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ABOUT THE COVER
After fifty-four years as a nation, Israel still faces a constant threat from nations and radical elements determined to destroy the Jewish homeland and its people. Our cover is a stark reminder of the cost of this conflict. The young soldier’s expression transmits the strain and weariness the young men and women of the Israel Defense Forces face every day. The pressure has taken its toll on these defenders of the nation. But despite all they face, they remain determined to survive and one day achieve peace.

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We are excited about the changes taking place on the Philadelphia Biblical University (PBU) campus for the incoming class at our Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS). These students will be the first to occupy IJS’s newly constructed, specially designed facilities as part of the university’s recently completed 21st-century classroom building.

Here our students will learn God’s Word using the latest technology available, including interactive communications. Plans also are under way to incorporate “smart” classroom technology, so professors will be able to teach simultaneously over the Internet using multimedia materials.

Over the years I have been tremendously encouraged by the quality of students we are privileged to train at IJS. I wish you could share personally in the blessings I experience as I speak to them, pray with them, and fellowship with them. They demonstrate an outstanding sense of commitment to the Lord and His service, which portends well for the future of The Friends of Israel and the cause of Jesus Christ worldwide.

Although the majority of our students are of average college age and are anticipating going into full-time ministry, we also have been privileged to train many older adults. Some of them come because the Lord has led them to change careers and prepare for full-time ministry. Others attend IJS to become more effective laypersons in their local churches and communities.

The results of our Institute of Jewish Studies program are obvious throughout the worldwide ministry of The Friends of Israel. Graduates have taken their places in many of our vital ministries in the United States and abroad, including Israel, Poland, France, and Australia. They also are filling positions here, at our international headquarters. And the blessings of IJS extend even further, as other alumni serve the Savior in local churches and with other organizations worldwide. Some are missionaries, some are pastors, and others are engaged in a wide range of ministries. They all carry their specialized IJS training in God’s Word that changes lives and builds up the body of Christ.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
Full Page Calendars Ad by Waveline
Standing Tall in the Rose Garden

When George W. Bush strode into the White House rose garden in June, much of the world waited somewhat eagerly to hear what the U.S. chief executive would say. He said a mouthful. Some likened his historic verbal missile to Harry S. Truman’s courageous endorsement of the reestablishment of the Jewish national homeland in 1948. Rep. Tom Lantos of California, a Holocaust survivor and ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, summed up the president’s big theme in a simple sentence. President Bush, he said, “announced the end of the Arafat era.”

As one would expect, naysayers swept in from every direction to take the chief executive to task for what he did or didn’t say. Granted, much more could have been said in relation to virtually every aspect of the speech. And, frankly, there were issues, such as the Israeli settlements, disarming of the Palestinians, his reference to “occupied territories,” and provisional Palestinian statehood, that will no doubt be debated with some enthusiasm in the future.

However, what should rightly be the focus of our attention is what Bush did say that represents a fundamental redirecting of administration policy in the Middle East. In this regard, the president stepped forward in his own right to articulate his foreign policy. In other words, the real George W. Bush stood up. Gone were the equivocation and frustrating mixed signals reflecting the views of appeasement-leaning Arabists in the State Department. A day after his speech, one commentator opined that the only reason the president had come down so heavily in favor of Israel was to grab the Jewish vote. That kind of pervasive liberal cynicism fails to reckon with the fact that perhaps this president had weighed the evidence; looked into the future; thoroughly evaluated what was in the best interests of America, Israel, and the Palestinian people; then made a decision to do the right thing. Keystones were the following:

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, his cadre of corrupt killers, and the terrorist infrastructure must go.

There will be no U.S. recognition of even a provisional Palestinian government until terror ceases and democratic leaders and reforms are in place.

American financial support will not be forthcoming if the Palestinian people refuse to opt for peace. The president reinforced this position at the G-8 economic summit in Canada a few days later.

With the president’s historic declaration, three things become clear. (1) Israel has an ally. The “honest broker” façade, which only weakened America’s ability to act, came down. There was solidarity on the matter of Israel’s security, and there was unity
in the war on terror. (2) Israel has the president’s backing to do what is necessary to protect the lives of its citizens. (3) The Palestinian people have a viable option to accept or reject oppression, poverty, and the misery of constant warfare.

The United States and free world stand ready to launch a “Marshall Plan” type of economic venture capable of elevating the Palestinian people to a plane of economic, educational, and social attainment they have never known.

And for those concerned for the welfare of Christian Arabs within the Palestinian entity, there is hope that, if enacted, democratic reforms would end the growing persecution by Muslim radicals, which has gone unchecked under the Arafat regime. Furthermore, the hostility that has closed Christian holy sites, such as Bethlehem, would be ended; and the civility between Arabs and Christians in decades past would be restored.

None of this, of course, would be a walk in the park. Yasser Arafat has declared that he will run for reelection in the planned January 2003 elections. Many believe he will be a shoo-in. Should the Palestinian people reinstate him and his cronies, they will have clarified the path they have chosen. Make no mistake about it; they have a clear choice. If they elect candidates who will act responsibly and bring their people into the “civilized” world of the twenty-first century, they will usher in a new beginning for themselves and certainly for the State of Israel.

If, instead, they revert to the old ways and reelect their bloodthirsty leaders, it will mean only one thing: The Palestinians are more interested in annihilating Israel and its people than in making better lives for themselves, their children, and the generations to follow. Let’s pray that this will not be their fatal choice.

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

Statement of Activities
Year Ended December 31, 2001

Changes in unrestricted net assets:
Public support and revenue:
Public support:
  Contributions:
    General ................................................. $3,656,755
    Missionary support ............................... 1,635,397
    Institute of Jewish Studies ........................ 18,701
    Legacies and bequests ........................... 311,194
    Total public support ................................... 5,622,047
  Revenue:
    Ministry publications, audio, and video .... 1,298,266
    Conference registrations and fees .......... 49,128
    Investment income ................................. 62,340
    Other income ............................................. 80,866
    Total revenue ........................................... 1,490,600
    Total public support and revenue ............. 7,112,647
Net assets released from restrictions:
  Satisfaction of program restrictions:
    Argentina Medical Clinic Project ........... 440,402
    Others ..................................................... 44,402
    Total net assets released from restrictions .... 484,804

Expenses:
Program services:
  Outreach ministries ............................... 3,412,254
  North American ministries ....................... 1,538,523
  Foreign ministries ................................. 830,286
  Institute of Jewish Studies ...................... 63,154
  Total program services ........................... 5,844,217
Supporting services:
  Management and general ......................... 1,685,091
  Stewardship and fund-raising .................. 283,220
  Total supporting services ....................... 1,968,311
  Total program and supporting services ......... 7,812,528
Increase (decrease) in unrestricted net assets
before other changes .................................. (215,077)
Other changes:
  Grant ..................................................... 44,402
  Decrease in unrestricted net assets .......... (215,077)

Changes in temporarily restricted net assets:
  Contributions ........................................... 590,693
  Legacies and bequests ............................ 15,000
  Actuarial adjustment on annuity obligations .. 18,960
  Net assets released from restrictions ......... (484,804)
  Increase in temporarily restricted net assets .... 139,849
Increase (decrease) in net assets ................. (75,228)
Net assets at beginning of year .................. 3,580,483
Net assets at end of year .......................... $ 3,505,255

Our financial statements were audited by the accounting firm of Lambirdes, Lamos, & Moulthrop Co., Certified Public Accountants. Their report on the audit for the year ended December 31, 2001, was rendered on April 18, 2002, with an unqualified opinion. The above figures are taken from that report.

Correction
Due to a typo on page 7 of our July/August editorial, we incorrectly fixed the Muslim population of France at 60 million. The population of France is 60 million, of which 5 million are Muslims.
Peace in Two Sentences

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14).

For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape (1 Th. 5:3).
Prophets and apostles agree. Throughout the ages men have talked of peace while they made war. They have spoken of utopian societies while they reduced great cities to ashes; and they have promised eras of peace, prosperity, and personal serenity while watching malnutrition and disease ravish their people. To put it bluntly, the course of human history has been a long thoroughfare of broken promises, shattered ambitions, and bloodied bodies.

For disappointing decades, proponents of social and political evolution have deluded themselves and their publics by claiming we are ascending to a higher order of civility, peace, and prosperity and that, by casting aside the authoritarian strictures of biblical Judaism and Christianity in favor of liberating secular liberalism, we would become the shining pagan “global village” so recently popularized by now discredited political, cultural revolutionaries.

These are old stories indeed. Some arose from the mists of ancient lore; others were foisted on us during the last century. But where are we today? Are we any closer to all this bliss and beauty we heard so much about? We don’t need an answer; the truth looms before us every bleak and dismal day that passes. Ironically, words written thousands of years ago are more to the point than most of what is being intoned today from university lecterns, statehouses, mosques, and even some church pulpits in this era of enshrined, wishful thinking. While talk of peace cascades about us, there is no peace—no peace. In fact, the world is more divided, more capable of inflicting mass destruction, and more disposed to doing so than ever in the history of humanity. No! There is no peace.

But What’s So Hard About Finding It?

A focal point in the persistent war for survival is, of course, Israel. While all sides agree that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be found, it remains as illusive as the storied fountain of youth. No Western nation has worked more assiduously than the United States toward achieving a settlement that would assure Israel’s national security and grant the Palestinians a state of their own. But for all of their investment of time, money, and sincere effort to arrive at some kind of settlement acceptable to all parties, the U.S. president and diplomatic experts in Mideast policy keep coming up empty.

When President George W. Bush was preparing his proposal for a “provisional” Palestinian state, he was being mocked for his efforts by the very people he and many in the administration were trying to salvage as legitimate national leaders of the Palestinian people. And while Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat was shouting, “We don’t take orders from anyone,” the Palestinian leadership and its state-controlled media were revving up a less than appreciative response. Their answer came in a three-pronged diatribe against the United States and Israel. They launched a joint public relations campaign with Islamic terror organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

They leveled an intense media attack on America, branding it the “blood-thirsty” supporter of Israeli “racism” and “fascism.”

And, to top it off, they rejected any compromise on their issue of “Palestinian refugee” resettlement (they call it “the right of return”) in Israel, despite Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres’s offer to withdraw and fully dismantle Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.¹

Where are we today? Are we any closer to all this bliss and beauty we heard so much about? We don’t need an answer; the truth looms before us every bleak and dismal day that passes.

This manifestly bald-faced rejection of even an interim agreement would seem to sound the death knell for American efforts to bring some relief to the situation. But we ask again, why is it so hard to find peace for these suffering people? A few days ago, a friend sent me a solution to the problem in two simple sentences:

1. If the Arabs put down their weapons today, there would be no more violence.
Despite all accusations of Israeli aggression and expansionist intent, this statement is the plain truth. Israel wants peace. For far too long the Jewish people have been subjected to torment and aggression dedicated to destroying the nation and its people. Just how far some of their leaders are willing to go to achieve peace was demonstrated by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Camp David Summit two years ago. But rather than accept virtually everything he claimed to want—the West Bank, Gaza, a piece of Jerusalem proper, and a sovereign Palestinian state—Yasser Arafat spurned the offer and preferred to seek “peace” through the muzzle of a gun.

