tent or cave but always stayed near the flock in his care. David learned of God as the good and faithful Shepherd. As he cared for his father’s flock, so God cared for the people of His pasture. As he watched over the safety of the sheep, so God protected Israel. God had molded these essential attributes into David’s character early in life to create a pastoral disposition within the heart of the future king.

Ever watchful of danger as a shepherd, young David once killed a marauding lion and bear. This experience was David’s “boot camp” and prepared him for the gigantic challenge he was about to face.

As valiant Israelite warriors cowered in fear for forty days, a nine-foot-tall, heavily armored Philistine named Goliath of Gath challenged them, cursed them, and slandered God. So David accepted the giant’s challenge and knocked him out with one stone to the forehead. Then he lopped off the giant’s head. Some commentators suggest that David nailed the head on a gate in front of the Jebusite fortress (future Jerusalem) as notice to the inhabitants that one day he would claim the city for Israel (1 Sam. 17:54).

Undoubtedly, David had courage. However, he also had other qualities that were important in shaping the character of the future king. When he arrived at the battlefront and asked about the Philistine, his brothers falsely accused him of ambitious pride. His own family questioned his motives and intentions. Displaying meekness and patience, David turned aside his brother’s attack with a soft answer and went on with God’s business (1 Sam. 17:29–30).

David’s control over his emotions when falsely accused by those close to him was a moral triumph viewed more honorable than his battle with Goliath. The experience taught him to continue humbly with his task to the glory of God. Sometimes as a ruler, his only comfort would be in the sure presence and faithful trust of God. “The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps. 27:1).

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Ps. 34:19).

God encouraged David’s spiritual aspirations and told David He would build him a spiritual house that would last forever. It consisted of an eternal house, kingdom, and throne (2 Sam. 7:16).

The Lord had given David much success against the Philistines. However, these triumphs brought trouble, which God used to test the substance of David’s heart.

King Saul was jealous. He knew the Lord had abandoned him and was with David. When David came to court to play his harp to soothe Saul’s troubled spirit, the king hurled a spear at him. Later Saul sent David on a campaign against the Philistines, hoping they would kill him. David triumphed and still submitted himself in respectful conduct toward his persecutor.

However, Saul’s jealousy
increased; and David eventually fled from court. While hiding in a cave in the wilderness of En-gedi, David saw Saul enter the cave. It was an excellent opportunity to slay his enemy. Instead, David quietly crept up on him and cut a piece of cloth from his robe. A similar situation occurred later as Saul slept in an open field. Again David made no attempt to take Saul’s life. Even David’s own men urged him to slay Saul. One swift stroke of the sword and all of David’s problems could have been over. But David refused, saying, “I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD’s anointed” (1 Sam. 24:10).

In displaying pity and godly restraint, David chose to be governed by the fear of God and to “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Ps. 37:7). Despite Saul’s disobedience, he still was God’s choice to reign as long as he lived. David, indeed, had been promised the kingship; but he was not to advance the promise himself. The office of king was sacred. One day he would be king and would expect his subjects to recognize the sanctity of his position.

In fact, even the simple act of severing a section of Saul’s robe bothered his conscience. For David, it constituted a serious offense against royal dignity. It was difficult, but David patiently committed his way to the Lord, trusting God to bring all things to pass. The entire episode was a testimony to God, the master sculptor, who had carved a strong faith and sense of piety into the tender conscience of His David. Eventually Saul died in battle; and at age thirty, David became king over Judah, then over all of Israel (2 Sam. 5:4–5).

All earthly material chosen by sculptors has defects. As wonderful as David may have been, he was flawed with a sin nature. But David was not cast aside. Two incidents illustrate David’s faults. The first is among the best known in all of Scripture. While his troops were on a military campaign, David stayed home. Looking down from his roof, he was struck by the beauty of a married woman named Bath-sheba. Unfortunately, he succumbed to his sinful desire and sent for her. Bath-sheba conceived. After trying unsuccessfully to cover up his sin, David had her husband killed in battle; and he married Bath-sheba. A year passed. But what David had done in darkness would be brought to light.

To arouse him from his yearlong spiritual stupor, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront the king. David could have offered excuses or made light of his sin. But he did not. He repented. Psalm 32 describes his agonized soul, and Psalm 51 is his confession. God cut deep into David’s soul to show him that “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Prov. 28:13).

The other incident was when David took a census without God’s authorization (2 Sam. 24). Some scholars suggest that David’s many successes over his enemies made him prideful. If so, then David’s many blessings turned into a snare, producing a complacent and self-sufficient attitude. David acknowledged his sin (2 Sam. 24:17). But the penalty was high. Seventy thousand people were slain with a plague. In the end, the sharp chisel of divine judgment forged a man who was ever grateful for the infinite depths of mercy and the super-abounding grace of God.

“For I have kept the ways of the LORD” (Ps. 18:21) was David’s testimony. When he first became king, his reign was over Judah only. Then, after much political intrigue and violence, he reigned over all Israel. To consolidate his reign, he captured the old Jebusite fortress and made it the new capital of the united kingdom. The city was renamed the “City of David.”

In general, David displayed great organizational skills in civil affairs. Moreover, despite all his fame and prosperity, he still maintained the true substance of a godly man—his spirituality. More than anything, David wanted to build a temple to honor God. This privilege was denied him for he was a man of war. But David was not bitter. He entered the Tabernacle and, before the Ark, in genuine humility, offered God adoration and praise (2 Sam. 7:18–29).

Though David never lived to see the Temple his son would build, he devoted his later life to preparing the materials for its construction. Through the prophet Nathan, God encouraged David’s spiritual aspirations and told David He would build him a spiritual house that would last forever. It consisted of an eternal house, kingdom, and throne (2 Sam. 7:16). The full culmination of the promise was realized in King David’s greater son, Jesus the Messiah (Lk. 1:32–33).

Today the achievement of Michelangelo’s gigantic marble sculpture of David is on display in Florence, Italy. It is a tribute to a great, human artist.

Yet, as the Master Sculptor of character, God molded a humble shepherd into a kingly, compassionate statesman; forged a sweet singer into a sensitive but fierce soldier; and chiseled through an ever-present sinful nature to produce a spiritual man. In Israel today, people still sing, “David melech Yisrael, chai chai,” which means, “David, king of Israel, is alive, is alive.” God’s masterpiece

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Much attention today is directed toward youth. Society is realizing that the future of our communities lies within the youth of today. Yet the vigor and vision of youth sometimes fade as the years go by, producing adults who are disillusioned or desiring some kind of personal reward after years of hard work. People who work their way into significant positions of responsibility certainly deserve their rewards; but when such individuals seek to satisfy their selfish desires, the consequences can be disastrous.

This warning becomes the lesson of King Solomon. Solomon was the model young ruler who sought God’s will and devoted himself to executing it through divine wisdom. Consequently, God blessed Solomon and all of Israel beyond anything that Israel had ever known. But at the end of his life, he strayed from God; and the consequences were so grave that the nation never again attained to the glory of Solomon’s kingdom.

**SOLOMON’S ASCENSION**

As recorded in 1 Kings 1—2, Solomon’s ascension to the throne was not without obstacles. First, he was not David’s firstborn son. As a consequence of David’s sin with Bath-sheba, God declared that “the sword shall never depart” from David’s house (2 Sam. 12:10). That judgment claimed the lives of Amnon and Absalom, the two eldest in line for the throne. This left Adonijah in line. And when David was old, Adonijah proclaimed himself king.

But Nathan the prophet knew God had chosen Solomon; for when Solomon was born to Bath-sheba, who had become David’s wife, the Lord called him Jedidiah, meaning “beloved of the Lord” (2 Sam. 12:24–25). So Nathan persuaded Bath-sheba to tell David what Adonijah had done and ask him to declare young Solomon king. David did. As Adonijah’s followers fell away, his only recourse was to beg for mercy. Thus Solomon became Israel’s third king, the second monarch from the house of David.

