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See enclosed envelope for ordering details.
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I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My Glory (Isa. 46:13).
When that plane touches down at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv," someone told me recently, "I know I’m in a country that’s a miracle. Israel is absolute proof of the existence of God."

I couldn’t agree more. Destitute and beaten down, Israel arose from the ashes. Today it is a vibrant, high-tech country whose innovations and medical advancements have benefited the entire world.

Although it still must fight to stay alive in an extremely hostile environment, Israel is thriving. This little country about the size of New Jersey has survived against all human odds—but not against divine odds. When God decides something, no one can reverse it (Isa. 43:13); and He has decided Israel will exist as long as the sun, moon, and stars remain in the heavens (Jer. 31:35–36).

This May modern Israel celebrates 71 years of independence. So we decided to give you a little glimpse of life in the Jewish state.

We submitted questions to our dear friend Meno Kalisher, and he graciously sent his answers. Meno is a native Israeli and pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly House of Redemption. He is the son of the late Zvi Kalisher, whose popular column appears at the back of this magazine. We still have hundreds you’ve never read, and we plan to continue running them until the Lord tells us differently!

We also have an article about the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin. Michael was a Bucks County, Pennsylvania, resident who left everything he knew behind to move to Israel to become a paratrooper in the Israel Defense Forces. In 2006, at age 22, he was killed in action during Israel’s war with Hezbollah. He is buried at the Mount Herzl Cemetery in Jerusalem; and to this day, his grave is the most visited one there.

Michael was a great friend to many at The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. When he was in the States on leave, he visited our headquarters in New Jersey and went from office to office to say hello. It was his dream to have a center for lone soldiers.

I’m also delighted to tell you we now have a special place on our website devoted to materials by world-renowned theologian Dr. Renald Showers. You can access it by going to foi.org/rshowers.

We truly hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine. Perhaps it will inspire you to join us on our next Up to Jerusalem tour. I promise you won’t regret it.

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
Each year in May, Israel celebrates its rebirth. Established on May 14, 1948, modern Israel is now 71 years old. The fact that the Jewish nation arose from the ashes and has come back to life in its ancestral homeland with its ancient language is unprecedented in history.

I have a T-shirt I purchased when I visited Kibbutz Misgav Am a few years ago. This small community, located atop a mountain on Israel’s northern border, provides a panoramic view of nearby southern Lebanon—a land occupied and controlled by Hezbollah, an Iranian-supported Arab terrorist group dedicated to Israel’s destruction. Hezbollah has stockpiled more than 200,000 missiles solely to unleash a reign of terror on Israel.

Hezbollah would do well to regard the message printed on the front of my T-shirt. It lists 12 civilizations that once tried to destroy the Jewish people and are gone today. Yet the Jewish people still stand, and Israel is alive and doing extremely well.

Indeed, the return and revival of a nation that was so decisively defeated and scattered throughout the world is unique. We must ask what is different about Israel that it still exists when so many mighty nations that sought to destroy it have disappeared.

The answer is also on my T-shirt: “The Jewish People. The smallest of nations but with a Friend in the highest of places!” The Jewish people’s preservation throughout the ages is associated with God’s purpose in raising them up in the first place: to be the people through whom He would redeem this world from the curse of sin.

Their restoration aligns with God’s promise to return them to the Land of Promise prior to the return of His Redeemer, the Messiah. In Isaiah and Ezekiel, God foretold of a day when He would bring the Jewish people back from the lands to which He scattered them.

Today we see them coming home. Last year haaretz.com reported that 29,600 Jewish people made Aliyah, that is to say, they immigrated to Israel. Their return is part of a phenomenon that began in the late 19th century and continues to this day. Israel’s Law of Return ensures that anyone who is Jewish has the right to move to Israel and become an immediate citizen. The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry collects funds for Aliyah to help Jewish people return to their ancestral land.

The population of Israel continues its upward growth. Globes, an Israeli business-news website, reported that, by the end of 2018, Israel’s population had grown to roughly 9 million, of which 74 percent, or 6.7 million, are Jewish; 21 percent, or 1.9 million, are Arab; and 5 percent, or 426,000, are other people groups.

Just as God is at work bringing the Jewish people back to their land, He is also bringing the world to Israel to see His modern miracle. Tourism reached an all-time high of 4 million visitors in 2018, according to The Jerusalem Post.