That Israel was willing to accept being pushed into a ghetto-like area and placed in constant mortal danger in exchange for a promise of peace is in itself rather astonishing. Many believe that the concessions Barak offered and then-President Bill Clinton endorsed were born from Israeli desperation and would have assured even more aggression from Israel’s enemies. I agree.

(2) If the Jews put down their weapons, there would be no more Israel.

This statement is the other, darker side of the coin. Such is the only kind of “peace” that will satisfy Muslim radicals. They will settle for nothing less than the complete annihilation of Israel. Perhaps the most revealing and heart-rending demonstration of how deep-rooted and deadly this fanatical hatred is can be heard in a Palestinian mother’s prayer.

Umm Nidal, the mother of a suicide bomber, was interviewed in the London-based Arabic-language daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat.

She first described to reporters how she regarded herself as a Muslim mother:

I am a compassionate mother to my children, and they are compassionate towards me and take care of me. Because I love my son [Muhammad], I encouraged him to die a martyr’s death for the sake of Allah. . . . Jihad is a religious obligation incumbent upon us, and we must carry it out. I sacrificed Muhammad as part of my obligation.

Later she described how she prayed for Muhammad as he went out on his mission of death:

But I worried and feared greatly that the operation would not succeed, and that he would be arrested. I prayed for him when he left the house and asked Allah to make his operation a success and give him martyrdom. When he entered the [Jewish] settlement, his brothers in the military wing [of Hamas] informed me that he had managed to infiltrate it. Then I began to pray to Allah for him.

I prayed from the depths of my heart that Allah would cause the success of his operation. I asked Allah to give me 10 [Israelis] for Muhammad, and Allah granted my request and Muhammad made his dream come true, killing 10 Israeli settlers and soldiers. Our God honored him even more, in that there were many Israelis wounded.2

To Christian and Jewish mothers and to members of civilized Western democracies, irrational devotion to such a god is incomprehensible. The Canaanites sacrificed their children to pagan deities like Molech by laying them on altars and burning them to death. Today the Palestinians

Rescue and clean-up crews clear debris from the site of a Palestinian suicide-bomb attack on a Jerusalem bus, which killed at least nineteen Israelis and wounded fifty.
strap them with explosives and blow them to bits. The concept is the same. Only the method has changed.

Equally reprehensible is the morally corrupt leadership that lures these human sacrifices to the “altar” using the Quran and the carnal fantasy of scores of perpetual virgin brides, feasts, and honor from Allah in paradise. To the enemies of Israel and the Jewish people, such practices are well within the bounds of obligation to a god who requires holy wars of aggression. But the cold reality is that there is nothing holy about wars dedicated to the eradication of innocent people whose only “offense” is their desire to possess a small portion of the land of their fathers and dwell there, at peace with themselves and their neighbors.

**Victims and Victors**

In both of these one-sentence scenarios, there are victims and victors. In the second, however, there are casualties. Umm Vidal and her son Muhammad represent hundreds of trusting Palestinians who are led down a path of destructive delusion. Besides afflicting an entire generation of their young with hate-driven martyr mentalities, these leaders force their people to suffer deprivation because of the ongoing intifada and manic obsession with jihad.

There is, of course, the other option: Stop the shooting. If and when that is done, there will be victors on both sides. To propose that a cessation in the shootings, suicide bombings, sniper killings of Israelis trying to get home from work, and mortar shelling and Katyusha rocketing into Israeli settlements and towns will level a pathway to peace would at once be ridiculed as naïve and simplistic. People who deal in such matters in high diplomatic circles seldom seek straight-line, common-sense solutions.

But what would happen if Yasser Arafat called off his cadre of killers, dispatched the likes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and enforced a total cessation of hostilities? The answer is clear and has been demonstrated time and again. Such action brought peace to Egypt and Jordan and offers the same prospect to the Palestinians. If the Palestinian leaders would say “Stop,” there would be no Israeli incursions into Palestinian towns and no need for security fences.

There would be freedom for Arab fathers to go to their jobs and for Israelis to ride their buses and walk the streets of Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv in security.

The greatest benefit would be a return to the negotiating table to begin the tedious process of working toward a just settlement acceptable to both peoples.

*If the Arabs put down their weapons today, there would be no more violence.*

It’s not as far-fetched as it may seem. The issue is, Do Arab Muslims have enough courage and concern for the welfare of their own people to try it?

---

**Endnotes**


2 “An Interview with the Mother of a Suicide Bomber,” Dispatch 391, The Middle East Media Research Institute, June 18, 2002, [www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD39102].

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
Nearly a year after the devastating terror attacks in the United States, Israelis can no longer ignore a reality they neither expected nor prepared for. Even though the United States has shown Israel great respect and understanding, it is obvious that Israel’s freedom of action in its own war against terrorism could well conflict with American objectives.
Why, many Israelis wonder, would the United States seek to restrain Israel, when Israel is the one country that could help it more than any other and whose support of American interests is second to none?

What few Israelis seem able to comprehend is that the very answer to that question lies in its asking. Israel’s close bond to the United States may well be the reason that successive administrations feel so comfortable publicly criticizing the Jewish state. After all, Israelis are unrivaled for self-criticism. If Israelis can criticize themselves with such harshness, why can’t others?

Precisely because Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, it is also America’s most secure ally. As such, Israel would be the last country in the region to seek a reduction in American power or influence. In short, the cost of taking on Israel is rather limited. And the chances of Israel abandoning U.S. support and offering to join forces with Muslim extremists are about as great as the chance of the Muslim extremists accepting Israel’s offer.

In the initial weeks following September 11 last year, Israelis and their American supporters were prepared to accept the measured, if not persistent, criticism of Israeli counter-terrorism measures because they believed it was confined to the State Department briefing room. Where it mattered, they assured themselves, U.S. support both for Israel and Israel’s actions to defend itself against terrorism were rock solid. Since the war’s initial field of action was more than a thousand miles away, Israelis more or less excused the cold shoulder, understanding that the United States needed to take the tactical steps necessary to access the logistical, staging, and intelligence resources it would need to wage its Afghan campaign.

**Cold-Blooded Murder**

Then came October 17. At 7:00 that morning, four terrorists from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) pulled into the parking lot of Jerusalem’s Hyatt Hotel. Two gunmen entered the hotel and waited around the corner from the elevator bay on the eighth floor.

As he did every morning, Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze’evi finished his breakfast and was going up to his room to collect his things before going to work. Ze’evi emerged from the elevator and walked toward his room. Upon hearing his name, the 75-year-old decorated general and outspoken rightist turned around to find himself facing a terrorist at point-blank range, pointing a nine-millimeter pistol between his eyes. The terrorist pulled the trigger three times. Ze’evi was killed instantly, and the terrorists got away without so much as a chase.

Within hours, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s unwieldy coalition government was on the verge of collapse. Rightists demanded that the murder of one of their own members be met with an immediate and severe military strike against the PFLP and its state sponsors in Yasser Arafat’s Palestinian Authority (PA). The Labor party, led by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, urged restraint.

Sensing a significant hardening of public opinion and the obvious rage of his erstwhile right-wing allies, Sharon ordered the Israeli army to take up positions inside six Palestinian towns under Arafat’s control. In addition to capturing or killing those responsible for Ze’evi’s murder, the other objective was to destroy quickly or at least disrupt as much of the terrorist infrastructure in the towns as possible.

While everyone knew the United States would almost certainly not voice open support for Israel’s antiterrorist crackdown (many even expected a public rebuke), almost no one here was prepared for what happened. The unusually harsh language and unequivocal demands that Israel “immediately” withdraw its forces from Palestinian areas, “never to return,” were reinforced by the president himself.

Didn’t the Americans understand that publicly hauling Israel over the coals would not, as the U.S. State Department naïvely hoped, encourage “moderate” Arab states to support the antiterrorism coalition? Didn’t Americans understand it would only weaken them? Couldn’t they see that, apart from being hypocritical, condemning a democratic ally for employing the same tactics they themselves
because they would see that the United States could not even control its closest ally. Whatever private pressure the United States may have exerted on Arab regimes would become far less menacing.

When Is Enough, Enough?

Enter the Saudis. Crown Prince Abdullah’s announcement that Saudi Arabia would be prepared to organize the Arab world’s recognition of Israel in exchange for a complete “withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967”—which would include handing over all Jewish and Christian holy sites to Yasser Arafat and evacuating all strategic points—generated much the same reaction here that a dog would receive for counting to ten. Although hearing a Saudi leader even talk about peace with Israel could seem positive, it would be as silly to infuse it with great credibility as it would be to nominate the counting dog for a Nobel Prize in mathematics.

If still more proof were needed to demonstrate that trying to make peace with Yasser Arafat is a lost cause, the Israeli navy’s intrepid predawn seizure last February of a gun-running cargo vessel packed with $25 million of Iranian-supplied weapons should have provided it. The evidence was irrefutable. The Karine-A was registered to Arafat’s Palestinian Authority, paid for with PA funds, and skippered by a lieutenant colonel in the PA navy who told investigators his mission was to deliver the illegal arms directly to the PA. At least seven of the thirteen crew members belonged to at least one of Arafat’s private militias.

Israel called the cargo the largest and most dangerous illegal arms shipment ever attempted. Had it reached its destination, every inch of Israel would have been in range of the weaponry, which consisted of long- and short-range Katyusha rockets; LAW and Sagger antitank missiles; long-range mortars; sophisticated mines; hi-tech explosives; hundreds of high-powered sniper rifles; thousands of rocket-propelled grenades; antitank grenades; and, most dangerous of all, an undisclosed number of SA-7 (Strella) antiaircraft missiles, the very presence of which could imperil commercial air service into and out of Tel Aviv.

On the other hand, if nothing in Arafat’s four-decade terrorist career could justify discussion of his removal, why should a little Katyusha running? As it turns out, it didn’t. Israel didn’t seem to view it as more than another public relations opportunity, while the United States treated it as a public relations challenge. Neither saw it as reason to replace Arafat and his terrorist-supporting regime with one less malignant.

Not only did the U.S. State Department refuse to discuss breaking with Arafat, its special Middle East envoy, who was in Jerusalem at the time of the capture, didn’t even issue Arafat a stern rebuke. Quite the contrary. Retired Marine General Anthony Zinni concluded his visit two days after the boat was seized by beaming to reporters that he now saw “a
real opportunity for progress.” To emphasize that point, a State Department official traveling with Zinni bluntly pronounced, “Our mission will go on, ship or no ship.” That passing comment perhaps explains why American and Israeli approaches to Middle East peacemaking have so miserably failed. Excusing Arafat’s criminality only insures it. If it takes the United States five days to muster the courage to criticize even the most brazen attempted violation of the Oslo Accords, what crime could ever justify Arafat’s ouster?