**SOLOMON’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*Wisdom (1 Ki. 3).* Solomon is
best known as the wisest man who ever lived or the epitome of the philosopher-king. Yet Solomon’s wisdom came from his understanding that he needed wisdom. He realized the magnitude of the task of judging God’s people and acknowledged that he needed divine help to do the job with justice. So Solomon asked God for an “understanding heart” (1 Ki. 3:9). Gratified, the Lord granted Solomon his request and made him rich as well.

Wisdom characterized all aspects of Solomon’s rule. As he wrote in Proverbs, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (1:7). Wisdom (Hebrew chokmah) in the Old Testament is never just intellectual brilliance. It incorporates an acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty and Law and recognizes that to succeed in life (i.e., receive the Lord’s blessing), one must love Him and follow His statutes (hence the book of Proverbs). As long as Solomon sincerely followed the Lord, he and all Israel were blessed.

Justice (1 Ki. 3). The initial evidence of this wisdom appeared in the administering of justice. In Israel, the king’s primary duty was to act as “attorney general”—to enforce the Law of Moses. Although the Law was clear, discerning people’s motives was more difficult. The Lord gave Solomon a discerning heart to administer true justice, giving us a glimpse of the ultimate, anointed (Mashiach) King of Israel, who will judge righteously.

Administration (1 Ki. 4—5; 7; 10). Just as David was the warrior and empire builder, Solomon was the consolidator and administrative genius. Like any good administrator, Solomon delegated responsibility to capable officials. To support his officials, he divided Israel into twelve administrative districts, apart from tribal considerations. He established treaties with the surrounding territories that David had subjugated, thus providing economic resources.

Solomon’s trading ships sailed the Red Sea down to Saudi Arabia and possibly the western coast of Africa in search of gold and goods. All these ventures brought great wealth to Solomon and Israel. With the income, he built government buildings and palaces between the City of David and the Temple. He also fortified the militarily important cities of Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor by building “triple gates.” So “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon” (1 Ki. 4:25).

Consequently, under Solomon, Israel achieved the status of being “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6) and a “holy nation” amid the world around her.

The story of the queen of Sheba confirms this fact. After being dazzled by Solomon and his kingdom, the queen magnified the God of Israel (1 Ki. 10:9). For a brief moment in history, Israel was a light to the nations, as God had intended her to be. The situation was the result of a godly king who desired to rule with an understanding heart and to adhere to the Law of the Lord.

Temple (1 Ki. 6; 8). Undoubtedly, building the Temple was Solomon’s greatest achievement. Although nothing remains today of this Temple except a small, ivory pomegranate, it must have been magnificent. A relatively small structure (90’ x 30’ x 45’), it nevertheless took seven years to build. Inside and out, it was overlaid with gold, as was the altar. Though Solomon surrounded himself with great buildings and treasures, he also understood the significance of the Temple as the palace of the Lord; and he attempted to make it a house worthy of the glory of God.

In his prayer of dedication, recorded in 1 Kings 8:22–61, Solomon acknowledged his understanding of the Lord as the God not only of Israel but of the whole earth. He knew the Lord dwells in heaven, yet he also understood that a manifestation of God’s glory would grace the Temple. Solomon prayed that the prayers of Israel, directed to the Lord at the Temple, would be heard in heaven.

Although God’s presence was not limited to the Temple (cf. Is. 66:1–2), the Temple was, nevertheless, the focal point of the Lord’s rule on Earth (cf. Ps. 132:13–18). Thus Solomon honored God with this Temple and gave an opportunity for all the people of the world to come and worship the Lord.

Solomon’s Failures

Noncompliance. Deuteronomy 17:14–20 describe how a monarchy fit into the Lord’s theocracy. In essence,
the king was to obey and enforce the Law of Moses. He was not above the Law but was to abide by it. The Lord Himself still was King.

Deuteronomy 17:16–17 also specifically state that the king was not to amass horses or wives. The first statute was to prevent the Israelites from returning to Egypt. The second was to prevent the king’s heart from forsaking the Lord. Although Solomon faithfully administered the Law, he did not personally abide by these two laws. And ignoring the second led to his undoing.

In the ancient Near East, a multiplicity of wives signified a man of power and wealth. David himself had many wives, and the fact was seen as evidence of the Lord’s blessing. In addition, kings often established and sealed treaties by trading daughters with foreign rulers, as security against disloyalty. Many of Solomon’s wives were obtained through political arrangements.

For example, Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter as part of an alliance and even built her a palace in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 3:1). The author of 1 Kings did not disparage Solomon for this action since it was considered the act of a great king. He criticized Solomon not for marrying many wives but because many of them were foreigners, and Solomon loved them (1 Ki. 11:2). He became so enamored with them, in fact, that he began to worship their gods.

Idolatry (1 Ki. 11). It seems almost impossible to imagine that the young Solomon who wrote Proverbs would become the king who practiced idolatry. How did this happen? Was it too much knowledge? Too much wealth? Too many beautiful women?

In Solomon’s book of Ecclesiastes, we read of a wealthy king who tried knowledge, wealth, and pleasure in an attempt to find happiness and meaning. But he concluded that all were vanity. Solomon’s problem was not with the external excesses swirling about him but with the internal allegiances of his heart. Twice the author of 1 Kings repeated the lamentable phrase, “his wives turned away his heart” (1 Ki. 11:3).

How was it, then, that these wives were able to steal Solomon’s heart? The author of 1 Kings revealed the reason. Solomon failed to follow the Law, which specifically warned the Israelites not to associate with the surrounding nations because of the threat of idolatry (Ex. 23:31–33; 34:12–16; Dt. 7:3). Perhaps all Solomon’s blessings caused him to believe he was immune to falling. Perhaps he did not care. Or worse, perhaps he reasoned, “The women who worship these gods are not so depraved after all. In fact, they seem more knowledgeable and interesting than the women of Israel. Maybe God has revealed Himself to Israel as YHWH but also to Sidon as Ashtorah and to Moab as Chemosh. After all, isn’t God bigger than the God of just Israel?” However Solomon justified himself, the consequences of his actions were devastating.

**SOLOMON’S LEGACY**

King Solomon leaves a mixed legacy. On the one hand, even Jesus alluded to his glory (Mt. 6:29). Solomon’s kingdom marked the apex of Israel’s culture and power in the ancient Near East. In addition, Solomon left us three Old Testament examples of wisdom literature: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, in which he proclaimed what it means to be truly wise. Solomon’s Temple stood for 373 years and was the center of worship during Israel’s kingdom years until the Babylonians destroyed it in 586 B.C.

On the other hand, the sad and enduring commentary is that Solomon departed from the Lord late in life and, in so doing, laid the seeds for the Temple’s destruction. Despite Solomon’s idolatry, the Lord proved Himself faithful to the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7) and did not remove the kingdom from David’s seed but disciplined his sons. Solomon’s son Rehoboam ruled only over Judah because the other tribes quickly were torn from him (1 Ki. 11:9–13). Thus, under Rehoboam, the kingdom became divided; and the northern kingdom of Israel degenerated rapidly into idolatry under Jeroboam.

Eventually Israel was taken captive by Assyria, and Judah went into captivity in Babylon—all because Solomon did not guard his heart.

Solomon is an example of an individual who occupied a position of responsibility, recognized his deficiencies, and devoted himself to doing what was right. Consequently, he brought blessing to many. Yet he also exemplifies someone who did well when he was young but wandered from the Lord when he grew old. Ultimately, the verdict on Solomon is that he did not take his own advice. At the end of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote,

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it*

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Some people claim good leadership is all it takes to turn a country around. But sometimes nations can slide so completely down the sewer of moral degradation that God finally flushes the pipes and clears them out altogether. Such a cleansing is what God had in store for the southern kingdom of Judah, and Hulda was the woman He chose to tell of it.

Judah’s steady descent into ignominy culminated with Manasseh, an intensely evil king who reigned from 696 to 642 B.C. If there was something God said not to do, Manasseh probably did it. The Bible says he seduced the Israelites “to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Ki. 21:9). And that was saying something.

Consequently, God promised, “I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down” (2 Ki. 21:13).

Although Manasseh repented toward the end of his reign, it was too little too late to turn the nation around. Furthermore, his successor was as evil as he once had been. Amon, his son, ruled two years and was murdered (642–640 B.C.). Then came Josiah (640–608 B.C.).