Further evidence of God’s blessing is Israel’s steady economic growth. Last year Israeli exports hit a record-breaking $110 billion, an increase of 8 percent over 2017, israelhayom.com reported. A remarkable figure for such a tiny country.

Every time I visit Israel, I am blessed to see our heavenly Father’s miraculous work. Oh, if Israel’s enemies could but see the fallacy of their dreams to wipe the tiny Jewish nation off the map and instead embrace God’s desire that we bless the Jewish people (Gen. 12:3).

As the T-shirt I got at Misgav Am reminds us, all those who tried to annihilate God’s people (and there were many) failed. Modern Israel is a testimony that God will not be thwarted in His plan to redeem this world from the curse of sin—and His plan runs right through Israel!

by Jim Showers,
executive director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry
You don’t have to be a political science expert to know the American political landscape is deeply divided.

It wasn’t that long ago when Democrats and Republicans could rally around an issue that helped show Americans we shared a common value. That value was Israel. Despite disagreements on the subject, both parties still shook hands when it came to Israel’s security, prosperity, and right to exist.

In the mid ’90s, both parties unanimously passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and allocating funds to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Through the years, bipartisan bills supporting Israel were passed under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Even at the end of 2018, five bills co-sponsored by both parties were introduced by the House and Senate: (1) The Israel Anti-Boycott Act (S. 720), (2) The Hamas Human Shields Prevention Act (H.R. 3542), (3) The Palestinian Authority Educational Curriculum Transparency Act (H.R. 6034), (4) The UNRWA Accountability Act (H.R. 5898), and (5) the United States-Israel Security Assistance Authorization Act (S. 2497).

These bills support American values and advance the United States-Israel relationship by continuing security funding and exposing the Palestinian leadership’s terrible treatment of their own people in the West Bank and Gaza.

There was never a disagreement over Israel’s right to exist—until now.

The 2018 midterm elections saw the “resist” movement gain traction when voters elected three unorthodox candidates; one even unseated a high-ranking Democrat. The midterms produced freshman politicians Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from New York’s 14th congressional district, Ilhan Omar from Minnesota’s 5th congressional district, and Rashida Tlaib from Michigan’s 13th district.

This new batch of progressive-socialist Democrats has an agenda to upend the bipartisan support Israel is accustomed to receiving. Tlaib, the first Palestinian-American elected to Congress, wants to change lawmakers’ minds about U.S. aid to Israel and plans to lead a delegation of lawmakers to the “occupied” West Bank controlled by the Palestinian Authority. She is also a vocal supporter of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel.

Ilhan Omar castigated the Jewish state in 2012 when she announced on Twitter, “Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel.” Earlier this year Omar said she “chuckles” when Israel “is upheld as a democracy in the Middle East” and compared the Jewish state to Iran.

Ocasio-Cortez proudly took to social media to share about her conversation with United Kingdom’s Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn is known for being both an anti-Zionist and anti-Semite who partners with the terrorist organization Hamas. Around the same time, a video surfaced of a group from Ocasio-Cortez’s activist group singing, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” calling for Israel’s eradication.

The Democratic party has a serious problem on its hands: It is attracting people who have a deep animosity toward the only democracy in the Middle East: Israel.

House Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY), who considers himself the “guardian” of Israel, shouldn’t shrug off these newcomers and their anti-Israel passion. These freshmen represent the ideals of a large contingent that supported Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT) in the 2016 presidential elections. Behind them churns a wave of support with a voice it didn’t have before.

For some reason, the news media is drawn to these progressive socialists like white on rice; and when the media gives them and their anti-Israelism special attention, their views can be mistaken as representative of the entire Democratic Party.

Democratic leaders must build a solid, unified approach to supporting Israel before their position becomes muddled by the media. A simple history lesson from Genesis 12 shows God meant business when He said, “I will bless those who bless you [Israel], and I will curse him who curses you” (v. 3). And those are words that shouldn’t be taken lightly.

Chris Katulka
PROPOSED PIPELINE WOULD BRING ISRAELI GAS TO EUROPE

Israel has reached an agreement with Cyprus, Greece, and Italy to begin work on an underwater pipeline designed to transfer natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean Sea to Europe. The so-called EastMed Pipeline, 2,200 kilometers (1,350 miles) in length, is envisioned to bring gas from under the sea between Israel and Cyprus to European markets via Greece and Italy.

The $7 billion project would carry up to 20 billion cubic meters (706 billion cubic feet) of natural gas each year from the Israeli offshore gas fields called Leviathan and Tamar to supply Europe’s growing demand. It also would help Europe diversify its energy sources and reduce European dependence on Russia.