The Heart of the Problem

It isn’t the inability of Israel and the Palestinians to resolve specific components of their dispute that prevents peace between them. It is the violent, oppressive, and unstable nature of the dictatorial Arafat regime. Until American and Israeli policy makers realize that peace depends far more on the nature of a future Palestinian state than it does on its borders, Israelis will not know peace and Palestinians will not know freedom.

If a future Palestine would be free, nonviolent, and committed to bettering the lives of its people as well as living in peace with Israel, it wouldn’t threaten Israel no matter how close its border came to the June 4, 1967, lines. But if it emerges as presently constructed—namely, violent, oppressive, and hopelessly corrupt—it will be a mortal danger no matter how small it is.

It certainly seems worth asking why, until President Bush’s recent speech, assistance to the Palestinian Authority and support for Palestinian statehood has never been made contingent on the democratization of Palestinian life. In the early stages of Oslo, when Arafat was still consolidating power, he was totally dependent on American and Israeli support. And because of their proximity to and familiarity with Israeli democracy, Palestinians had an excellent chance to build the first democracy in the Arab world. Leaving Israel aside, a truly democratic Palestine would have been one of the most positive and desirable political developments to hit the Arab world since independence.

It wasn’t without reason that no Israeli, American, or European government ever made such a demand on Arafat in the past. The truth is that virtually no one in these governments is certain Arabs are ready for democracy. In Israel, it is ironically the very leaders of the supposedly enlightened left who most passionately reject the notion that Palestinians could govern themselves democratically. The right hasn’t rejected the idea only because no one has thought of it. With the glaring exception of Natan Sharansky, the deputy prime minister who spent nine years as a prisoner of Zion in the Soviet Gulag, there would be not a single political voice making the case for Palestinian democracy.

How else can one explain that, when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell finally delivered his much-anticipated “vision” of how America thought peace between Israel and the Palest-tinians could be reached, the words freedom and democracy were never mentioned once. Secretary Powell used his November 19, 2001, speech to place greater emphasis on supporting an independent Palestinian state than any American official ever had before. His address at the University of Louisville, which was broadcast live around the world, marked the first time an American official ever called the yet-to-be-born state “Palestine.” But the secretary did not devote even one sentence of his 43-minute, 4,900-word address to describe what kind of state he thought Palestine should become.

Until and unless someone gives them a chance to experience a more open political culture, Palestinians will never know freedom.
Dictators make bad neighbors. And make no mistake; before he is an Arab, before he is a Palestinian, even before he is a Muslim, Yasser Arafat is a dictator.

When he founded the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, there was not a single “Jewish settlement” to oppose nor an “Israeli occupation” to resist because the West Bank was ruled by Jordan and Gaza was ruled by Egypt. Arafat created the PLO to destroy Israel. But he learned quickly that he could not lead the “holy crusade” before first consolidating his power over a fractious and scattered people. The only way to do that was to kill those who challenged him and scare those who might be oppressing everyone else.

It took an inarticulate Israeli general-turned-prime minister to best articulate the fatal mindset from which Oslo was born. The PLO leader, said Yitzhak Rabin, was the ideal peace partner precisely because he was a dictator. Arafat could crack down on terrorists, Rabin said, because “unlike us, he doesn’t have to worry about elections or human rights groups.” Thus Israel helped birth the mortally dangerous terrorist state in its midst. Rather than forcing a more open Palestinian political system, Arafat has been given both the time and resources to consolidate his regime to the point where peace with it is now impossible.

Until pressured by the United States and growing unrest among some disgruntled Palestinians, Arafat, like other dictators, had no need to worry about losing an election; but he certainly had to worry about losing his life. Those most likely to take it are the very extremists he has armed, funded, and trained. Therefore, the notion that Yasser Arafat would crack down on the organizations he needs to survive is laughable.

Arafat isn’t going to crack down on terrorists because they might kill him if he does; and they help him if he doesn’t. In fact, these groups provide Arafat’s regime with the best insurance that stolen American aid money can buy. They keep the national focus on fighting the external enemy rather than on the failings of their leader. If the elections scheduled for January 2003 are, in fact, free and fair, Arafat and crew will be forced to run on their records—and they most definitely have records.

Since its creation in 1994, Arafat’s Palestinian Authority (PA) has presided over the complete collapse of the Palestinian economy. Arafat received control over a relatively prosperous people and rapidly impoverished them. He was given billions of dollars of foreign aid and squandered what he and his cronies didn’t steal.

Under his rule, Palestinians have been robbed of nearly two-thirds of their collective national wealth. The gross domestic product is down seventy percent. Virtually nothing remains of what was once a reasonably vibrant private sector. Corruption exists on a scale so pandemic that even the normally approving Europeans no longer abide it.

Public infrastructure has disintegrated. Public health standards, the highest in the Arab world just seven years ago, are now the lowest. And if that weren’t bad enough, last year Arafat started a terrorist war against Israel that has reduced the Palestinians to their most desperate conditions since the creation of Israel in 1948. A record like that will be tough to run on.

Arafat claims he can’t be held responsible for the actions of extremists and does not have the power or authority to stop them. Yet he alone controls the state-run media that creates the climate necessary to generate suicide bombers and public support for terrorism. Arafat has intentionally fomented the cry for Israeli blood and has let Hamas and Islamic Jihad fulfill it.

Arafat and Hamas aren’t rivals. They are two sides of the same coin—codependents. Arafat has no difficulty cracking down on moderate opponents, only his terrorist allies. Those who challenge him to open up the press, fight corruption, and calm tensions with Israel are shown no mercy. For them, retribution is swift and merciless.

But Arafat needs Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the extremists to divert his people’s hatred; and Jihad, Hamas, and the extremists need Arafat to provide the “moderate” cover they require to continue their murderous acts of terror. The simple truth is, Arafat needs terrorism much more than he needs Colin Powell.
May God give me the honor of martyrdom in my steadfastness for Jerusalem.” Like the terrorist that he truly is, Yasser Arafat bellows from behind the walls of his compound in Ramallah. His aging body belies the youthful vigor he has for terror.

Under former President Bill Clinton, Americans seemed to have forgotten that Arafat is a terrorist. But the events of September 11, 2001, brought back into our collective national conscious a
renewed awareness that there is evil in the world and some people are, in the words of President George W. Bush, “evildoers.”

Working in the Washington, D.C., area, I have been given the unique opportunity to watch the issue of the security of Israel and the protection of Jerusalem become increasingly more important to both our current president and members of Congress.

One of the most brilliant speeches I have ever heard was given by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before a U.S. House committee that asked him to address the question, “How do we wage a war on terrorism?”

Netanyahu eloquently reminded us all that there is now a collective “we.” It is composed of Israel and the United States, two countries joined together by the common goals of liberty, freedom, and democracy, and now both hated by those who recognize the connectedness of the Judeo-Christian worldview. “They hate us,” he said, “not for what we’ve done, but rather for who we are.”

The fact that the former prime minister would even be called to testify is clear evidence that something is happening in Washington regarding America’s relationship with Israel. For far too long, we have been made to listen to the mindless mantra of “land for peace” as the equation for the successful termination of conflict in Israel. Nothing in history bears out this fuzzy-headed thinking.

But September 11 did something to remove Arafat’s mask. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, a man who once viewed Arafat as someone with whom he could partner in peace, has now had a kind of “Damascus Road” experience. Blinded by the light of harsh reality, he now says, “Yasser Arafat happens to behave like a terrorist, he looks like one, he walks like one, he quacks like one, so maybe he really is a terrorist.”

In a meeting with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Barak also said, “It is about time we tell the truth . . . about his behavior to be able to draw some conclusions.” Not bad for someone who once dug in with Arafat at Camp David for two weeks in July 2000 and hoped to emerge a partner in peace. Problem is, the other partner has to want peace. The real issue with Arafat is that he doesn’t.

On Capitol Hill, new leaders are emerging who are not afraid to tell the truth when it comes to terrorists. Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Virginia) is one of them. He has introduced two pieces of legislation that send a clear message to Arafat that his hatred will not be tolerated. If these bills become law, they will hit Arafat where he will feel it the most—in his pocketbook.

The Temple Mount Preservation Act (H.R. 2566) that Congressman Cantor introduced would cut off funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) if it continues destroying the Temple Mount. Har ha-Bayit, as it is known in Hebrew, is significant for both its history and antiquities.

In 1967 Jerusalem became a united city under Israel’s sovereignty. Since then, Israel has been legally responsible for the Temple Mount and viewed it as a place of importance for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Congressman Cantor’s legislation states the following:

In the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, Yassir Arafat’s Palestinian Authority asserted preeminence on the Temple Mount through the subversion of the Waqf (Religious Council) and by coercing the Jordan-affiliated officials and clergymen off the Temple Mount. Arafat personally nominated the virulently anti-Semitic and anti-American Mufti Ikrima Sabri as the Imam of al-Aqsa Mosque. In May 1998, Sabri declared that the Jews have no right to the Temple Mount.

Imagine a piece of legislation that tells the real history behind the repeated attempts to destroy Har ha-Bayit. No revisionist
interpretations here—just the facts and the clout of Congress to back it up.

The legislation acknowledged that massive excavation and unsupervised destruction of artifacts discovered within the Temple Mount threaten to eliminate all historical evidence of Jewish activity on the Temple Mount and are attempts to “discredit Israeli claims of sovereignty over the Temple Mount.”

If enacted into law, the legislation will prevent any U.S. funds from assisting the Palestinian Authority if evidence shows that excavation is being done on the Temple Mount by anyone other than those authorized by the Israeli Antiquities Authority.

The second piece of legislation is called the Peace With Security Act. This bill is designed to stop the practice of sending American taxpayer dollars overseas to Yasser Arafat and his band of terrorists. The act declares the following:

Chairman Arafat’s Fatah group has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks on innocent Israeli civilians, including

The United States sends an average of $75 million every year to the PA. . . .

Last year an additional $125 million of American taxpayer money was delivered to the PA as part of a $400-million, three-year aid package appropriated by Congress in 2000. If this important piece of legislation is enacted into law, it will put a stop to the funding of the PA and all its agencies with American taxpayer money.

Something seems to be happening in Washington. The tenure of a president who courted terrorists at the White House is gone. We now have a president who has “zero tolerance” for terrorism and sponsors of terrorism. He has stated, “Mr. Arafat has to show the world that he is willing to join our fight against terror.” Don’t hold your breath.