Hulda appears in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34—both times in connection with the reign of King Josiah, a genuine man of God who sought the Lord and pursued righteousness. Yet even Josiah’s godly leadership could not stay the coming judgment. Although he labored tirelessly to undo all the evil his grandfather Manasseh had done, the nation was too far gone. God had had it.

Hulda is one of only five prophetesses mentioned by name in Scripture. The other four are Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and Anna (Lk. 2:36). In the eighteenth year of Josiah’s rule (he was only 26), Hilkiah the high priest found a book containing the Mosaic Law while workmen were repairing the Temple. Some commentators believe most copies were destroyed during Manasseh’s reign. Hilkiah may have unearthed a complete Pentateuch or at the least the book of Deuteronomy because what he found apparently contained the curses God promised Israel if the nation abandoned Him.

When Josiah realized how far the nation had departed from God, he tore his clothes in mourning and dispatched Hilkiah, Shaphan the scribe, and three others to inquire of the Lord: “For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD” (2 Chr. 34:21).

So Hilkiah took the book and went straight to Hulda. Interestingly, he did not go to Jeremiah, who was continued on page 43
The People of the Book.”

Whom do you think of when you hear that phrase, which so clearly distinguishes a specific people? Which people and what book?

The people are the Chosen People, the Israelites of old and their progeny—the Jewish people of today, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Book, of course, is the Bible. Its author is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who chose the Jewish people “to be a special people unto himself, above all people who are upon the face of the earth” (Dt. 7:6). And the book they
public reading of God’s Word: 31:10–13 is the first reference to the assemble for the event. Deuteronomy scrolls to Judaism is not taken lightly. Jewish people. The centrality of these nized as a legitimate member of the such an honor, you must be recog-

“ascend” or “go up.” To qualify for scroll. In fact, the word yad

and, perhaps, read from the unrolled up to the Torah to say the blessings

platform) of a synagogue; take the holy Torah scrolls can produce a blessing. Therefore, it is not surprising that to possess a Torah scroll is considered a great honor.

And to ascend to the bima (the platform) of a synagogue; take the yad (silver pointer) in hand; and, like Ezra of old, read aloud the Word of God is considered an enormous privilege. Today, when the Jewish people gather publicly to worship, a specific number of men are honored with the opportunity to make aliyah—to go up to the Torah to say the blessings and, perhaps, read from the unrolled scroll. In fact, the word aliyah means “ascend” or “go up.” To qualify for such an honor, you must be recog-

ized as a legitimate member of the Jewish people. The centrality of these scrolls to Judaism is not taken lightly.

Before the Torah can be read, a minimum of ten men, a minyon, must assemble for the event. Deuteronomy 31:10–13 is the first reference to the public reading of God’s Word: Thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy sojourner who is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law (vv. 11–12).

The book of Nehemiah records that the Jewish people—male, female, old, and young—stood for half the day to listen to God’s Word (8:1–8).

When the Sephardic Jews (those of Mediterranean descent) gather, they open the scroll and lift it up in full view of the congregation before reading the Torah. In Ashkenazi congregations (those of Eastern European descent), the Torah is lifted after it is read. Either way, the congregation chants, “This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel” (Dt. 4:44).

Four events in a person’s life virtually mandate that he receive an aliyah. The first of these is the birth of a child. Certainly, any birth is a “blessed event.” But in a Jewish home, at least part of the rejoicing takes place around the Word of God. If the baby is a girl, she receives her name after her father has made aliyah at the syna-

gogue on the Sabbath following her birth. There he publicly speaks his daughter’s name for the first time. If the baby is a boy, the father makes aliyah after the brit milah, or covenant of circumcision, which takes place eight days after the child’s birth. That, too, is when the father publicly speaks his boy’s name aloud for the first time.

The first opportunity for Jewish people to read from a scroll is when they turn thirteen. The event is the bar mitzvah (meaning “son of the commandment”) for boys and, in some synagogues, the bat mitzvah for girls (daughter of the command-

ment). For many Jewish people, these events become the defining moments of their lives. Almost every Jewish person I have met who has ascended the platform to be recog-

nized as a son or daughter of the commandment vividly remembers reading from the scroll in front of friends and family for the first time.

The third life-cycle event requiring aliyah takes place the Sabbath before a wedding. The bridegroom goes up to read from the holy scroll. When he is finished, the congregation pummels him with candy, a practice believed to insure a sweet life. It is a remarkably holy

The word Torah comes from the verbal root that means to guide or to instruct. Jewish liturgy proclaims Torah a tree of life to

and hilarious time for both the bridegroom and the congregation. Recently a well-known talk show host elaborated on this custom as he anticipated his brother “finally” getting married. “We are going to throw a little harder,” he said, “because he kept us waiting thirty-nine years.”

The fourth important aliyah comes at the Sabbath before observ-

ing yahrzeit, the anniversary of the death of an immediate family
member. A solemn good bye is marked by reading the Word of the God who gives and takes life.

It is noteworthy that, regardless of whether an event gives great joy or great sadness, the Jewish thing to do is to declare God’s Word by reading it in public. This declaration is so important that, before it takes place, the individual called on to read from the sacred scroll must recite two blessings. The first says, “Bless the Lord who is blessed. Blessed is the Lord who is forever blessed. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has chosen us from among all peoples by giving us Thy Torah. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, giver of the Torah.”

The second blessing states, “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us Thy Torah of truth and thereby planted among us Thy Torah. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, giver of the Torah.”

So holy, so magnificent is the scroll that the reader takes his talit (prayer shawl), touches it to the parchment, then brings his hand to his mouth. It is a holy kiss.

For some Jewish people, reading from the Torah and making aliyyah is the dramatic reenactment of the theophany at Sinai.2

It is believed that the reader is in the place of the Almighty. The person called to read represents the people to whom the Torah was given; and the segan, the congregational leader who apportions the aliyyot (plural of aliyyah) and stands beside the reader, has the role of Moses.

Although the privilege of aliyyah is significant in these four life-cycle events, individuals can receive aliyyot at other times. On Shabbat (Sabbath), one of the most important days on the Jewish calendar, up to seven aliyyot are given. These seven slots must be filled by individuals from prescribed groups of people. One of the seven has to be a kohain, a descendant of Aaron. He is regarded as a possible high priest. Another spot must be taken by a Levite, a person from the priestly tribe. The other five positions are filled by men from the congregation, “Israelites,” sometimes called in Hebrew the am ha’aretz (the people of the land). These persons can be from any tribe except Levi. Of course, no one today knows for certain what tribe he is from. Jewish people must take an educated guess.

So it is that a certain people, the people of the Book, ascend to read and listen to the Word of the Lord. This tradition has been practiced by Jews for thousands of years and is the method God has used to teach and instruct His people.

Luke 4 records an aliyyah that was unprecedented and unrepeatable. The portion of Scripture to be read that day was Isaiah 61:1–2. The person chosen to read it was Jesus, a legitimate Israelite who knew with absolute certainty that He was from the tribe of Judah. Luke 4:16–19 records the event:

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet, Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

On completing those words, Jesus did something dramatic, something so unusual it stunned the congregation. He stopped, closed the book, sat down, and said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Lk. 4:21). Jesus used his aliyyah to testify of His identity as the Messiah of Israel. Unfortunately, His offer was rejected. And it would be rejected many more times by many others who did not believe the Word. His aliyyah was unique; but its results were not. People still decline to consider God’s Word.

Time after time in our collective history and in our individual lives, His Word has gone unheeded, even rejected. Although it is a great honor and privilege to make aliyyah and read from the Torah, it is but a fleeting moment of glory with no lasting value unless the Words of God inscribed there grip the soul of the reader. Will the people of the Book obey the Book? The answer to that question is of eternal significance.

The prophet Micah (4:1–2) and his contemporary, Isaiah (Isa. 2:2–4), told of a future time when all will accept God’s Word. Both men recorded this prophecy:

In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Mic. 4:1–2).

That aliyyah will be special indeed.