The pipeline would mark a milestone for Israel. Not only would it offer the Jewish state direct access to the lucrative European energy market, it also would give Israel—as a newfound strategic supplier of energy to Europe—an opportunity to reset European-Israeli relations, which for decades have been strained by anti-Israel animus.

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz said the pipeline could also reduce Arab leverage over Europe. “For decades, we have complained about the Arab influence in Europe due to oil and gas,” he said. “The export of gas to Europe will moderate this influence to a certain extent and be a counterweight to Arab power.”

The project, which the Israeli government says could be fully operational within the next five years, faces formidable technical and geopolitical hurdles. The underwater pipeline would be one of the longest, deepest, and most complex in the world. The most challenging part is the section between Cyprus and Crete, an underwater earthquake zone where the seabed is more than 3,000 meters (two miles) deep.

Geopolitically, Turkey, which has occupied northern Cyprus since 1974, opposes exploiting natural resources from the eastern Mediterranean without Ankara’s permission. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has even deployed a Turkish warship to prevent an Italian energy company from exploring off the coast of Cyprus.

Russia, too, might be opposed to a project that reduces its share of gas to the European market. Israeli supplies, even if relatively small, could reduce the price Europe pays for natural gas and thereby reduce Russian profits and political leverage.

In any event, the project has already bolstered stability in the eastern Mediterranean by improving Israel’s relations with Greece and Cyprus. All three countries have difficult relations with Turkey—which aspires to become the regional hegemon—and all three now hold frequent joint military and civil protection exercises.

Israel, Greece, and Cyprus are also promoting a project to install undersea electricity and fiber-optic cables that will link the three countries. The so-called EuroAsia Interconnector—a 1,520-kilometer (940-mile) undersea electric cable with a 2,000-megawatt capacity—is designed to connect Greek, Cypriot, and Israeli power grids via the world’s longest underwater power cable. The project aims to build gas-driven electric power plants in Israel and Cyprus to export electricity to Europe.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hailed the growing ties between the three countries as building “an alliance for good” through joint trade, tourism, and health endeavors. “We are building a great alliance, an alliance for good among our three democracies,” he said. “It is almost inconceivable that our countries did not have this warm, intimate, and direct contact in the past.”

Energy Minister Steinitz concluded, “The agreement that we have drawn up will enable Israel to become an energy supplier to Europe, and that has both economic and political importance. This will be the first time ever that Israel has joined with the EU on any major infrastructure project.”

by Soeren Kern, a senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, a nonpartisan foreign policy think tank based in New York City
EGYPT—A Christian mother who was kidnapped and tortured in Egypt for her faith now fears for her daughter and her pastor-husband who have been threatened with death if she refuses to return to Islam.

The 42-year-old Ebtehaj Alsanosi Altejani Mostafa, who fled to Egypt from Sudan in 2005, was kidnapped two years ago in Cairo where she was burned, tortured, and raped.

“I will not go back to Islam—I hate Islam,” she told her persecutors. Two Sudanese Muslims kidnapped her on her way to a market in 2017. They took her to a windowless room in an unknown house where they poured water on her, pulled her hair, tied her hands and legs to a chair, raped her, and burned her.

“You are a disgrace to your Muslim family; you brought shame to the family,” they shouted as they struck her, she said. “You are kafira [infidel].”

After she told them she would rather die than return to Islam, one of the kidnappers brought a copy of the Qur’an and began reciting verses that call for killing those who leave Islam. Between verses they shouted, “Allahu Akbar,” the jihadist slogan, “Allah is greater,” she said.

Then they raped her while taking photos and video.

Four other men entered the room, two Sudanese and two Egyptians. One ordered her to say the shahada, the Islamic profession. When she refused, he had one of the others shove her onto the chair and tie her hands and legs again; her chest and back were in great pain, she said. They then forced her to kneel at length, hurting her legs; and one man burned her back with a cigarette 26 times, trying to force her to say the shahada, she said. They laughed with each cigarette burn; the room was full of smoke.

Refusing their ultimatum again, she was slapped on her face and kicked several times as they continued ordering her to renounce Christ and save her life. “Are you sure you want to keep with Jesus?” they asked her. They again tried to force her to say the Muslim profession of faith, and when she again refused, they asked her why she worships three gods: Mary, Jesus, and God.