Arafat talks peace out of one side of his mouth and gives the orders to kill out of the other. Washington appears to have had enough. Democrats and Republicans alike are calling for moves to isolate Arafat, including closing the PLO Mission in Washington and preventing Palestinian officials from coming into the United States.

Those of us who love Israel and pray for her continued safety must take heart. A crisp wind of reason is blowing through the nation’s capital. We have seen and felt the effects of terror on our own soil. The days of uttering messages of “reasoned response” are no more. Now we choose sides. The nation must decide if it is for freedom and democracy or for terror and evildoers.

September 11, 2001, changed the heart of America forever. Conversations about terrorism are no longer simply relegated to the State Department or college political science classes. Terrorism has a face and a name—and it must be dealt with. Washington has been issued a wake-up call that has aroused the sleeping giant.

Janet Parshall hosts the nationally syndicated talk show “Janet Parshall’s America” in Washington, D.C.
Living in Jerusalem for the past eleven years, I have witnessed some of the most historic events of our day. I have also reported on events that mark the time the Jewish prophets spoke of when they described the last days prior to the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

When I moved to Jerusalem, only three days before the Gulf Crisis erupted in January 1991, I was amazed at the number of journalists from all over the world who had come to the Middle East. Many are still in Israel, covering the daily events that are shaping the world into the scenario found in the prophetic portions of the Bible. A student of Bible prophecy is amazed at the similarities between today’s news and the prophecies of God’s Word.

The journalistic community in Israel is extremely large. Jerusalem, in fact, is second only to Washington, D.C., in the number of journalists who live here. Over the years, reporters have been accused of distorting the news to fit their own agendas. This charge has been leveled at every news-gathering organization in the region. And, in fact, evidence exists that the major media manipulate the news almost on a daily basis.

I can testify to the fact that a definite bias makes its way into most of the stories coming out of the Middle East. I cover many major news stories while in Israel; and on arriving in the United States later, I either hear or read a story about the same events I covered but from almost the opposite perspective.

Twisting the Terminology

The media’s manipulation of news has effectively changed the
thinking of people around the world. A blatant example is the widespread use on radio, television, and in print of the term West Bank. Reporters routinely use it to describe the area known in the Bible as Judea and Samaria.

However, a closer look at the phrase will give you a better understanding of the journalistic intent behind it. During one of my first visits to the Government Press Office, then-Director Morty Dolinsky was asked about the West Bank and where this location could be found. Dolinsky, in his humorous way, said the country had several banks, such as the Bank of Israel; but he knew of no West Bank. He made his point.

What the media refers to when it says West Bank is the property west of the Jordan River that is the center of controversy in the on-again, off-again peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is the land of Israel that houses the Jewish settlers who believe they are living in the land of their forefathers.

The truth is, from a geographical perspective, the land in question is not the west bank of Israel. Technically, it is the east bank of Israel. When people use the term West Bank, they are making a political statement. The West Bank can only refer to the west bank of the country of Jordan, the nation that occupied the area biblically known as Judea and Samaria prior to June 1967.

The designation West Bank is only one way the media manipulates the world’s mindset. Often you will read that Israelis are living in the “occupied territories.” The statement gives the impression that years ago the Jewish people decided to take a piece of land away from its rightful owner.

The real estate in question is the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, the Golan Heights, and the Old City of Jerusalem. These four locations are the bone of contention for Arabs and Palestinians as they fight for their “rights” to the land under Israeli control.

However, no “occupying force” captured these geographical locations. Here is what happened. Israel was under attack from three sides—north, east, and south—in June 1967. In order to defend its people and give them the assurance of security for their families, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), in a defensive action, pushed its attackers back from the population centers of Israel.

The IDF actually set up buffer zones between the Jewish state and its enemies. The three attacking nations were Syria in the north, Jordan in the east, and Egypt in the south. Israel, fighting for its life, pushed Syria back towards Damascus and took the Golan Heights as the buffer zone in the north.

In the east, the Jordanian Army was pushed towards Amman, with Israel setting up Judea and Samaria (some refer to it as the West Bank) as the buffer zone. The Egyptians were pushed south towards Cairo, with the IDF taking the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Desert as the buffer zone.

Several years ago the Israelis made a deal with Egypt for the Sinai Desert but retained the Gaza Strip. As a result of the Oslo Accords, signed in 1993, the Israelis granted the Palestinians administrative responsibilities in the Gaza Strip.
To say that Israel is “occupying” these areas is incorrect. The world understands the word occupying as meaning an offensive action where a fighting force takes land away from an innocent party for a sinister purpose. The truth is that, in these areas, Israel has only been involved in defensive military operations.

Someone once said if you tell a lie long enough, not only will you start to believe it, but everyone else will accept it as the truth as well. That is what has happened in the issue of Israel “occupying Palestinian territory.” The Palestinians claim Israel is occupying their land, and the world media has taken up their cause in reporting current events in the Middle East.

Many journalists, while not lying outright, fail nevertheless to tell the whole story on some of the major issues.

A perfect example of withholding all the facts and background on a story involves the issue of a Palestinian state. Palestinian leaders claim they have a right to have their state back, which they say was taken from them by the Israelis. The land referred to in the accusation includes the West Bank and Jerusalem (at minimum, the Old City), which they want as the capital of a state called Palestine.

The truth is, there never was a state called Palestine under Palestinian leadership. Prior to the Six-Day War in June 1967, the Old City of Jerusalem and the land east towards the Jordan River was under the sovereignty of the nation of Jordan. Palestinians living in those areas had Jordanian passports and were subjects of the late King Hussein.

Before the Jordanians took control of the land in question, the British administered it, dating back to 1917. In December 1917 General Edmund Allenby of the British Empire accepted the surrender of the entire West Bank area, including the city of Jerusalem, from the Ottoman-Turkish Empire that had controlled the area for more than four hundred years.

Knowing the truth helps a student of the times and God’s prophetic Word to better understand what is really happening in the events of our day. Certainly, some of the reason these half-truths are making such an impact on our world is the fault of journalists covering these stories in contemporary Israel.

“Dumb Like a Fox”

However, the news media is not the only culprit in this propaganda campaign being waged in the Middle East. Yasser Arafat, believed by many to be the “granddaddy” of current terrorists, is not a “dumb” leader of his people. Arafat could only be called “dumb like a fox.” For years Arafat has been on the world stage, propagating his cause with great success.

Arafat has been known to use half-truths and even outright lies to advance his cause. Organizations like Palestinian Media Watch have proven that the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman will tell the Palestinian people one thing in Arabic and the rest of the world, another.

What Arafat tells the “Palestinian street” sometimes incites his people to take action that fits into the scheme of his overall plan for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

On the other hand, Arafat is a master at manipulating the media and world leaders into joining his fight against the “evil Israeli government.” I can personally testify to his skill at managing the press. I once met with Arafat at his palace in Jericho and watched as he used King Hussein of Jordan, who joined the news conference sponsored by Arafat, to help him handle veteran journalists, including the CNN reporter.

When I once asked my friend Morty Dolinsky several years ago why the Israelis were not better at working with the media from a public relations perspective, he said that Israeli public relations are not aimed at the West or even the world media.

Dolinsky said Israel needed to keep the Middle East region in mind in all of its public relations and news releases because Israel’s neighbors needed to be aware of the potential harm that will come to them if they attack Israel. Nevertheless, this philosophy has not helped Israel tell its story to the Western world.

As tensions in the region heighten, it becomes even more critical that people know the bias of news sources providing them information about events in the Middle East. In addition, it is important to develop a worldview that is based on an understanding of the prophetic scenario of the last days as laid out in God’s Word.

Today’s political events are setting the stage for prophetic Scriptures to be fulfilled. Each day we draw closer to the return of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to stay abreast of current events, but we must make sure we do so with the Bible in hand.

Jimmy DeYoung, director of Shofar Communications, is a journalist stationed in Israel and the United States.
Editor’s Note: Dave Breese wrote this article for us in February. Three months later, on May 3, at the age of 75, Dave entered the matchless presence of the Lord he had served so faithfully for almost sixty years. It was our deep privilege to have been associated with such a great and genuine man of God. We will miss him until the day we see him again in glory.

Scripture says, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about. . . . And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples” (Zech. 12:2–3). This was the prediction of the prophet Zechariah two and a half thousand years ago. The question is, Do we see that event taking place in Israel and the world today? And assuming the answer is yes, the concomitant question is, What does it all mean to the United States today?

Contemporary Israel is a place of stark contrasts—a place of religious, cultural, and emotional extremes. It is the most hotly contested piece of real estate in the world. In the City of Peace, blood is shed virtually on a daily basis. And today the crucible that is Jerusalem is almost ready to boil over. It is a cauldron of conflict that threatens to spill its violent contents across the entire Middle East and, indeed, the whole world.

What Events in Israel Mean to the United States
It has been said, “As the world goes, so goes Jerusalem.” But we suggest that it is really the other way around: “As Jerusalem goes, so goes the world.” The truth of that statement can easily be seen here in the United States.

For decades a battle has raged in the Middle East between the nation of Israel and her predominantly Islamic neighbors. Until recently, most Americans observed the carnage with a distant compassion: “Isn’t it terrible, what’s happening over there.”

But those days of aloof separation are past. The life-and-death struggle between incompatible belief systems has spilled over onto our shores, bringing with it the destruction of the World Trade Center; an attack on the Pentagon; and a challenge to the very institutions of freedom and democracy that have become so dear to our hearts here in America.

What does this have to do with contemporary Israel? Aren’t the terrorists simply striking out at our way of life and our freedoms? Well, perhaps those factors contribute to the situation. But at the very foundation of the problem are the issues of Israel, Judaism, Christian evangelism, and America’s historically unflagging support for the people of God.

There is an ancient American Indian saying, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” In the reverse logic that is so common in the Islamic world, especially as it refers to friends of the State of Israel, the terrorists of al-Qaida believe that “the friend of my enemy is also my enemy.” So it is that the hostilities of the Middle East have come to our shores, proving that the Bible is true when it says, “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples” (Zech. 12:3).

The driving passion behind al-Qaida and other terrorist forces like it is the desire to win the world for Islam and rid the world of any competition to Islam. And while it is certainly true that modern Muslims claim to be tolerant of other faiths, the fact is that in a hundred different places, the Quran instructs the followers of Islam to conquer the world for their faith. They are told to get along with the infidel (non-Muslim) if it serves the propagation of Islam, but they are also told to kill the infidel if they must. They are told that such is the will of Allah. And if it is necessary to give their lives in the effort, they are promised that Allah will be so pleased by their sacrifice that he will give them amazing rewards in paradise. So the very nature of Islam is both ruthless and “evangelistic,” designed to conquer and dominate the entire world in the name of Allah.