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Sin is like a moral cancer, infecting everything it touches. If you do not deal with it, it will corrupt you totally. What is true of moral corruption in man is also true in nations. When God confronted Israel about her spiritual and moral malignancy, the nation refused to deal with it. In chapter 10, Hosea traced the pattern of sin that ultimately resulted in the nation’s demise.

Sin Denounced

Hosea continued to speak of Israel’s sin in agricultural terms. Israel is described as “an empty vine.”

He bringeth forth fruit unto himself; according to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land, they have made handsome images (v. 1).

The word empty in Hebrew means “luxuriant” and refers to the overflowing abundance of fruit Israel enjoyed during the days of Jeroboam II. However, the Israelites attributed their prosperity to the false gods of Baal rather than to Jehovah. And the more they prospered, the more extensive and elaborate became the idols they made.

Hosea called Israel double-minded. “Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty. He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images” (v. 2). The word divided means “smooth, tricky, treacherous, slippery, deceitful, unreliable speech.” Israel’s speech and approach to God was hypocritical—divided and deceitful. She tried to worship both God and Baal. Ultimately, this dual allegiance provoked God to destroy Israel’s altars, images, and false religious system.

In verse 3, Israel realized that no one could deliver the nation in time of war. “We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what, then, should a king do to us?” Upon reflection, the people knew that not even a king would be able to rescue the nation from judgment. The Assyrian invasion resulted in the destruction of Israel’s political power and the removal of her king. Afterward,
Israel realized that her lack of reverential faithfulness to God was the reason for her judgment. Lack of faithfulness to God also spilled over to a lack of regard for individual rights. The Israelites and their kings made legal agreements with no intention of honoring them. “They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant; thus judgment springeth up like hemlock in the furrows of the field” (v. 4). Verbal duplicity in regulating citizens’ rights produced a breakdown in justice. Lawsuits sprang up quickly and plentifully, like hemlock (poisonous herb) that grows in a fallow field.

Israel knew that judgment was imminent and feared the loss of her calf-idol:

The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven; for its people shall mourn over it, and its priests that rejoiced on it, for the glory of it, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to King Jareb; Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel (vv. 5-6).

It was customary for a conquering army to carry off the gods of its defeated foe, thereby demonstrating the strength and superiority of its own gods. The idols would be melted down and presented as a gift to King Jareb. No record exists of an Assyrian king named Jareb. The phrase King Jareb means “warrior king” and is a figurative title for the king of Assyria, who was the final subjugator of the kingdom of Israel. Israel was disgraced and put to shame (v. 6) because she trusted in idols who were powerless to protect her in time of war.

Assyria showed no mercy to Israel. The Assyrians stripped the land of everything:

As for Samaria, her king is cut off like the foam [splinter of wood] upon the water. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars (vv. 7–8).

Verbal duplicity in regulating citizens’ rights produced a breakdown in justice. Lawsuits sprang up quickly and plentifully, like hemlock.

Samaria’s king was swiftly carried away like a splinter of wood on a tumultuous sea. Everything was destroyed and removed: idols, high places, and the wicked monarch. Thorns and thistles grew up, covering the site where the shrines and altars once stood.

In despair and anguish, the people cried for the mountains and hills to cover them (v. 8). They preferred death to being captured by Assyria. Yet God did not answer Israel’s cry. Unbelievers will make a similar plea when they experience the terror of God’s wrath during the future Tribulation (Rev. 6:16).

Israel’s sin is compared to that of Gibeah: “O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah; there they stood; the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them” (v.9). The incident Hosea referred to is recorded in Judges 20:1–48. Israel almost destroyed the entire tribe of Benjamin for sheltering the wicked men of Gibeah who brutally raped a Levite’s concubine. Israel experienced the same fate when the Assyrians invaded the country.

God said, “It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows” (v. 10). God determined the time when He would punish Israel for her sin. The phrase when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows is better translated, “when I (God) shall bind them for their two transgressions.” The meaning is difficult to interpret. Some believe the phrase refers to Judah and Israel yoked together in evil (like plowing oxen) before God’s eyes. Others interpret it to mean Israel is yoked to the two golden calves set up in Dan and Bethel. Still others believe the phrase refers to Israel’s former sin at Gibeah and her priest’s sin of idolatry. Whichever view one holds, judgment on Israel was certain.

Ephraim (Israel), who was deprived of her calf-idol, is compared to a heifer: “And Ephraim
is like an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the grain, but I passed over upon her fair neck; I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods” (v. 11). A young cow was trained to do easy work and allowed to be unmuzzled, so she could eat while threshing grain. In like manner, Israel lived in a comfortable land of plenty, able to indulge herself because of the prosperity God provided. Ephraim, however, failed to appreciate her situation under God’s covenant relationship and became yoked to immorality and idolatry. Therefore, God would place Israel under a harsh yoke that would chafe her fair neck raw. Both Israel and Judah would be yoked to their enemies and made to perform harsh labor. Plowing and harrowing was backbreaking work in a land like Israel with rocky, thin soil. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians destroyed Israel (722 B.C.) and Babylon took Judah captive (586 B.C.).

 Salvation Announced

Although destruction hung over Israel, God still announced that judgment could be averted. Hosea said, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (v. 12). Fallow ground is land that has been plowed but left unseeded. During the growing season, it becomes hard and full of weeds. If Israel broke up the fallow ground of her hard heart, she would receive loving-kindness and mercy from God. But first, Israel needed to root out the noxious growth of sin that had overtaken her. Then the nation needed to seek the Lord earnestly and zealously, in true repentance. If Israel had responded in such a manner, God would have withheld judgment and would have rained righteousness on the nation.

To reinforce the need for sowing righteousness by repenting, Hosea reminded Israel of all the evil she had plowed:  
*Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies; because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men* (v. 13).

But Hosea’s enumeration of Israel’s sin did not bring conviction on the people; neither did his call to repentance. Instead, Israel turned a deaf ear to the prophet.

Sentence Pronounced

Because Israel failed to respond to Hosea’s call to seek the Lord, the prophet had no choice but to pronounce judgment: “Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle; the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children” (v. 14). In the siege, people could hear the noise of war and confusion. All of Israel’s strongholds would be laid waste. The inhuman cruelty of the Assyrian army would be unleashed on the people, and none would be spared. Mothers would bend over their children to protect them but to no avail; both would be slaughtered.

Israel’s destruction is compared to Shalman’s devastation of Beth-arbel. Little is known about Shalman or the city of Beth-arbel. Many scholars believe that Shalman is a contracted form of Shalmaneser, the name of a number of Assyrian kings. Shalmaneser V, son of Tiglath-pileser III, is the king to whom Hoshea of Israel became subject (2 Ki. 17:3) after he attacked Israel in 725 B.C. Others believe Shalman refers to Shalamanu, a Moabite king who invaded Galilee and later paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser. Beth-arbel may well be Arbel in Galilee. In this context, the name Shalman probably refers to Shalmaneser.

The Assyrian invasion would bring an end to Israel. Hosea said, “So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness; in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off” (v. 15). Bethel, the center of all wickedness (representing every city in Israel), would be destroyed completely like Beth-arbel. At dawn’s light, when soldiers assemble for battle, King Hoshea would be cut off, thus ending the kingship within Israel. Israel’s misplaced confidence in its military, rather than in God’s power, was the nation’s downfall.

Failure to deal with her spiritual malignancy resulted in Israel’s inevitable judgment. God’s chastisement of Israel is an example and warning to each nation in every generation that forgets God. Through the apostle Paul, God reminds us today, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).
Teaching about the Holocaust in conjunction with faith is often a delicate situation. It is a sensitive, difficult topic, but one with many lessons for people who want to learn about the mercy and patience of God.

Why did God allow the Holocaust? How should people today react to the fact of the Holocaust? And what can I learn from such a tragedy? Many people ask these questions. The answers, of course, are found in the Bible.

The Holocaust is not something new to me. I grew up in a family where my father, a Holocaust survivor, spoke about it daily. For years, each Sabbath before going to church, we would eat breakfast and listen to a devotion that would be a story from the Holocaust. My father, Zvi, was ten years old in 1939 when the Nazis occupied his hometown of Warsaw, Poland. He became an orphan and managed to survive outside the ghetto because he didn’t look Jewish, and he learned how to run for his life.