“This is not true. I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God,” she told them.

Before leaving the room, they told her this was her last chance to return to her old religion before they are allowed to kill her. They returned carrying a Muslim prayer mat. “This is your last day with us,” one of them said.

After several attempts to force her to sign the papers saying she had returned to Islam, they injured her hands as they forced her against her will to sign one of the papers, she said. Then she felt a blow to the back of her head and lost consciousness. When she came to, she found herself on a street with people and cars passing by, she said.

Prior to her abduction, Mostafa had received a phone call from one of her sisters telling her that her uncle and brother were planning to hurt her. Her uncle, a prominent officer in Sudan’s notorious National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), has great influence as the military attaché in Sudan’s Foreign Ministry in Khartoum.

Mostafa said she knows God has His purposes for her abduction and that her purpose in revealing it is so the international community will know what type of pressure Sudanese converts face in Egypt. For the complete story, go to tinyurl.com/MSTRNenght.com.

Sudan ranks sixth on the Open Doors 2019 World Watch List of countries where Christians face persecution. Egypt ranks 16th.
The Gift That

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? And that same gift can increase your income and reduce future tax payments.

If you want to invest in the Lord’s work yet need to make the most of your financial resources, then you may want to consider purchasing a gift annuity from The Friends of Israel.

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 being due in the year of your gift.

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

Gives Back

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Hesed is an exciting, Christian, adult volunteer program to Israel, hosted by The Friends of Israel. Participants work alongside Israelis doing manual labor and giving of their time, effort, and resources and always leave with a deep love for the Jewish people and a desire to return.

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WHO IS A JEW?

For centuries, Jewish people have been asking themselves, “Who is a Jew?” Today a new wrinkle has developed, and it involves Christians.

by Steve Herzig
If a Jew is not a Jew, then who’s a Jew? Of late I’m told that I, a Gentile, am a Jew—are you one too? Now I’m confused! Will someone please provide a clue Who on Earth is a proper Jew?1

I am not confused. I know I’m Jewish, 99 percent European Jewish, in fact. Confirmed through DNA testing. My mother is 100 percent European Jewish.

So where does the confusion come in? Through farmisht (Yiddish for “confused”) theology.

Last fall I participated in a panel to help clear up theological confusion about eschatology, which is the biblical teaching about the future. Panelists presented various views, and I presented Premillennialism and Pretribulationalism—positions firmly held by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Premillennialism holds to a literal, 1,000-year Kingdom of God on Earth and maintains that Christ will return to establish that Kingdom before the thousand years begin. Pretribulationalism maintains the church will be raptured from the earth before the seven-year Tribulation (70th week of Daniel 9:27).

The evangelical, Bible-believing Christians who assembled the panel hold strongly to the inerrancy of Scripture but had no formal view on eschatology.

After my presentation, a young man asked if we could talk. He is a godly believer, sincerely loves the Jewish people, and is truly interested in growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. He was extremely concerned that I had said Replacement Theology, which teaches the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan, is anti-Semitic.

His theology sees only one people of God and makes no distinction between Old and New Testament believers. My theology sees two people of God: the Jewish people and the church. I told him the ideology that the church replaces Israel is anti-Semitic, but not necessarily the person who holds such a position. Then he asked, “Why shouldn’t all the blessings God promised be mine in Christ?” He truly believed they were, including the blessings promised to Israel.

Then he said three words that jolted me: I am Jewish. He uttered them slowly and softly, without malice, and with kindness from a Christian brother. Yet I must confess, when I heard them, I felt robbed, not by the young man, but by his farmisht theology.

DOUBLE EVERYTHING

God promised the Jewish people both double punishment and double blessing. When the children of Israel failed to walk with Him, He punished them. First, He carried the 10 northern tribes into exile in Assyria, then He carried the remainder into exile in Babylon. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would receive “double” for its sins. God said, “I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols” (Jer. 16:18).

True to His Word, God has allowed the Jewish people to suffer. They have been hunted, persecuted, and slain more than any nation on Earth. The curses in Deuteronomy 28:15–68 read like the past 10 centuries of Jewish history. Many Jews, when told they are God’s Chosen People, reply, “I wish He would choose someone else.”

Yet God also promises great future blessing for Israel:

But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, they shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs (Isa. 61:6–7, emphasis added).

God said, “Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you” (Zech. 9:12).