In the end, it is not the Buddhist or the Hindu or the Animist or the Wiccan who threatens the spread of Islam. It is the Jew and the Christian who pose a threat to the dream of Islamic fundamentalist world government. So it is not surprising that the wrath of Islamic extremism has been violently vented against America, Israel’s “best friend and defender” of so many years.

Many have voiced concern over what they fear might be a possible conflict in the promises of Scripture. On one hand, the Bible says, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper who love thee” (Ps. 122:6). But then, on the other hand, it says, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about” (Zech. 12:2). People ask, “Which one is it?” And the answer is, of course, “Both!”

Who can deny that the United States has been blessed with prosperity of immense proportions, and especially so since Israel returned to the Holy Land as a legitimate nation back in 1948. We would suggest that it wasn’t our brilliant financial management or our keen business insight that brought about God’s blessing on our nation. Rather, it was the fact that America loved and defended the nation of Israel: “They shall prosper who love thee.”

But it is also true that Jerusalem has been a burdensome stone and a cup of trembling—both to Israel’s friends as well as foes. It is not easy for any nation to be allied with a people as controversial as the Jewish people. Nor is it
easy for any nation to be an enemy of the Jewish people. Why? Because Israel has a role unlike any other nation in the world. God called Israel to be a divine representative to the other nations, bringing proof through example of how wonderful life could be if people followed the teaching of God’s Word.

Therefore, Israel is not merely a nation like all others, with problems that are difficult but possible to solve. And Israel is not just a patch of land that was conquered by a nomadic group from Ur of the Chaldees. Israel stands, both in history and religious identity, as the representative of the one true God. Israel was chosen—not because it will always be a faithful representative of God but because it will always play a vital role in the events of time. This fact is especially true in these end-times. Israel has a date with destiny that will not be denied by any nation, by al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden or even by the coming world ruler (the Antichrist).

One of the chief reasons Jerusalem will continue to be a cup of trembling to all the nations of the world is that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all claim Jerusalem as a holy site. Israel has proclaimed Jerusalem its undivided and eternal capital. The Palestinians want Jerusalem to be their capital as well. And Christians, who generally support the Jews as the people of God, see Jerusalem as the place where the Savior was crucified and the point to which He will one day return as Lord of lords and King of kings.

Until then, it behooves us to stay true to our friends in Israel. Israel may indeed be a difficult friend to have, but it is absolutely essential that America continues to love and support that nation. And while it is almost a certainty that there will be further terrorist attacks against the United States by those who hate Israel, it is vital that we continue to stand with Israel in the days to come.

Even recently, American support of Israel has begun to flag. Certain politicians have suggested that it would be better for us to stand with the Palestinians than with Israel so as not to anger our few Arab friends in the Middle East. Consensus appears now to be the name of the game, ignoring the fact that, because of Israel’s special nature, many of the common rules of diplomacy do not apply to her.

So when the next shoe drops, when the next terrorist attack is successfully carried out, when people everywhere are clamoring for the United States to distance itself from those troublesome Jews, remember: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper who love thee” (Ps. 122:6).

There is a price to be paid for friendship with the nation of Israel, but it is also the only path of survival for our nation. To neglect to walk that path of truth, to neglect the fact that Israel has a special place in God’s heart, is to put us in jeopardy of falling under the condemnation of God: “The wicked shall be turned into sheol [hell], and all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17).

And so, as bombs explode and the slippery, slimy gurus of our time call for us to abandon our support of the Israelis and join the world’s consensus against them (something that will happen increasingly in the days to come), we must be firm in our convictions and stay our course. The alternative could bring to pass God’s judgment on America—a judgment far greater than what a few terrorists and some bombs could bring.

A final word: While supporting Israel is vitally important, it does not bring salvation into our lives. We must each come to personal faith in the Son of Israel and only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the grave to save us from our sins. If you have not yet said that wonderful “Yes!” to Jesus Christ, why not do it today? Recent events indicate that time may be running out before He returns. Are you ready? You can be! In a moment of time, by believing on Him as your personal Savior, you can be
God’s will is never frustrated. He says in Isaiah, “I will work, and who shall hinder it?” (43:13). Sometimes things turn out exactly as we want. But other times His will is not our will; and that can be difficult to take.

What do we do when God allows events we cannot understand or situations that bring us pain? Do we reject him in bitterness? Do we declare Him irrelevant or decide He does not exist because He failed to perform to our specifications? Or do we lean even more heavily on Him based on our knowledge of who He is, trusting that in His ways there is
No matter how difficult or painful our circumstances, “the LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Ps. 145:17). And it is in His unchanging nature, His righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, and love that we place our trust.

Many years ago, a young man went forward for salvation at a Billy Graham crusade. But later his sister died and his father committed suicide. How could God allow such things? So a hurt, angry, and defiant Ted Turner rejected the God of the Bible. “Christianity,” the founder of CNN has said, “is a religion for losers.”

Thousands of years ago, three different young men also found circumstances not to their liking. They were ordered to bow before a gigantic gold statue in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful king the world has known, warned the young Israelites, “If ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that God, that shall deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan. 3:15).

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow. They no doubt had seen many loved ones perish when the Babylonians descended on Judah. The Babylonians were a “bitter and hasty . . . terrible and dreadful” people (Hab. 1:6–7) who slew young and old, male and female (2 Chr. 36:17). Furthermore, these boys saw their city, Jerusalem, destroyed and their Temple burned. Yet, unlike Turner, they remained steadfast:

Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Dan. 3:17–18).

Nothing in the lives of God’s people “just so happens.” Jehovah is not a God of accidents but of appointments. Nothing ever is beyond His control, and He has a purpose for everything. God calls us to be like Jochebed and to trust Him because of who He is.

Usually a time comes when our belief is tested. Then we have two choices: rebel against Him in anger or submit to Him in faith. The first produces bitterness. The second produces peace, enabling us to focus on what He did for us at the cross and to say, as Job did, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (13:15).
Joseph Akiva is known by Jewish people around the world as the famous Rabbi Akiva. Though he lived from A.D. 50 to 135, he is deeply revered among Jews today for his amazing insights and knowledge of Torah. He attracted such a huge following that he became known as “one of the fathers of the world.” His style of teaching through storytelling is so much admired today that rabbis still quote him often.

Rabbi Akiva undoubtedly rose to prominence for many reasons. However, three in particular stand out: his humility; his response to the help he received as he grew more educated; and the huge impact he made on Torah study, an impact felt to this day among Jewish students of Torah and Talmud. (The Talmud is the greatly revered, vast body of commentaries on the Torah [written law], plus what is called the oral law.) It was said that Rabbi Akiva “did for the oral law what Ezra had done for the written law.”

AKIWA: Ascension to Prominence
His Humble Beginnings

Akiva belonged to the am ha’aretz (people of the land), not to the priestly tribe of Levi or the high priestly line. In fact, he was either the son or grandson of a Gentile convert. He had no formal education and earned his living by shepherding sheep. Yet Akiva’s lack of education was not a problem to him. Rather, he had little regard for the highly educated, saying, “Had I a scholar in my power I would maul him.” Akiva was an unlikely candidate to become a Torah scholar.

His Helper

Akiva worked for a wealthy landowner named Ben Kalba Savua. For some reason, Rachel, the landowner’s daughter, saw Akiva’s potential to become a great Torah scholar. One day she approached him with a proposition of marriage. Attached to it, however, was a condition. They would marry only if he would begin to study the Torah as soon as possible. Though caught off guard by the offer, the forty-year-old Akiva was intrigued. Rachel did not know Akiva’s disdain for scholars. As he pondered the proposal, he came across a natural pool containing a hollowed-out rock that rested on a waterfall. He began to reason, “If water, which is soft, can hollow out a stone, which is hard, how much more will the words of the Torah, which are hard, cut through and make an impression on my heart, which is soft.”

The couple married despite opposition from Rachel’s father, who opposed the union because of Akiva’s low station in life. Ben Kalba Savua disowned both of them. Although undertaking intense Torah study was a Herculean task, Akiva began his quest by mastering the Hebrew alphabet. Slowly, yet thoroughly, his knowledge grew. Rachel was a constant, daily encouragement to him. Though life was difficult, she did all she could to help support the family, including selling her hair to bring in money. Eventually Akiva had to leave home to study under prominent rabbis. Rachel knew the importance of such a move and encouraged and persuaded him to go. He returned twelve years later as an ordained rabbi, the head of his own yeshiva (Jewish school), with twelve thousand students.

The story is told that, as he returned home, he heard Rachel tell a neighbor she would “willingly wait another twelve years for Akiva to increase his learning twofold. He left immediately for another twelve years, not even showing himself to her.” When he returned the second time (a twenty-four year total), she ran to him and “prostrated herself at his feet. When his students moved to push her away, he restrained them saying, ‘All the Torah knowledge that I have, and all the Torah knowledge that you have, are the direct results of this woman’s love of the Torah.’” Akiva was acutely aware that his position as a great rabbi was only a reality because of the sacrifice and support of his wife, Rachel.

As the noose of Roman persecution tightened around the Jewish people, Hadrian ordered the ruins of Jerusalem rebuilt and dedicated to the Roman god Jupiter. . . . It was at this time Israel began to be called “Palestina,” a practice still used today.

His Impact

Tannaim were learned men who interpreted and explained Torah and Talmud. According to Jewish tradition, God gave an oral, as well as written, law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. (Scripture does not support this position.) Over the years, many scholars have considered Akiva the greatest of the tannaim because he organized the Halacha (law) in an outline form. He drew up the six major divisions or areas that would be used as the template for Judah Ha-Nisi, the last of the tannaim, as the basis for what is known today as the Mishna.

Akiva lived when Rome controlled Israel. Most of that time, the atmosphere was not conducive to Torah study. Many difficult years culminated in the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. By the time Hadrian became emperor, the Temple had been in ruins for fifty years. Hadrian’s rise to power brought temporary
hope because, early in his rule, he desired to win the trust of his subjects. But hope died when he came to believe the Jewish people were not trustworthy; and he decreed it illegal to read and study Torah, as well as to observe the Sabbath. These “crimes” were punishable by death.

Persecution increased, and thousands of rabbis died. Asked by one of his students why he continued to teach and study Torah, Akiva replied in the form of a story:

To what is the matter like? To a fox who was walking along the banks of a stream, and saw some fishes gathering together to move from one place to another. He said to them, “From what are you fleeing?” They answered: “From the nets which men are bringing against us.” He said to them: “Let it be your pleasure to come on dry land, and let us, I and you, dwell together, even as my fathers dwell with your fathers.” They replied: “Are you the animal who they say is the shreadest of animals? You are not clever, but a fool! For if we are afraid in this place which is our life-element, how much more so in a place which is our death-element!” So also is it with us: If now, while we sit and study Torah, in which it is written, “For this is your life and the length of your days”(Dt. 30:20), we are in such a plight, how much more so if we neglect it?