Every day he told us something else that happened to him during those terrible years—how he ran from one place to another, what this person did to him, what happened to that person.

I have heard much about the Holocaust. And although I am relatively young, I probably know more about it than people who are eighty because I heard about it
from someone who passed through it, someone who shared with us every description, every situation, and every gruesome detail.

Some aspects of the Holocaust are difficult for people to accept. But we must never dare to put ourselves in the position of thinking we are more merciful or knowledgeable than God. We do not know everything and cannot think that God somehow was indifferent; and, if only we had been in charge of the universe, we would have done better.

It is important to remember this fact when people imply that they are more merciful or trustworthy than God. God knows best. Let us always remember that.

The First Destruction

The Bible describes many tragedies, and they all have a common thread. How did God sanction the annihilation of nations? How did God punish individuals? What was His reason? What was His purpose? Why did He allow these things at all? And what kind of attitude did He expect His people to manifest after such tragedies?

A common factor runs through these past tragedies and those the Bible says are yet to come. We cannot separate the Holocaust from these but must place it within a biblical framework where it belongs.

One major tragedy, although not the first for the people of Israel, was the destruction of the first Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. A great many people died then. And when the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, the number of Jewish people killed then was roughly equal in proportion to the number killed in the Holocaust. Of course, we were not eighteen million people in the second Temple era. But proportionately speaking, the percentage of Jewish people who died in that destruction was relatively the same as the percentage who perished at the hands of Hitler.

However, when we speak of the many people killed in the second destruction, not one of us even wrinkles a brow. Why? Because we did not have uncles or fathers or grandfathers there. It is easy to speak about a Holocaust that happened 2,000 years ago. But one that occurred only fifty years ago becomes a difficult, sensitive subject.

Why? Because our uncles and fathers who survived it are still alive. The blood is still fresh. Yet the same principles apply to all three tragedies and to the future destruction prophesied in the Bible. We should feel the same emotion for those who endured the second destruction as for those who endured the Holocaust of World War II.

The Captivity

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon when the prophet Jeremiah warned the Israelites that God would allow the Babylonians to move against them and they would be taken from their land for seventy years. Why? Because they did not keep the Law.

Second Chronicles 36:21 tells us that Israel would be exiled for seventy years “until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.”

God sent the Israelites into captivity for one year for each sabbatical year they failed to observe. Sabbatical years were not intended for agricultural reasons alone. They were important for faith. In the seventh year, you were not to till the ground. By faith, you were supposed to gather your food from the ground without working the soil.

Thus the sabbatical year was to be a time of total dependence on God. You harvested what God gave. Those who had faith did not till the soil. They stayed at home, teaching their children to know about the Lord.

It is a beautiful picture of Deuteronomy 6:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (6:6–7).

“You don’t have time to teach your children?” God was asking. “I’ll give you a full year to do so. Don’t come and tell me, ‘I didn’t have time.’ I will work in your field. Just teach your children to know Me.”

But for almost 500 years, the people of Israel did not keep the sabbatical year. Consequently, for each one
they failed to keep, they suffered one year outside the land. For hundreds of years they demonstrated a lack of faith—but God was patient. He did not bring chastisement immediately.

So He allowed them to be taken into captivity in Babylon for seventy years. Do not think it was an easy trip. Nebuchadnezzar did not come with buses or jumbo jets, telling people, “Here is your food package. Enjoy it while flying to Babylon.”

They walked more than 1,000 miles and hungered for death along the way. A certain young man walked into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon in 605 B.C., during the first wave of deportation. He probably saw his parents die along the way. No doubt, many of his friends never arrived at their final destination. He was fifteen to twenty years old. How do you think he reacted when he saw a nation dying before his eyes?

In Daniel 9, he described everything. Many people think that chapter 9 contains only prophecy. However, only verses 24–27 are prophetic. Most of the chapter is Daniel’s prayer.

And I prayed unto the LORD, my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thine ordinances (vv. 4–5).

Not once does the Bible mention any personal sin on Daniel’s part. Yet he basically prayed, “Forgive me as well. I and my nation, my leaders, we all broke the law. The shame is on us, not on You.”

Bear in mind that the man who said this saw his nation die along the way. He saw his country collapse and his people taken captive. Yet Daniel did not say to God, “It’s unfair.” Instead, he said, “The shame is on us. We broke Your law. You are so merciful. Please forgive us.”

He said, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, . . . to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee” (9:7–8). In verse 9 he said, “To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.”

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God is not fickle.
He does not have moods. He is different than we are. His thoughts are different; His ways are different.

The Purpose. We do not have a God who one morning says, “Oh, I hate them,” and the next morning changes His mind and says, “Oh, today I love them.” God is not fickle. He does not have moods. He is different than we are. His thoughts are different; His ways are different. God’s actions are not arbitrary or impulsive, precipitated by whims. God’s actions are based on His righteousness and holiness and are for the ultimate betterment of the people.

Because He is righteous and holy, He says, “If you will not listen to Me, I must correct you.” Some of us are parents. Imagine if we repeatedly told our children, “Woe to you if you do not do what I say, because I will punish you,” but we never kept our promise. Imagine if we never corrected our children for the wrong they do and let them do whatever they pleased. We all know what we would be creating. Monsters. We would have a society of anarchists.

The principle is the same with God. His righteousness and holiness demand that He correct His people. Such correction is designed to restore them to a right relationship with Him. In the case of the first destruction, God waited almost 500 years. Such is the balance between love, mercy, long-suffering, and righteousness.

Although Daniel had seen the extreme hardship of his nation, he nevertheless confessed his sin and uttered not a word of criticism against God. This is the example God sets before us.

The nation of Israel sinned. So, too, we sin in our daily lives. God is not guilty. We are guilty. And in the end, God expects the nation to say, as He expects us to say, “We are sorry, God. Please forgive us.”

God wants us to repent. Our repentance is His objective. It is what He seeks from the nation of Israel through what appear to be, humanly speaking, national tragedies. His aim is repentance, not rebellion.

Thus we conclude that the purpose of God’s chastisement is to educate and to bring His people to repentance and back into the will of God. His objective for His children, therefore, is always remedial, never retributory.

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Meno Kalisher, son of a Holocaust survivor, is a native of Jerusalem and Pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly.
T \[\text{hey cry in silence:}\]

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World

Above, the hacked-up Piper Pacer plane on Palm Beach in Ecuador after the Auca Indians attacked the five missionaries, Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, pilot Nate Saint, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian, on January 8, 1956.

Their remains were found in the shallows of the Curaray River in the jungles of Ecuador. Crudely crafted lances protruded from the bodies of the men. A few days earlier, five young Christian missionaries had landed a small plane beside the river. They were on a mission. It was to bring the message of spiritual life in Jesus Christ to a remote and savage tribe known as the Huaorani, meaning “people” in their language. Their neighbors, however, called them Aucas, “savages.”

The Aucas’ reputation for violence was well known. Consequently, the missionaries decided that, before they went in, they would make contact with the tribe from the airplane, using a unique rope-and-bucket system rigged by the pilot. While the plane circled, a long rope tied to a bucket filled with gifts was lowered to the ground. Once they were confident that their friendly and peaceful intentions were established, the men decided to go to the area, set up camp, and make contact with the Aucas. So they landed and set up camp in a prefabricated treehouse. But their plan never materialized. On Sunday, January 8, 1956, Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, pilot Nate Saint, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian were speared and hacked to death by the people they had come to help.

After the missionaries were reported missing, a rescue party from the Ecuadorian Air Force and the United States Army, Air Force, and Navy began aerial searches of the area. On January 13 they found four of the bodies downstream in the Curaray. Ed McCully’s body was seen but was irrevocably swept away by the river. The time of death was placed at 3 P.M. Nate Saint’s watch had stopped at 3:12. At the request of their wives, the four men were buried where they had camped near the river.

When reports of the martyrdom of these promising young American missionaries hit the international media, it captured the attention of people the world over. In the evangelical Christian community, a pall of grief and unbelief descended. This was something that strained our comprehension to the limit. How could it have happened? With a few rare exceptions, missionaries were no longer being hacked to death in the jungles. After all, this was not the age of the martyrs, and such publications as Foxes’ Book of Martyrs seemed remote and out of touch with modern reality.