God filled His Scriptures with promises to bless His beloved Israel, whom He has loved “with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3)—and it is these blessings Replacement Theology (RT) appropriates for the church. Yet it completely discards the curses. When it comes to the curses, RT maintains that Israel still means biological Israel—a clever feat of theological gymnastics.

The Jews are a unique and separate people, the physical descendants of the patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. When Gentiles become believers, they do not become children of Jacob—or should they want to. Jews and Gentiles who place their faith in Messiah Jesus for salvation become new creations—members of the body of Christ, which is the church.

SEPARATE ENTITIES

The Bible presents two peoples of God with two histories and two sets of promises.


[1]

[2]

[3]
God." The church and Israel are different. Israel is a specially loved people (Dt. 7:6), the apple of God’s eye (Zech. 2:8). God has promised the Jews a special land (Gen. 17:6), a special Redeemer (Isa. 53), and a special blessing (Jer. 31). They are an earthly people who will receive a future, literal, earthly Kingdom.

The church, on the other hand, is blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). God loves the church and “gave Himself for her” (5:25). The church is the bride of Christ. Israel is not. Believers are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) on Earth. Our citizenship is in heaven. We eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to meet us in the air (1 Th. 4:17) or take us in death to be with Him, when we will be absent from the body but present with our Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). When He returns to Earth, we will return with Him in immortal bodies.

The church is gloriously composed of both Jews and Gentiles who are saved by grace through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen and amen.

**‘BY HIS STRIPES’**

By God’s grace, I was born and raised an Orthodox Jew. Therefore, I knew certain foundational truths: I knew the Jewish Scriptures were the very words of God, not the traditions of men. I knew I was responsible to keep the Law, and I knew heaven and hell were real. I also knew my Messiah would come someday to gather all Jews from around the world to the Promised Land of Israel.

It was also by God’s grace that I became a believer in Jesus (Yeshua) as my Lord, Savior, and Messiah. God took what I knew to show me what I did not know. I knew the Law was good and that I was not. I knew God saw all my righteousness as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

I had learned the prophet Isaiah said, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (53:5–6).

I am not farmish. I am a Jew and part of the body of Christ, the church. I know the truth: Yeshua is “the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [Him]” (Jn. 14:6). He is my only hope and the world’s only hope for salvation.

If you are interested in a better understanding of how Jewish people think and see themselves, I recommend you read I Am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl, compiled by Judea and Ruth Pearl. It was written as a tribute to their son, Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped and savagely beheaded in Pakistan by radical Muslims in 2002. Before he was murdered, Daniel read this statement: “My name is Daniel Pearl. My father is Jewish. My mother is Jewish. I am Jewish.”

If you are Jewish or Gentile and don’t believe in Jesus, please consider this admonition: “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

If you are a Gentile believer in Jesus, you are a member of the body of Christ, as am I; and that should be blessing enough for anyone. ♠

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**ENDNOTE**


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Steve Herzig
is the director of North American Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.
A LOOK at Life in ISRAEL

AN INTERVIEW WITH MENO KALISHER
M any of our readers have asked us what life is like in Israel, especially for Jewish believers in Jesus. So we asked Meno Kalisher to answer a few questions for us. Meno was born in Jerusalem and has lived there his entire life. A sought-after Bible teacher around the world and author of several books, Meno is the senior pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly House of Redemption. He is also the son of the late Zvi Kalisher, whose column has appeared at the back of this magazine for more than 60 years.

Q. How are things different today than when you were growing up and when your parents were young believers?

A. I was born in 1962, so my childhood was many years ago. We had fewer than 200 believing families in Israel at that time, and the attitude toward us was very bad. Jews who believed in Jesus were viewed as betraying their nation. Most of our neighbors were religious people who hated anything that had to do with Jesus.

Many Israelis who believed in Jesus lost their jobs. I remember situations where kids in the neighborhood mocked and shunned me. A bomb destroyed our church elder’s car. Our church was vandalized and flooded when someone opened the fire hose one night. Another church downtown was burned to the ground.

As the number of believers grew, a better understanding about who we are developed, and the attitude toward us changed for the better. We, too, were born in Israel. We studied in the same schools, served in the army, paid taxes, and spoke Hebrew with no foreign accent.

The rise of Zionist evangelical Christians and developments in school education have helped to shed a better light on Jewish believers in Jesus. Today Israelis realize not all Christians hate Jews! Though most religious Jewish people still dislike Jesus and view Jewish believers as idol worshipers, their behavior toward us is more respectful.