Rabbi Akiva possessed a unique capacity to laugh in the face of terrible circumstances. When the Roman legions were advancing toward them, the sages asked him why he was laughing: “Idol worshipers dwell in peace and security, while the holy Temple is burnt to the ground . . . shall we not cry?”

“That’s why I’m laughing,” said Rabbi Akiva. “If this is how G-d rewards the Romans—who are so wicked and cruel—for the good deeds they sometimes do, how much more will be the reward of the righteous people in the World to come.”

As the noose of Roman persecution tightened around the Jewish people, Hadrian ordered the ruins of Jerusalem rebuilt and dedicated to the Roman god Jupiter. A now very old Rabbi Akiva encouraged a revolt. Quoting from Numbers 24:17 (“There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth”), Akiva pronounced Simon bar Koseba, known for his strength and courage, as messiah. Bar Koseba became known as Simon Bar Kochba (son of a star).

At first Bar Kochba seemed successful, but the rebellion soon turned to disaster. More than 500,000 Jewish people were killed and one thousand villages destroyed. Jerusalem was rebuilt—not by the Jews, for the Jews—but by the Romans as a Roman city called Aelia Capitolina. It was then that Israel began to be called “Palestina,” a practice still used today.

Rabbi Akiva, in his eighties, was captured and flayed alive. Even as he was tortured, he reportedly laughed:

“All my life I’ve been waiting to fulfill the concept “You shall love Hashem [literally, “the name”; a reference to the Lord] your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul . . .” and now I finally have the chance.”

Rabbi Akiva holds a place of greatness among the Jewish people because he was “great in Torah, great in love of Hashem, great in ‘Emunah,’ ‘Belief,’ in the Almighty, and great in appreciation of and devotion to his wife.”

As Christians, we don’t recognize oral law as inspired from God. Yet Christian Bible students have sometimes gained fresh insights to Old Testament texts through Rabbi Akiva’s commentary.

His quest to know Torah, begun at age forty, demonstrates that one is never too old to begin studying the Word. And his faithful Rachel demonstrates the importance of a wife who believes in her husband.

But most important, Rabbi Akiva’s life also demonstrates that intelligence, sincerity, and dedication are not the ingredients required to identify the Messiah of Israel. Reading God’s Word, trusting in the plain meaning of Scripture, and believing it are the essentials. Rabbi Akiva looked to a false messiah because he allowed the terrible conditions of his day to cloud his thinking. Eternity and our place in it hang in the balance; therefore, it is crucial we look to the truth.

ENDNOTES

4 Ibid.
7 Jewish Encyclopedia, p. 487.
8 Elul: A Time to Reflect.”
9 Klaperman, p. 174.
10 Telushkin, pp. 143–44.
11 “And Rabbi Akiva Laughed,” [www.ohr.org.il/special/9av/3weeks.htm], Ohr Somayach, 1996.
12 Ibid.
13 Elul: A Time to Reflect.”

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In the book of Micah, God holds Judah’s leaders responsible and accountable for their abuse of the underprivileged. Earlier, Micah condemned those who used the nation’s legal system to defraud people of their property. However, in this chapter, Micah more fully described Judah’s corruption, denounced the wickedness of civil and religious leaders, and announced the imminence of divine judgment.

**Corrupt Politicians**

Micah began with a call for leaders to hear God’s message: “Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel, Is it not for you to know justice?” (v. 1). The names “Jacob” and “Israel” refer to the southern kingdom of Judah because Assyria already had destroyed the northern kingdom. It is these “heads” and “princes” of Judah whom Micah condemned, those who were responsible for maintaining order and justice in Judah’s national life—political leaders, civic governors, judges, elders of tribes, and military officials. God had appointed these men to insure justice.

The prophet’s rhetorical question, “Is it not for you to know justice?” expects a positive response. It was mandatory for all Judah’s rulers and leaders, especially judges, to know the Mosaic Law and adjudicate using God’s standards of right and wrong (Dt. 1:13–17). Such was not the case. The judges were unprincipled men who had long forsaken the Mosaic standard of justice for new, dishonest laws that benefited their evil agendas.

Micah described these men as follows: They “hate the good, and love the evil” (v. 2). They no longer made judicial decisions based on what was right and good; but, loving evil, they aided and abetted the criminals in Judean society for their own greedy, selfish gain.

The description of their wickedness becomes even more intense: [They] pluck off their skin from them, and their flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of
my people, and flay their skin from them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and like flesh within the caldron (vv. 2–3).

Judah’s leaders were like starving, wild animals that unconscionably, savagely, and unmercifully grabbed their prey, ripped open its skin, and gorged themselves on the animal’s flesh and blood. So thorough were these butchers that they consumed their victims as cooks who chopped up the meat and ground up the bones of an animal they were going to boil in a pot. These tyrannical leaders were heartless, were cruel, and totally consumed every possession their victims owned. The use of such grotesque metaphors emphasized the deep depravity of these inhumane rulers who should have been the guardians of justice, guarantors of human rights, and protectors of Judean society. Instead, they abused their positions and used brutal lawlessness to satisfy their greed for power, property, and possessions. God calls the prey of these ungodly rulers “my people,” a term of endearment used to depict the Lord’s loving relationship with His covenant people Israel (v. 3).

Micah said a day would come when the tables would be turned, and these lawless rulers would cry out fervently to God for mercy in their hour of need:

Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them; he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings (v. 4).

These profane men had lived and functioned as if there were no God to whom they must give account. Those who showed no mercy to the people of Judah and turned a deaf ear to their cries will receive the same treatment they meted out. God will hide His face from them and refuse to hear the cries of their anguish. He will be silent to their pleas and show them no grace or mercy.

Micah . . . was filled by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak God’s Word. . . .

His words of justice or righteous judgment were not his own. They came directly from God.

Covetous Prophets

The second group that God condemns is that of the false prophets:

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him (v. 5).

The people looked to these perverted prophets as men who knew the mind of God and, in so knowing, would direct the nation properly. Instead, these pseudoprophets deliberately misled Judah for their own selfish and greedy ends. God condemns such people and puts them under a divine curse (Dt. 27:18).

The phrase bite with their teeth has been interpreted two ways. Some believe the verse teaches these false prophets predicted peace and prosperity only when they received food or material goods in return. Others believe the verse speaks about these men’s lying words, which inflicted harm like the bite of a serpent. Both teachings are true. These pseudoprophets spoke of peace and prosperity to those who provided for them monetarily or materially. But to someone who gave nothing, these prophets prepared, or sanctified, “war against him”—that is, predicted a curse.

Therefore, Micah declared,

Night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them (v. 6).

God’s judgment will descend on these charlatans like night and darkness, which depicted their impending destruction. God will not give them visions or answers to explain their calamity. Nor will these prophets say they have visions from God of peace and prosperity. And in the day of their calamity, these prophets no longer will seek answers to their dilemma by using divination (magic and spiritism). The sun (v. 6) will set on their prosperity—and on any possibility of deliverance.

In that day “shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God” (v. 7). Men who looked to these prophets for direction and illumination concerning the future will disown them and put them to public shame. These prophets will be “confounded” or struck dumb because their prophetic gift will be
stripped from them. In humiliation, they will “cover their lips” (v. 7). Covering the outer lip (including the face) was a sign of embarrassment, shame, and mourning (Lev. 13:45). Covering their mouths was an appropriate sign that they had nothing to say. If, perhaps, they sought God for a remedy to their predicament, they would receive no answer. God will remain silent and provide no revelation. It would seem that these prophets did possess a true gift from God; but over time, they prostituted it for financial gain.

In contrast to the powerlessness of the pseudoprophets, Micah’s power was from God. He told the people, “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin” (v. 8). Micah stated three facts about his power and authority. First, he was filled by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak God’s Word. Second, his words of justice or righteous judgment were not his own. They came directly from God. Third, he was given might, or manly courage, to stand against men fearlessly and preach boldly against the sins of “Jacob” and “Israel” (the entire nation, cf. 3:1, 9).

They despised justice and twisted and distorted the facts of each case that came before Judah’s courts. Those accused in a lawsuit could never be assured a fair verdict unless they bribed the judge.

These leaders “build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity” (v. 10). That is, the means of building Jerusalem was through extortion by the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Jerusalem’s buildings and palaces were built with blood money gained by fraud, confiscation of property, and even murder. The entire justice system was utterly corrupt.

Civil and religious leaders performed their duties with an eye on getting wealthy: “Her heads judge for reward, and her priests teach for hire, and her prophets divine for money” (v. 11). Judicial decisions were predicated on who provided the largest bribes. God established the priests to teach; interpret the Law; and decide questions on religion and ritual, free of charge (Dt. 17:8–11). But they only did so for financial gain. And He established the prophets, whom Micah already had denounced (cf. v. 5), to provide revelation from God gratuitously. But they used demonic divination and charged for it (cf. Balaam, Num. 23–24).

Micah continued, “Yet will they lean [support themselves] upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? No evil can come upon us” (v. 11). These corrupt leaders believed they had immunity from God’s judgment because (1) they were in a covenant relationship with Him; (2) God’s Shekinah glory was present in the Holy of Holies; and (3) they practiced Judaism by offering the required animal sacrifices at specified times, in obedience to the Lord. For these reasons, they erroneously believed the Lord’s protection would safeguard them from destruction.

How mistaken these men were. Their gross immorality and hypocritical religious practices made God’s judgment of them inevitable. Micah said,

*Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest* (v. 12).

“For your sake,” or because of the leaders’ sins, three events will befall Jerusalem. First, Zion will be completely destroyed and become a leveled field for plowing and planting seed. Second, Jerusalem will be torn down and left in ruins and rubble. Third, the Temple Mount will become overgrown with trees, briars, and thorns.

King Hezekiah took Micah’s prophecy to heart. He humbled himself, repented of sin, and brought religious and social reforms to Judah (Jer. 26:17–19). Because Judah turned to God, destruction was postponed for over a century.

Micah’s message is certainly a word from God for our time. The economic, political, religious, and moral situation in America is not unlike Judah’s. People skirt or break laws for greed, material gain, or to drive up stock prices. Politicians take advantage of legal loopholes to gain political advantage or fatten their campaign coffers. Americans worship at the feet of materialism and technology during the week and give God lip service in church on Sunday, with little or no commitment. The nation needs to heed Micah’s message before it suffers the same fate as Judah.

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What is the holiness of God? For many years I thought the sum total of God’s holiness was His sinlessness. But I was mistaken. God’s sinlessness is an important aspect of God’s holiness, but it is only one aspect. God’s holiness involves far more than sinlessness.

The Meaning of the Holiness of God

The Meaning of Holy. The root of the word translated “holy” means “to divide.” A holy person is divided from other persons and things by being different, distinct, or even unique from them.

The Bible’s opposite of holy is profane. To be profane is to be “common” or “ordinary.” Thus to be holy means to be different, distinct, or unique from the common or ordinary.