In the immediate aftermath of the murders, people everywhere demonstrated an insatiable desire for details. They wanted to know names, dates, and all the bits of information they could get about the lives of these five martyrs. Elisabeth Elliot, Jim Elliot’s young widow, wrote a best-selling book, Through Gates of Splendor, that kept bookstores busy just trying to keep it in stock. Pastors memorialized the men from their pulpits; buildings were named in their honor; and for years, the tragedy remained fresh in the minds of Christians.

But that was 1956, a time far removed from what we now know as the “contemporary scene.” In a way, I suppose what happened that continued on page 39
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Alfredo Espinoza awoke one morning, dressed, and went to the medical clinic in Buenos Aires. The next time he saw his home was almost three weeks later. His family visited him and brought him food and clothing because he was so busy he chose to sleep where he worked.

Drs. Alfredo and Asunta Espinoza run The Friends of Israel Medical Clinic in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a sprawling city of 3.2 million people. About 13 million live in the Greater Buenos Aires area, making it one of the largest cities in the world. Since 1982 Alfredo, Asunta, and the medical team they have assembled have provided free treatment, ambulance service, and 24-hour emergency care for people who are too poor to pay for it. Almost all their patients are Jewish—and no patient leaves the clinic without being offered spiritual materials.

Nearly 100 patients a day pass through the doors of the tiny, four-room facility located in the heart of the Jewish population. Last year the ambulance responded to 5,000 calls, attending to people in homes, schools, and on the streets of Buenos Aires. More than 35 percent of the calls were “code red”—life-threatening medical emergencies.

When a terrorist bomb tore through the Jewish Community Center in 1993, The Friends of Israel ambulance was first on the scene and treated victims until all were cared for. Recently the Espinozas established a mobile clinic that travels directly into Jewish neighborhoods and treats patients in their homes and in outlying communities.

In a few weeks, life will change for the Espinozas and the clinic. After years of working in a crowded, rented facility, The Friends of Israel Medical Clinic will move into a home of its own. The Lord has provided a three-story, 18-room building next door to a synagogue in the heart of the Jewish sector.

“It almost seems too good to be true,” Alfredo and Asunta said after they saw it. Because it was used as a medical facility, it has examining rooms, patient quarters, classrooms, and all the related service areas.
Renovations will begin as soon as the clinic moves in May.

We at The Friends of Israel are profoundly thankful to God for the way He has guided us and provided for the expansion of this unique ministry that treats not only the body but also the spirit.

The Espinozas teach classes in Bible; distribute literature; conduct summer outreaches, hospital visitation, and wellness programs; counsel people; and do discipleship training.

In addition, they are outstanding physicians. Alfredo is a cardiologist, kidney specialist, cardiac surgeon, and critical care specialist. Asunta is a pediatrician and dermatologist. Their team includes more than 40 volunteer doctors, medical technicians, and support staff.

The Espinozas joined The Friends of Israel after working for two years as Christian physicians in the jungles of Bolivia. Alfredo, however, already was well acquainted with the work of FOI. His father, Julio, joined us in 1970 as a pastor and minister to the Jewish people of Buenos Aires. After World War II, many Jewish people immigrated to the metropolis. But they could not speak Spanish. Julio, who also speaks Hebrew, Portuguese, French, Italian, German, and Russian, ministered to them. The Espinoza home often looked like an international book repository as Julio distributed dual-language Bibles and materials to help them master Spanish.

Today he and his son serve the people of Buenos Aires together. Julio hosts The Friends of Israel radio broadcast every Saturday and faithfully continues to communicate the great truths and principles for living found in the Scriptures.

The past 20 years have borne much fruit for the Kingdom of God. And with His blessing, it will bear much more. We still have many needs. It will cost much to outfit the clinic and renovate it. But we know whom we have believed and are persuaded that, with His help and guidance, it can be done.
We have commented often in this space about the issue of revisionist history—the writing of fiction while calling it fact. The most recent blatant example is the Arab contention that the Jewish people have had no ancient associations with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This assertion is as barefaced a fabrication as is the revisionist idea that the Holocaust did not occur.

Now, according to a report in The Jerusalem Post, a 1930 pamphlet has been discovered that articulates the Arab position held in those days. Published by the Supreme Moslem Council, the pamphlet declares emphatically that the site’s association with the first (Solomon’s) Temple is “beyond dispute.” The pamphlet further states, “The site is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates from the earliest times. Its sanctity and identity with Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot according to universal belief, on which David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.”

After information from the pamphlet became public, Ikrima Sabri, the mufti of Jerusalem (who was appointed by the Palestinian Authority), denied the validity of the document. He said the report was untrue and taken out of context. The mufti’s denial coincides with the Palestinian Authority’s frantic desecration of areas underneath the Temple Mount in an attempt to destroy the Jewish identity of the site. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority is now contending that the Jewish people not only have no claim to any history on the Mount but that they also have no right to worship at the Western (Wailing) Wall.

The Palestinian Authority is now contending that the Jewish people not only have no claim to any history on the Mount but that they also have no right to worship at the Western (Wailing) Wall. That, too, it says, was constructed to buttress the foundations of the Muslim Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The absurdity of these claims is obvious. However, they are also dangerous. If you have been paying attention, you have noticed that the international news media have not offered any serious rebuttal of the Muslim contentions regarding the Temple Mount.

The idea seems to be that this Muslim claim is just one more evidence of the level of the Arabs’ frustration with the way they allegedly have been treated by Israel. Thus blatant untruths are winked at and tolerated, only to be embraced later as fact. This is a dangerous road to travel, and the ramifications will extend far beyond Israel and the Middle East. The practice of tolerating the fabrication of spurious history for the benefit of unscrupulous, agenda-driven people is on the rise. And, if unchecked, it will destabilize societies and create an every-man-for-himself environment rife with anarchy.

For this reason, what is transpiring at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem should concern everyone who values the truth. Because if the facts of history mean nothing, the rights of every law-abiding human being are in serious jeopardy. And, whether we like thinking about it or not, we may be next in line to have our rights trampled and see the evidence of those rights destroyed.

The mufti is wrong. The Jewish people have indisputable prior claim to the Temple Mount and its environs. And, in a very real sense, the stones are crying out. So should we.
The Study of God

Introduction

Our series now comes to the doctrine of God, the formal name of which is theology proper. This division of “The Foundations of Faith” will examine the major scriptural truths concerning God and will consider some of the implications of those truths.

Various Views of God

A survey of all mankind would uncover so many different views concerning God that it would be impossible to describe them in a single article. However, we shall examine several of the more prominent views that have been held historically.

Atheism. Atheism asserts that there is no God. No personal being or object should be worshiped as a god. Madalyn Murray O’Hair prominently represented this view in America.

Agnosticism. Agnosticism claims that perhaps God exists, but we do not and cannot know that fact with any degree of certainty.

Pantheism. Pantheism, in its ultimate sense, believes the universe in its entirety is God. The basic expression of this view is “all is God.” Every individual object in the universe (every tree, flower, animal, rock, human, etc.) is part of God. This position prompts the worship of nature and such concepts as “Mother Earth” and the protection of the environment, animals, and trees because they are sacred.

A different form of pantheism is the belief that the gods of all religions or faiths must be regarded and respected as equal. Any claim that there is only one true God is to be rejected as intolerant. As part of its goal to unify all of mankind, the ancient Roman Empire adopted this form of pantheism as official policy. Emperor Hadrian gave visible expression to this policy by having a magnificent temple called the Pantheon built in the capital city of Rome to house images of all the gods worshiped within the empire.1

Because the early Christians insisted that the God of the Bible is the only true God and refused to recognize all other gods worshiped in the empire, they were despised and persecuted by many of the people and the imperial government of Rome.