Q. How much freedom do you have to make Christ known?

A. We have much freedom. We can use all forms of media to make Christ known. Private newspapers and businesses can reject our offers for business, but that is life.

As a local church, we make Christ known through our Christian testimonies; speaking with neighbors and friends; giving out gospel tracts; and spreading the gospel through our websites, video clips on YouTube, billboards, etc. We do not hide our faith in Jesus. We invest much in educating our people in the church to speak boldly about Jesus and to be able to defend their faith biblically.

There is a law in Israel limiting missionary activity. It has two major warnings:
1. It is forbidden for adults to evangelize minors (people under 18).
2. It is forbidden to promise any goods or benefits in order to persuade someone to change his religion.
In other words, it is forbidden to bribe people. Needless to say, we don’t do things like that. We also respect the first warning. We teach the Bible to our children, and they share it with their peers and teachers at school. By God’s grace, the church is growing without violating this law.

Q. Are most Israelis religious, secular, or nominally religious?
A. Most Israelis are secular (60 percent). The other 40 percent are religious, varying from nominal to Orthodox. But many secular Jews feel attacked and in need of defending their national religion, Rabbinic Judaism, when you speak about Jesus and prove to them He is the promised Messiah.

Q. How many Jewish believers in Jesus live in Israel today?
A. The last number we heard was about 30,000. This is a rough estimate and includes those who believe in Jesus but do not attend church out of fear. The number of Jewish-Israeli believers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is about 500 soldiers. The total number of evangelical churches is 300, including small churches that meet in homes.

Q. What are some of the greatest pressures facing Israeli believers today?
A. Spiritually, there is always an attack on the Lordship of Christ Jesus. Not all Israeli evangelical churches accept the Trinity and believe that Jesus is God and that He was not created. This may sound weird, but it’s true! Another issue is our identity in Jesus. Despite all we do and say for our nation Israel, people still reject us and say we are not part of our nation. It’s a price we must pay. We should prefer to identify with Jesus in all aspects of life. Being mocked, ridiculed, and rejected is still a big part of our lives.

Being part of Israeli society at large, not necessarily because of our faith, brings economic pressures. Being a believer in the food business is almost impossible because Israelis must obtain their kosher license from the rabbinate, and the rabbis will cause all types of difficulties to avoid giving a kosher certificate to a food business owned by a Jew who believes in Jesus.

Also, believers who want to rent a facility for church use run into major objections. This is a major issue in cities that are more religious.

Q. Who is obligated to serve in the military? How long do soldiers serve, and when do they go to college?
A. Israelis are obligated to join the army at 18, after they complete high school. Men serve three years, and women serve two.

Druze [a sect of Arab Muslims] serve in the Israeli army and are loyal. Israeli Muslim and Christian Arabs are not obligated to join the army. They are not even obligated to do any social service in place of military service. I wish Israeli Muslim and Christian Arabs would insist on doing social service for their nation, even in their own villages and schools. But only a handful do. Shouting and murmuring about
being second-class citizens while refusing to lift even a finger to help and serve your own people seems unbalanced.

A person can be excused from military service if he is medically unfit.

Going to college and university usually comes after military service. But an 18-year-old can postpone serving if he or she is studying a profession accepted by the army (medicine, electronics, electricity, computers, etc.). But that person will have to serve extra years in the army.

I postponed my service for two years and entered the army with a degree in electronics and served the army in my profession for four years. The first three years I was paid a regular soldier’s monthly salary, and at the beginning of my fourth year, I received a regular worker’s salary.

Q. Tell us about the program you’re involved in to prepare believers for going into the military.

A. During military service, most believing soldiers are under strong spiritual attack. Many grow cold to the things of God. To help equip them to survive, programs named Netsor (Hebrew, “safe”) and Hitsim (Hebrew, “arrows”) were created. The Netivah ministry organization formed the outreach and runs it. We just help in teaching and supporting as we can.

The programs provide believing 18-year-olds with fellowship and crash courses on the Bible and how to defend their faith. Netsor lasts 10 days, and Hitsim lasts about two months.

Such premilitary courses serve as spiritual boosters. The training helps the soldiers perform their military service with a better testimony and lessens the number of believing soldiers who drift from the faith.

Each course involves about 10 to 20 people. There are two Hitsim programs per year and one Netsor program. The same Netivah group runs about four to five weekend conferences for soldiers throughout the year, six to seven youth conferences per year, and many more activities—all to share the gospel and teach the young believers to know and trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The teachers in these courses include the leaders of Netivah and local pastors like me. I teach one of the courses, and our church hosts them for a weekend, as needed.