Biblical Examples. God rebuked Israel’s priests for profaning His holy things and making no distinction between the holy and profane (Ezek. 22:26). They converted into common or ordinary the things He wanted kept different or distinct.

God declared the Sabbath holy for Israel under the Law (Ex. 31:14–15). The seventh day of the week was to be different, distinct, or unique. The Israelites were to work on the other six days, which were common and ordinary. But they were to rest on the Sabbath.

The Bible is called “the holy Scriptures” (literally, “the holy writings,” Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15). This designation means the Bible is different, distinct, or unique from all other writings. The Bible is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). That fact is not true of any other writings.

Holiness As Ascribed to God. When the Bible declares that God is holy, it means that God is different, distinct, or unique from everyone and everything else. Some ascriptions of holiness to God demonstrate this.

When Moses and the people of Israel sang a great song of praise to God after He delivered them safely through the Red Sea, they said, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness . . .?” (Ex. 15:11). They associated God’s holiness with the fact that He is different, distinct, or unique from all other gods mankind worshiped. They emphasized that no one else is as distinctive or unique as He.

Hannah, Samuel’s mother, declared, “There is none holy like the LORD, for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam. 2:2). She equated God’s holiness with His uniqueness.

In the midst of a passage (Isa. 40:12–31) that emphasizes the unparalleled greatness of God, God asked, “To whom, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One” (v. 25). God indicated that His holiness is synonymous with His uniqueness. No one else matches Him.

God’s declaration, “I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee” (Hos. 11:9), signified that His holiness involves His being different or distinct from mankind.

Thus the holiness of God is His quality of being divided from everyone and everything else by being different, distinct, or unique from them.

The Basic Attribute of God

At least two factors indicate that holiness is God’s basic, foundational attribute. First, other attributes contribute to His holiness. God is omnipresent (everywhere present), omniscient (knows everything), omnipotent (all powerful), infinite
(no limitations), self-existent (not dependent on anyone or anything else for His existence), and eternal (no beginning or end). No one but God possesses these attributes. Therefore, these attributes contribute to His uniqueness.

Second, the four angels around God’s throne in heaven incessantly cry out, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 4:8). The fact that they continuously emphasize God’s uniqueness as they surround His special presence in heaven seems to indicate that God’s uniqueness means more to Him than any other attribute. His holiness is absolutely essential to who He is.

Manifestations of God’s Holiness

When Sennacherib, King of Assyria, threatened Jerusalem with his great army during King Hezekiah’s reign, he asserted that, just as the gods of other nations could not deliver those nations from his strong hand, so would Jehovah be unable to rescue Jerusalem from Assyria’s military might (2 Ki. 18:28–35; 19:8–13). Sennacherib insinuated that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was no different from the gods of other nations. Thus he verbally attacked the uniqueness or holiness of God.

King Hezekiah recognized Sennacherib’s statements to be a reproach against God (2 Ki. 19:3–4, 16) and an attack on His uniqueness. Therefore, He said to Jehovah, “thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth” (v. 19).

God declared that He would judge Sennacherib and defend and save Jerusalem (2 Ki. 19:6–7, 20–34). He addressed Sennacherib as follows: “Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel” (v. 22).

God thereby warned this arrogant king that he had reproached the God who is different or unique from all other gods.

God then supernaturally killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (2 Ki. 19:35), breaking the back of Sennacherib’s army. The Assyrian retreated home and was assassinated (2 Ki. 19:36–37). Jehovah, the God of Israel, graphically demonstrated that He was not impotent against Assyria’s might, as the gods of other nations had been.

A second manifestation of God’s holiness is recorded in Isaiah 6:1–4. Isaiah saw God seated on His throne. Seraphim (angels of high rank) stood above the throne, crying out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (v. 3). These exalted beings emphasized God’s holiness.

This emphasis is significant in light of the seraphim’s position above God’s throne. Originally, another exalted angel had occupied that position: Lucifer, the anointed cherub who covered God’s throne (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:14, 16). But Lucifer became consumed with pride because of his exalted nature (Ezek. 28:15, 17; 1 Tim. 3:6) and boasted that he would “be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14). This assertion that he could become like God was an attack on God’s uniqueness.

Because of this reproach against His uniqueness, God cast Lucifer out of His heaven (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:16) and apparently replaced him with the seraphim above His throne. The word translated “seraphim” means “burn,” and its root means “fire.” The term may indicate that the seraphim looked fiery to Isaiah or that, contrary to Lucifer, they emphasized God’s holiness because they burned with zeal for His uniqueness.

As Isaiah observed this great emphasis on God’s holiness, he became overwhelmed by a sense of his sinfulness and that of his people (Isa. 6:5). Apparently, one particular aspect of God’s holiness impressed Isaiah on this
occasion—the difference between God and mankind in relationship to sin. Mankind is sinful, but God is absolutely sinless (1 Jn. 1:5–10).

The Holiness of Places Where God Is Uniquely Present

Although God is everywhere at the same time, the Bible teaches that places where God is present in a unique sense or makes His presence uniquely known are holy. Thus Scripture declares that heaven (Dt. 26:15; Isa. 57:15; Jer. 25:30), God’s throne (Ps. 47:7–8), the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex. 40:9, 34–35), the Temple (1 Chr. 29:3; Ps. 5:7), the land of Israel (Zech. 2:12), Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1; Mt. 4:5), Mount Zion (Ps. 2:6), the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:18), and the church (1 Cor. 3:16–17; Eph. 2:19–22) are holy. Because God is present in a unique sense at each of these places, they are different, distinct, or unique from other places. Other places are common or ordinary in contrast with them.

The Application of God’s Holiness

The Bible sometimes applies God’s holiness to His people. **Position.** First, it declares that believers are holy. Peter called believers “an holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9), and Paul called them “saints” (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). The term saints means “holy ones.”

The declaration that believers are holy means that God has given them a different, distinct, or unique position. Since man’s fall, all human beings (except Jesus Christ) have been born in a sinful, unsaved condition with membership in Satan’s kingdom (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:1–3; 1 Jn. 3:10). Since this condition is true of all human beings, it constitutes what is common or ordinary. But when a person trusts Jesus Christ to be his personal Savior from sin, God divides him spiritually from the realm of the unsaved and places him in the realm of the saved; God separates him from membership in Satan’s kingdom and gives him a position in His family and kingdom (Eph. 2:5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9–10). In other words, God gives the believer a position that is different, distinct, or unique from the common, ordinary position of the unsaved.

The basis for the holy position of believers is twofold. (1) They are indwelt by God (“your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you,” 1 Cor. 6:19); and (2) they are owned by God (“ye are not your own . . . For ye are bought with a price,” 1 Cor. 6:19–20). Places where God is uniquely present are holy, and everything God owns is holy.

**Practice.** Second, believers are commanded to be holy (1 Pet. 1:14–16). This command relates to a different application of God’s holiness than the holy position believers receive at the moment of salvation. This command to be holy relates to the believer’s world-life view, values, character, lifestyle, and practice. Since God is holy, He expects the members of His family and Kingdom to have world-life views, values, characters, lifestyles, and practices that are different, distinct, or unique from those of the unsaved.

**Proclamation.** Third, God’s people are commanded to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2). The word translated “beauty” means “adornement.”

In private and public worship, believers are to adorn God with His holiness by declaring how different, distinct, or unique He is in contrast with everyone and everything else.

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**Endnotes**

2 Ibid.

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When people think of Colombia, South America, they usually think of drug trafficking and the scourge of addiction it produces. The murder of public officials there is commonplace as the war to curtail the drug lords’ activities continues. However, another sinister, silent menace that is almost completely ignored is the persecution of Christian believers in that country. It is a problem Christians and missionaries in Colombia face constantly.

The radical Marxist group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is a particular threat to believers. This armed leftist organization is dedicated to bringing a more socialist government to power in Bogotá. In order to raise funds for their cause, these Marxists often resort to drug smuggling to finance their revolution. Christians and missionaries are viewed as threats because they discourage locals from becoming aligned with the rebels and their cause.

In the last three years this group has forced an estimated three hundred churches to close their doors and has murdered at least eighty pastors and priests.

On June 25 we received an urgent e-mail from a believer well acquainted with the situation, pleading with us to make the plight of the Christians of Colombia known. He related this story of a pastor who was recently murdered by the FARC.

The FARC guerillas kidnapped a missionary who was working in the area of Tame, Arauca, in East Colombia. When apprehended, the missionary was spending the day fasting. Before he was taken away, he asked his captors if he could be alone for a few moments to pray. Two days later, his body was found. The rebels had murdered him. The brother left behind a widow and several children. He had been working to start a small, evangelical church in the area on behalf of a local mission group, Good News Mission. This organization has a growing outreach among working-class people in a number of Colombian cities.

The rebels told a second pastor from the same area that he was next on their agenda and would be killed if he continued his work. This man was establishing a Christian radio station. Despite the threat to his personal safety, this pastor continues the work on the station. Radio, with its potential outreach to thousands of Colombians, is considered an extremely serious threat to the rebel terrorists.

Although he was warned to leave the area for the safer environs of Bogotá, he has refused, saying he is more than willing to give his life for Jesus.

The brother who sent us this report lamented the fact that the secular media in Colombia does not even report such tragic events. Sad to say, the same can be said of the secular media in the United States and Western world.

It is only as Christians become aware of what is taking place and become burdened enough to pray and act on behalf of our suffering brethren that these stories will get out and public officials will be forced to do something.

Our plea is for you to become involved.

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
One of the most exciting aspects of a return trip to Israel is seeing the magnificent changes that take place in relatively short periods of time. Riding through the Galilee and Judean hills and seeing the caravan communities springing up to house new immigrants gives testimony to the fact that, in spite of Israel’s current woes, Jewish people from many parts of the world continue to come home.

It also gives further evidence that Israel is, indeed, “The Old-New Land.” New communities, industries, agricultural enterprises, and businesses trumpet the fact that Israel is alive, vital, looking to the future, and standing as the region’s model of a prosperous and progressive democracy.

As fascinating as the new Israel is, the Old Land is equally compelling. Virtually every time a spade of earth is turned over, the past emerges from the ground. Archaeological treasures, telling their stories of the wonders of the ancient world, dazzle the eyes and imagination. Entire cities, such as Beth-Shean (the Pompeii of the Middle East), Caesarea (ancient seat of Roman imperial power and memorialized in the ministries of the apostles Peter and Paul), and the Citadel of David in Jerusalem, give you the feeling of walking in places where time has been turned back thousands of years.

On our twice-annual Friends of Israel “Up to Jerusalem” tours, our stay in Tiberius is at the beautiful Radisson Moriah Plaza Hotel on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. For years the hotel was plagued by a lack of parking. When workers began to prepare an area in front of the structure for a parking lot, they immediately began to uncover ancient artifacts. Work was halted and archaeological officials brought in to evaluate the find. Today there is still a parking problem. What began as a place to park cars and buses is now a beautiful archaeological garden. That’s Israel.