Polytheism. Polytheism claims many gods exist, not just one true God. Hinduism is a classic example of polytheism because, in its most popular form, it believes in the existence of some 330 million gods.2

Deism. Deism began in 17th-century England as a naturalistic religion based solely on human reason. Deists believe in the existence of one personal God who created the universe with precise design but then withdrew from it to let it be governed solely by natural law. Deism contends that at no time in history has the Creator interacted in any way with the universe He created. Thus there have been no supernatural interventions, miracles, special divine revelations to mankind, prophecies, or divine acts of providence. Jesus Christ was not a divine being who took humanity on Himself through incarnation. He was only a man, but the greatest human teacher and example of morality and ethics who ever lived. The Bible is not a divinely inspired revelation to mankind. It is the human record of the discovering of God’s moral and ethical laws totally through human reason.

As a Deist, Thomas Jefferson studied the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible but literally cut all references to the supernatural out of its pages.3

Non-Trinitarian Monotheism. Non-Trinitarian monotheism declares that there is only one personal, moral, supernatural God. But that one true God is one divine person or being. He is not triune (a union of three divine persons or beings). Judaism, Islam, some forms of Buddhism, the Watchtower Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses), and Unitarianism advocate this view.
Finite Theism. Finite theism believes in a personal God, but He has limitations. He is not infinite. This God is in a struggle against evil, against great odds. He is unable to determine the outcome of that struggle on His own because of His limitations. His victory over evil depends on what the majority of human beings choose to do. Only if the majority chooses to join Him by opposing evil will God ultimately defeat it.

Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian religion that continues today, and a number of modern philosophers of the Western world are proponents of finite theism.

Biblical Theism. Biblical theism is the view of God presented in the Bible. It claims there is one, personal, moral, infinite, supernatural God consisting of three equal Persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). In other words, the one true God is triune. Biblical theism has been the historic view of Christianity.

The Knowableness of God

The existence of these and many other views concerning God prompts the following question: How can a person determine which one of these views is correct? The only way would be if God is knowable to mankind. Is it possible for human beings to know that God is a reality and, if a reality, then to know God’s nature, thoughts, ways, actions, and relationship to the universe, planet Earth, mankind, and individual persons? If these points concerning God are knowable to mankind, then it is possible for a person to determine which view of God is correct.

The Bible addresses the issue of the knowableness of God. In fact, it presents two major concepts related to it.

A different form of pantheism is the belief that the gods of all religions or faiths must be regarded and respected as equal. Any claim that there is only one true God is to be rejected as intolerant.

The First Concept. Mankind can know God. The Bible makes this assertion in several ways. The Bible presents the following divine command to human beings: “Know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). In addition, Psalm 100:3 commands people to know “the Lord, he is God.” These commands imply that God is knowable to humanity.

In addition, the Scriptures assert that God communicated knowledge to people. They state that God “teacheth man knowledge” (Ps. 94:10) and that “the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6). The Bible also records God’s promise to make Himself known to prophets (Num. 12:6).

Many biblical passages indicate that the Israelites knew God in Old Testament times. For example, God made Himself known to them when they were in Egypt (Ezek. 20:5, 9). God was known in Judah, and His name was great in Israel (Ps. 76:1). The Lord “made known . . . his acts unto the children of Israel” (Ps. 103:7). In addition, they were to know such things as the following: “the Lord, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else” (Dt. 4:39); that He is the one who brought them out of Egypt so He might dwell among them (Ex. 29:46); that the Lord “put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel” (Ex. 11:7); and that He is “the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations, And repayeth them who hate him to their face, to destroy them” (Dt. 7:9–10). God desired that Israel have the knowledge of God more than He desired their burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6).

Scripture also reveals that individuals possessed knowledge of God in Bible times. God made His ways known unto Moses (Ps. 103:7). Rahab, the Jericho harlot, told the Israelite spies, “I know that the Lord hath given you the land” (Josh. 2:9). As the result of being healed of his leprosy, Naaman, captain of the Syrian army, declared, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel” (2 Ki. 5:15). Job knew that God could do everything and that no thought can be withheld from Him (Job 42:2). Balaam said he “heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High” (Num. 24:16). King Manasseh “knew that the Lord, he was God” (2 Chr. 33:13). Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon’s greatest king, “knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 5:21). Jonah knew that God is “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Jon. 4:2). David knew that God...
tests the heart and has pleasure in uprightness (1 Chr. 29:17) and that He would “hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand” (Ps. 20:6).

The Bible indicates that knowledge of God was available to all nations. Originally, the whole world knew God (Rom. 1:21). But through time, most of humanity willfully abandoned the knowledge of Him (Rom. 1:18–23). Through the supernatural plagues that God brought on Egypt, He gave the following knowledge to Pharaoh and the Egyptians: the Lord is God (Ex. 7:5, 17), there is no one like Him in all the earth (Ex. 9:14), and the earth belongs to the Lord (Ex. 9:29). Kings Solomon and Hezekiah prayed that all the people and kingdoms of the earth would “know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else” (1 Ki. 8:60; cf. 2 Ki. 19:19).

The Scriptures also teach that today every person who is born of God spiritually knows God (1 Jn. 4:7) and can increase in the knowledge of God and His will (Col. 1:9–10).

The Bible even reveals several facts about the knowledge of God in the future. First, as a result of God supernaturally destroying the massive armies of Gog of Magog and their allies when they will invade the nation of Israel, He “will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know” He is “the Lord” (Ezek. 38:23). In addition, God will make His “holy name known” among His “people, Israel . . . and the nations shall know” He is “the Lord, the Holy One in Israel” (Ezek. 39:7).

Second, at the beginning of the Millennium, every person on Earth will know God (Jer. 31:34; Mt. 25:31–46).

Third, throughout the Millennium, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

**The Second Concept.** Mankind cannot fully comprehend or understand God. The Bible teaches that God is knowable but incomprehensible to men. King David declared that God’s greatness “is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3). The apostle Paul wrote, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).

The next article will address how it is possible for mankind to know God.

Renaud E. Showers is an Author, Professor, and International Conference Speaker for The Friends of Israel.

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**They Cry in Silence,** from page 31

day along the Curaray River in the remote jungles of Ecuador was a harbinger of things to come—the awful dawning of a new age of martyrs, an age that would descend with a ferocity unknown since early Christians faced the fury of a pagan world on the floors of arenas and the bodies of crucified believers were set on fire by the hundreds along the roads of the Roman Empire. But this time, things are different.

In our own way, we all felt that we knew Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian. We sensed that they were next of kin and prayed for their families and, yes, for the Aucas who took their lives. We believe those collective prayers fueled the spiritual awakening that eventually saw many of the men who participated in the murders find light and life in the Savior whom the missionaries had come to proclaim.

Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about the hundreds of thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters who are being slaughtered today. They constitute a ragged, faceless procession. Their deaths go unnoticed by the secular world and are virtually unmourned by many who call themselves evangelical Christians. These martyrs are men, women, and emaciated children who are being starved, hacked, raped, mutilated, and murdered because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Tragically, we don’t even know their names or seem to care.

On this page in future issues of *Israel My Glory,* we will give faces to these brethren, with the fervent prayer that God will turn our hearts toward them and that our hands will reach out to them with help.

Elwood McQuaid is Editor-in-Chief for The Friends of Israel.
**Fatah: We’ll make life hell in Gilo—and kill Israelis in Bethlehem**

*The Jerusalem Post*—Fatah has issued a leaflet vowing to escalate the intifada and to make the lives of Gilo residents “hell.” The leaflet praised the recent killing of Israeli motorist Tzahi Sasson on the Bethlehem bypass road and vowed there will be no security for Israelis under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Fatah also has warned Israeli journalists they will be killed if they enter Bethlehem, after reporting Palestinian criticism of the local Fatah leader.

“The period of the Sharon government will not be stable as he has promised,” the Fatah leaflet reads, pledging to “continue to strike at Gilo and turn the lives of the settlers to hell.” Fatah considers the Jerusalem neighborhood, which has come under fire, a West Bank settlement built on Palestinian land captured in the 1967 war.

“The election of Ariel Sharon was a direct challenge to the intifada,” said Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti. “Sharon is the last bullet in the Israeli pocket before surrender.” He said that, sooner or later, Israel will be forced to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders and recognize the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes inside Israel, adding, “We have nothing to talk about with Sharon. He has nothing to offer.”