Q. Is it expensive to live in Israel compared to the United States? What are some of the differences in types of housing, housing costs, and medical care?

A. There is a big difference between Israel and the United States economically, especially when it comes to housing. An average apartment (three bedrooms and a living room) in an apartment building costs $250,000 minimum.

In the center of Israel, the price is sky high; an average apartment costs $450,000. Most Israelis live in apartments instead of houses. Houses cost 50 percent more than apartments.

Since the average monthly net income in Israel is about $2,500, purchasing an apartment is almost impossible. A young couple must have one third of the cost up front to obtain a mortgage. Many young couples depend on their families to come up with the first third. Then they are bound to the mortgage for the next 25 to 30 years.

Part of our taxes are directed toward medical care. Our medical-care fee is a certain percentage of our income, depending on the income. We have four medical groups from which each person can freely choose.

The basic health package is pretty good and sufficient. If someone is able, he can add more items to his package for an extra cost.

Frankly, our medical-care system is extremely good compared to many other countries. The medical teams are highly professional. One must remember that since
Israel’s defense budget is very big, the nation is limited in social services.

Q. Surveys have shown that Israelis are among the happiest people in the world. Why do you think that is, considering the dangers they face every day?

A. First, God’s grace. Second, Israel is the only place where we can loudly complain about everything without being thrown out. Third, most Israelis speak their feelings and opinions without running away from confrontation. Keeping less inside is healthier and gives more space for joy. Fourth, in any other country, people usually don’t love us. We know that in a crisis outside Israel, we might be the ones to be blamed and persecuted. So even if it is not easy to live in Israel in many aspects, it is the only and best place for the Jewish people. Even God knows it!

Q. What is the relationship between Arab and Jewish believers?

A. By God’s grace, the relationship is slowly improving. The Arab churches in the north of Israel are more connected to the Jewish churches. The north is much more assimilated. As you go south toward Jerusalem, the relationship is improving; it was pretty cold. Recently, we have been meeting to discuss, pray, and fellowship to build a better foundation of fellowship for the next generation.

The major cause for the distance between believing Arabs and Jews is Replacement Theology, which most Arab churches adopt. [Replacement Theology maintains God has replaced Israel with the church and that Israel no longer has a biblical right to the land.] We pray and hope that, as time goes by, a better understanding of God’s role for Israel will yield accurate teaching and result in a better relationship.

Many Jewish believers think as long as Replacement Theology dictates the Arab-Christian understanding about Israel, Arab Christians will share the same views and feelings about Israel and Jews as Muslim Arabs. We pray and hope for a better relationship.

Q. How does Israel treat Israeli Arabs?

A. You must understand that an Israeli Arab (Muslim, Druze, or Christian) is an equal citizen like any Israeli Jewish person. The reason for the distrust and distance or excessive security checks is only because of all the terror activities carried out by Muslim Arabs. It is very sad that innocent Arabs do suffer because of that.

Many Israeli Arabs rightfully demand all rights, yet they do not view Israel as their nation, and most of them (not all) will not do any civil service or military service.

Out of 120 parliament members, about 20 are Arab Muslims and Christians. Some publicly support the terrorists and call them freedom fighters. They will not say a word against the killing of innocent Israeli Jews. Outside Israel, in foreign parliaments, they denounce Israel. The only thing they forget to say is that no Arab country in the world would tolerate such activity!

Arabs, Christians, and Muslims—those who desire to assimilate into Israeli Jewish society—hold high positions in Israel. They work as judges, police officers, and in many other well-respected positions.

What media channels like CNN and BBC choose to broadcast are usually half-truths and anything bad about Israel.

Q. What do Israelis do for recreation?

A. Culturally, Israel is very close to the United States when it comes to recreation. Our main sports are soccer and basketball. We are very family oriented, and since Israel is not that big (it’s about the size of New Jersey), families often gather on a weekly basis, especially on Friday evenings; and if they live far apart, they may get together once a month.
We are not perfect; but compared to all the Arab nations, Israel is the best and most desired country for Arabs!

Q. What are the IDF’s moral standards?
A. It may sound boastful, but the IDF’s moral standards are extremely high. Every command has to be verified by the army’s legal department. Soldiers are told to refuse a command if it is unlawful. So from an administrative point of view, our standards are very good.