Just weeks ago at the Tiberius Galei Kinneret Hotel, a near neighbor of the Plaza, a similar find was made. This time bulldozers unearthed the remnants of a monumental public building that archaeologists believe is a stadium dating from the first century. According to Moshe Hartel, an expert from the Antiquities Authority, this is probably the building mentioned in the writings of first-century historian Flavius Josephus.

Hartel believes that the stadium was used for athletic competitions, horse races, and as a place for people to assemble on special occasions.

Such are some of the wonders encountered every day during a tour of the Holy Land. As a matter of fact, one of the first things we will do on arriving in Tiberius on our October tour this fall will be to take a look at these spectacular ruins and hear what took place there when our Lord and the early disciples lived and walked in this magnificent part of the country.

We are told constantly that a trip to Israel will make our Bibles come alive. Millions of believers who have gone there can attest to that fact. But touring these sites will also put you in touch with a world much different from our own—one we should all learn about and come to know well.

Remains of ancient Caesarea in Israel.
Arabs offer advice on how to kill Americans

Arutz-7—Yasser Arafat’s Fatah terrorist organization is signed on posters throughout Judea, Samaria, and Gaza that threaten terrorism against Americans. The posters say attacks will take place if the United States continues to support Israel and to call for Arafat’s removal. Fatah has denied any connection with the posters, although it did call on the Palestinian leadership to “boycott” meetings with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Hamas is more practical-minded in its anti-Americanism. The Israel Defense Forces spokesman reports that the official Hamas Web site recently hosted an electronic chat in which at least four participants offered a fifth user advice on how to murder Americans. Here are some excerpts:

“One a week, a group of American ‘dogs’ come near us on the sea front. I have been following them for a long time and am interested in your suggestions for ways to get rid of them secretly.”

Reply: “If they arrive in a private car, put a large amount of sugar in the gas tank of the car. Then, you can ambush them on the way back because the car will get stuck in the way. You will have many options to get rid of them. You can run them over on the road after they abandon the broken down car. You can put a trap on the beach if they tend to do a lot of walking. If you have people with you and four cars, you can stop them at a certain point on the road, at a traffic light for example, block them from all directions and burn them in their cars using a Molotov cocktail.”

Official Palestinian Authority television is also inciting anti-Americanism. Palestinian Media Watch tells of clips showing American and Israeli flags being burned, as well as scenes of an anti-U.S. demonstration with the name of President Bush shown dripping with blood, next to a skull and crossbones.

Denenberg calls for boycott against Philadelphia Inquirer

Prominent Pennsylvania consumer advocate Herb Denenberg has had it with The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Known throughout the area for his television reporting on consumer fraud, Denenberg has taken out a full-page ad on the inside front cover of the July 11 edition of The Jewish Exponent to voice his outrage at what he feels is the Inquirer’s blatantly pro-Palestinian coverage of events in the Middle East.

“It would take an encyclopedia to capture a fraction of the Inquirer’s endless bias,” the ad said. “The Inquirer can’t bear to call homicide bombers who blow up babies and pregnant women ‘terrorists.’” The newspaper refers to them as militants.

Denenberg wrote, “The moral bankruptcy of the Inquirer is constantly demonstrated by its equating Israel’s self-defense with homicidal terrorist bombings of the innocent. . . . The Inquirer’s twisted perceptions blame homicidal terrorist bombings on the Israelis.”

Denenberg, who has served both as the Pennsylvania insurance commissioner and public utility commissioner, asked people to boycott the Inquirer and to purchase newspapers without an anti-Israel bias, naming The Wall Street Journal, Washington Times, New York Daily News, New York Post, and Chicago Sun-Times.

“This is not just a Jewish issue, but impacts everyone,” he wrote. “As we learned from the Holocaust, when one group is persecuted, no group is safe—it’s just a matter of the order of persecution.”

The Inquirer is owned by Knight Ridder.

Murder by numbers

Arutz-7—The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson has released a series of graphs illustrating the extent of brutality of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Arabs against Israelis from the start of the Oslo War in September 2000 thru June 2002. There have been at least 13,494 incidents of Palestinian terrorism against Israelis during this period—an average of 21 attacks per day for the 21 months period.

One graph shows that 115 Israelis (including 58 civilians) were murdered in shooting attacks, while 216 civilians and 20 soldiers were killed by suicide killers. Two Israelis were killed in rock-throwing incidents, and 15 were lynched.

Another graph breaks down the attacks according to month and location. November 2000 was the most violent month on record, with 1,134 attacks, followed by August 2001, which logged 1,073. May of this year, the month following Operation Defensive Shield, had the least number of incidents—329. Arutz-7 records show that the bloodiest month was March of this year, in which Moslem terrorists murdered 136 Israelis.
Who says Israeli settlements are illegal?

Arutz-7—Author Hillel Halkin, writing in the June issue of Commentary, has this to say about the legality of the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria: “Not only has Israel ‘deported’ or ‘transferred’ no one to the settlements, whose inhabitants are there of their own free will, it is by no means clear that Israel was ever, legally, in the position of being an occupying power.

“This is because, in 1967, Israel had as good a claim as anyone to the West Bank, which in effect belonged to no government. The Jordanian annexation of the area, while acquiesced in by the same Palestinian leadership that had rejected the 1947 U.N. partition resolution, was unrecognized by most of the world, and Jordan itself had refused to make peace with Israel or to consider their joint border more than a temporary cease-fire line.

“The conventional wisdom is also wrong in asserting—a frequently made claim—that continued settlement activity on the part of Israel is a violation of the 1993 Oslo accords. The plain fact of the matter is that nowhere in that agreement was there any reference to the settlements, apart from a single paragraph stating that their fate was to be settled in final-status negotiations. This was hardly an oversight. The Palestinians wanted a settlement freeze and fought for one at Oslo; if they did not get it, this is only because in the end they accepted the Israeli refusal to agree to one. In repeatedly demanding one anyway over the ensuing years, it is they, not the Israelis, who have gone back on the document they signed.”

Israeli hope for heart problems

The International Jerusalem Post—An Israeli technique for injecting stem cells from the bone marrow of a heart patient into his own heart to stimulate the growth of tiny blood vessels has shown promise in Phase I trials in Israeli and American hospitals.

The technique is meant for patients who have had no relief from cardiac surgery, angioplasty, or medications and spend much of their time in hospitals.

The first Israeli patient to undergo the procedure, developed by Dr. Ran Kornowski, is a man around sixty who has undergone four bypass operations and 33 catheterizations—15 of them angioplasties (balloon therapy). Kornowski and his team removed some 30 million stem cells and processed them in the lab.

They underwent filtration, sterilization, a viability assay, and other processing and were injected via a special catheter into 12 different sites in his heart while the patient was wide awake. These sites, Kornowski said, were chosen using a unique three-dimensional, non-radiological imaging technique. Aside from the processing, the procedure took about 45 minutes.

“The patient feels great,” Kornowski said, but he added that it will take three months to know whether the stem cells’ growth factors have triggered the production of new blood vessels to bypass damaged muscle.

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

In addition, that same gift can increase your personal income and reduce your future tax payments.

If your heart’s desire is to invest in the Lord’s work, yet at the same time, you need to make the most of your current financial resources, then you may want to consider purchasing a gift annuity from The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

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

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

Name ______________________________
Address _______________________________________
City/State/Zip _______________________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) ___________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Name of Joint Annuitant _______________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) ___________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Relationship to First Annuitant _________________________
Phone ( ) _________________________________________
Possible Amount of Annuity $ _______________ 
(Minimum annuity amount is $5,000)
Income to be paid:
○ Quarterly ○ Semiannually ○ Annually
○ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.

60.5
In Psalm 94 it is written, “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. . . . How long shall the wicked triumph?” (vv. 1, 3).

Each day the situation in Israel brings more grief and sadness. We need the Lord more than ever. But so many of our people have left the way of the Lord. I ask God each day to show me how to speak with them about His truth, because most of them grow up with so many fictitious stories. They believe these stories, but later in life they become extremely disappointed. Now they are at a crossroads and need someone to tell them the truth and to help them find their way back to the true and living God of Israel.

Recently, as I was trying to encourage a number of people here, one said to me, “You speak so nicely about faith in God. But what do you know? You are not in our situation.”

I told them, “Here in Israel, we all live on the same active volcano.”

“No,” they said. “This is not so! If you had a son in the army today, in the situation Israel is in today, you would not speak with so much courage, as you are speaking to us now.”

So I asked them, “Do you all have sons in the army?”

Each person answered yes. Every person I was speaking to had one son in the army.

“Well,” I told them, “if I were like you, without faith, I would have to dress in sackcloth and ashes. I have not one but three sons. And all of them are on active duty.”

This was hard for them to believe. I showed them pictures, so they could see for themselves.

One of my sons is the captain of a torpedo boat; one is a paratrooper; one is in the air force; and our daughter also serves. When I was on active duty, I had the “best” job of all. I cleared mines! I fought in all of Israel’s wars until recently. Now I must watch my children go to war.

“Yet in all this, I have never lost my faith in the Lord,” I told them. “You see, I put my trust in God. And He gives me the courage to stay happy and go to others, like you, to tell them that God has a future for us.”

Then one asked me, “Do you love your sons?”

“I am their father,” I said. “What kind of a question is that to ask me! Of course I love them. But God, who is their Father, loves them even more.”

Then I read to them the beautiful verse of John 3:16. When they heard it, one said, “But this is not written in the Bible.”

I showed them the Scripture and told them it is the continuation of the Hebrew Bible. And because I believe what is written there, I can have peace.

“Look at me, then take a good look at yourselves,” I said. “You are embittered. Why? Because of what you have believed. You have believed a big stack of
superstitions and have lost your will to live. You are even thinking of ways to end your lives.”

When I said that, they began to look at each other, wondering how I knew what they were thinking.

“Can you show me your Bible?” one asked.

This time I gave it to them. They examined it, trying to determine if it really was the Bible.

“Who was your teacher?” someone asked.

“The Holy Spirit was my teacher,” I answered. “He will teach you, too, if you read the Bible instead of all the rabbinical commentaries you receive from others. I have believed what is written in the Bible. And God gives me the courage I need each day.

“As it is written in Isaiah 12:2, ‘Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD, even the LORD, is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.’”

I told them that, in our assembly, we often sing a song from Isaiah 60:1: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.”

“Have you such songs in your books?” I asked, knowing they do not. “What you learn is not how to put your hope and trust in the Lord, but how to dislike those who do not agree with you. You will find no peace there.”

This conversation took several hours, and we all became friends. It was the best beginning possible. The door is now open to teach them about Jesus, who can give them peace.