A leaflet also harshly condemned reports carried by Israel Radio quoting Palestinians in Bethlehem who accused Kamal Hamid, the regional senior Fatah commander, of corruption.

According to reports, Hamid used his position to extort bribes and embezzle public funds.

“Fatah is warning that any Israeli, even a journalist, is barred from entering Bethlehem and anyone who does so won’t get out alive,” the Fatah announcement said.

**Bush explores moving embassy to Jerusalem**

President George W. Bush has begun exploring the possibility of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, according to *The Jerusalem Report*.

The magazine quotes White House foreign policy spokesperson Mary Ellen Cuntryman as saying, “The president has asked his foreign policy team to look into how this can be accomplished.”

In 1995 Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act, stating the American Embassy should be moved no later than May 31, 1999. Then-President Bill Clinton had pledged to relocate the embassy to Jerusalem but never did.

Israel has considered Jerusalem its capital since 1950, but only a handful of countries have acknowledged the fact. The report says “a plot earmarked for the building has been leased in the Talpiot neighborhood for more than a decade.”

**Palestinian arsenal includes antiaircraft missiles, cannons**

The Palestinian police, militia, and other Palestinian groups maintain an arsenal of illegal weapons that includes machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, antitank missiles, shoulder-launched antiaircraft missiles, cannons, machine guns, and more.

*Arutz Sheva* reports that an Israeli document submitted to the Mitchell Committee investigating the recent violence lists a substantial cache of illegal Palestinian weaponry.

*Arutz Sheva* said the document “is emphatic” that the Palestinian violence was not a reaction to 73-year-old Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount. The document states, “The groundwork for the violence had been laid long before this. Stung by the widespread appreciation in the international community that Palestinian inflexibility was responsible for the failure of the Camp David Summit . . . the Palestinian leadership looked to violence ‘to create new facts on the ground.’”

Many people claim Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000 incited the recent wave of violence, now known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. However, Sharon, who was born in British Mandate Palestine, has said the Palestinian Authority planned the violence long ago, then orchestrated it.

**El Al gets world’s newest airplane as tourism crashes**

As tourism in Israel plummets, El Al has taken delivery of the first of three Boeing 777 airliners it purchased during better days in 1999.

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A Moslems still digging under Temple Mount

Four more well-known Israelis are demanding the government do something about what they say is new Moslem excavation underneath the Mosque of Omar and Al-Aqsa Mosque. They say this illegal excavation is destroying valuable artifacts from the period of the Jewish Temples.

According to Arutz Sheva, Former Supreme Court Chief Justices Meir Shamgar and Moshe Landau; Jerusalem’s former mayor, Teddy Kollek; and writer Amos Oz have signed a petition maintaining that the Moslem Waqf is conducting extensive, illegal excavation without supervision.

“We cannot remain silent as we witness nonstop daily work on the Temple Mount,” it reads. “History and academic and archaeological research will not forgive you if you do not halt the terrible vandalism that is occurring before your eyes, with your knowledge and consent.”

The news media have reported that the Waqf is digging a tunnel to link the Al-Aqsa and Solomon’s Stables Mosques.

The Waqf has barred Jewish people from visiting the Temple Mount since September 28, 2000. The Jerusalem Post has reported that the Waqf even refuses permission to representatives of the Antiquities Authority, which is in charge of supervising and protecting the site’s archaeological resources.

A government committee has been established to evaluate the charges of

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In Psalm 20:8 it is written, “They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright.”

So many nations seek our downfall. Our enemies are all around us, and each wants to become the first to obliterate us and emerge as the hero that destroyed the tiny nation of Israel.

The world has so many big countries. Russia has 6.6 million square miles of land; Canada has 3.8 million. Even Jordan has 57,354 square miles of land. We have only 7,850 square miles. And although we are only the size of New Jersey, the eyes of the whole world focus on us. Everyone wants to take our little piece of land away from us.

One day, as I was leaving my home in Jerusalem, I stopped to talk with my neighbors who are Arabs. We speak often, as good neighbors do. I was surprised when these people, with whom I have been friends for so long, said to me in their own language, “You will not live here much longer because this land belongs to us, and we will take it back.”

I told them, “I have heard such talk since I came to Israel in 1948. We were but a half million people then, and you were as numerous as the locusts in Egypt. But you see, the Word of the Lord is eternal. In our assembly [church] we often sing from Isaiah 62:1, ‘For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest.’”

“That is only a nice song,” they said. “It means nothing.”

I told them these words are written in the Bible. “And what is more holy than the Bible?” I asked.

Naturally, they replied, the Quran, the holy book of Islam.

So I showed them the facts, the fulfillment of Psalm 122:2–3, where it is written, “Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.” Jerusalem had been a divided city. But it was united under Israel in 1967 during the Six-Day War.

“How could this happen?” I asked. “We are so few in number, and the Arab world is so large. I will show you the answer.”

I read for them Isaiah 49:25, where God says, “I will contend with him that contendeth with thee.”

“God Himself fought for us,” I said. “That is why we won.”

Then three older Arab neighbors arrived, people I have known for twenty-five years. They looked at the younger Arabs and said, “You should not be so sure of yourselves. You should know that Israel will never lose because God promised this land to them.”

The younger people were not happy to hear this. But they had to admit that someone powerful was helping us.

So I read from Psalm 124:

If it had not been the LORD who...
was on our side, when men rose up against us; Then they had swallowed us up alive. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth (vv. 2–3, 8).

“We have had victory over you,” I said, “not because of our power but because of the Lord. He has promised this land to His Chosen People that we should bring His salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Then they began asking me the same questions the ultra-Orthodox ask. “Why don’t you look like a religious Jew with a long beard and special clothes? How can you speak with such authority but not look religious?”

I replied, “I do not belong to the group that uses many books and commentaries. I use only the Bible. I know only one God Almighty. About Him it is written that He gave His only begotten Son; and if we come to Him, we shall have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).

“Are you a Jew and yet you believe in Christ?” they asked.

“The Bible is clear,” I told them. “Moses wrote in Deuteronomy that God would raise up a special prophet from among the Jewish people, and we must listen to Him. You, too, must listen to Him. It does not matter what nationality we are. It only matters in whom we have believed. If we believe in the Lord, we are saved.

“It would be best if our leaders came together, not with a big stack of papers, but with the Holy Bible. Then everyone would see that this land belongs to His Chosen People Israel.”

They told me they would like to speak to me again on this subject.

Too Far Gone, from page 21

then probably 25 and in his fifth year of ministry. Nor did he go to Zephaniah, who had prophesied God’s judgment on Judah about three years earlier (around 625 B.C.). Perhaps these men were unavailable. Or possibly Hilkiah did not consider the matter critically important because he sent the book to the king via Shaphan rather than bringing it himself. And when Shaphan delivered it to Josiah, he thought it more important to tell the king first about the money gathered in the Temple (34:17).

Dr. Israel W. Slotki, a Jewish scholar, suggested that Jeremiah was not yet well known whereas Hulda may have been the wife of a Temple official because the Bible says her husband, Shallum, was “keeper of the wardrobe” (34:22). This phrase also could mean he was in charge of the royal garments. In any event, God divinely ordained Hulda and placed her nearby in a suburb of Jerusalem. Moreover, she must have been a well-known woman of excellent character and reputation for the high priest to have consulted her.

According to 19th-century commentator Alfred Edersheim, the fact that such an important matter was brought to a woman “indicates the exceptional position which Hulda occupied in general opinion” and sheds light on the religious conditions of the time. The conditions were terrible. And Hulda’s message said so:

And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, . . . I will bring evil upon this place, and upon its inhabitants, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, Because they have forsaken me (34:23–25).

Yet God showed mercy to Josiah because his heart was tender toward the Lord (34:27). God promised to stay the judgment until after Josiah’s death.

Immorality and godlessness will destroy a nation. Judah had become so corrupted that even the brief revival under Josiah did not produce the sincere, national repentance God desired. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12). And the nation whose God is not has little to look forward to but the message from Hulda.

Lorna Simcox is Senior Editor for The Friends of Israel.