But since we are all sinful people, subject to moods and feelings, mistakes and wrongdoings can happen, though they are minimal.

Sadly, most of the news about the IDF and Israel in the world media is very biased. Israeli soldiers are not aiming to kill children or babies. Our enemies are shooting at us from schools and hospitals. When we shoot back, they call us child-killers. Our enemies hate us more than they love their own children, as the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir said.

During the wars in Gaza, before taking down a building that was used by terrorists, the Israeli army called everyone in the area and told them personally to leave. (Technology makes this possible.) How many armies do that? Pilots aborted their missions the minute they saw innocent people in the target area. Sick people could cross the border and get treatment in Israeli hospitals. Trucks loaded with food and goods constantly went to Gaza to provide essential food. I am sure CNN and BBC do not show this side to you.

What you see is the moment a bullet hits a young person or child. It is heartbreaking, but a war zone is not a laboratory. Mistakes happen. And some of these people are not as innocent as you may think. It’s easy to edit a film, and Hamas in Gaza is really professional in video-editing.

You should ask yourself, Why do Palestinian leaders send kids to war? Why do they give them weapons to kill Israeli soldiers? Why do they allow them to throw stones at soldiers? Why does Hamas use almost all of its money to produce rockets and buy weapons instead of feeding its people?

After all, Israel left the Gaza Strip, as the Palestinians wanted. The cruel party is the Hamas leadership, not Israel.

At the northern border, things are similar. During the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Syrian president massacred about 400,000 Syrian citizens. More than 3 million Syrians left their homes and are now in exile. During these five years, Israel opened a field hospital in the north and served more than 5,000 wounded Syrians. We hope that some of the 5,000 will think twice before shouting again, “Death to Israel.”

Overall, the IDF is an army with high moral standards. Soldiers who violate the rules are punished. Bad standards are rejected and criticized. We are not perfect, but we are way better than those who accuse us.
Why should Israelis and American Jews see eye to eye? Americans and Israelis are not alike. They have different concerns, interests, lifestyles, and even a different calendar. Most American Jews do not speak Hebrew, nor do they treat Friday night as special, whereas more than 60 percent of Israelis observe Shabbat by lighting candles or reciting a benediction over wine before sitting down to a family-centric Friday night dinner. With all these differences and more, it’s not surprising American Jews do not make Israel a high priority when they go to the polls to vote.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem’s first Temple in 586 BC and the subsequent Babylonian Exile, there have been Jewish people living outside Israel (the Diaspora). In fact, for most of the past 2,000 years, the majority have lived in the Diaspora. Today approximately 6.9 million make Israel their home, eclipsing even the U.S. Jewish population of 5.7 million.

For Americans, the exile mentality is long over. Except for the anomalous 10 percent or so on the Orthodox spectrum, the vast majority of U.S. Jews are assimilated. Merely 22 percent have kosher kitchens. Many marry non-Jews and do not raise their children as Jews.

A third of those born between the 1980s and early 2000s say they have no religion. The landmark events that defined American-Jewish identity since 1945—the Holocaust, creation of Israel, 1967 Six-Day War, and Soviet Jewry’s freedom movement—have dimmed in the collective memory. Merely 3 percent of non-Orthodox children attend Jewish day schools. And in a pathetically telling statistic, 42 percent of U.S. Jews consider having a good sense of humor crucial to their Jewish identity.

DIMINISHING ZIONISM

Across the spectrum, the American-Jewish sense of peoplehood is frayed. Many are unacquainted with the Abrahamic Covenant binding God to the Jewish people and the Jewish people to the land of Israel. This covenant forms the bedrock of Judaism. It is not that U.S. Jews can’t decide whether to take the Torah as divine revelation or as a hallowed foundational myth; it’s that most don’t even know the covenant exists.

The covenant drives political Zionism and emphasizes the bond between the Jewish people and their historic homeland. Reform Jews in America tried to create a Judaism devoid of peoplehood. (Since World War II, however, the movement has shifted from anti-Zionist to non-Zionist and now pro-Zionist.) As an alternative to peoplehood, religiosity, and ritual, Reform Judaism embraces progressive politics and social mores.

Orthodoxy went through a similar transition, with its rabbis initially opposed to Zionism. Today only a small number of ultra-Orthodox sects actively oppose Israel.

In contrast, Conservative Judaism has been Zionist from its inception, and its Rabbinical Assembly makes decisions based on halacha, or Jewish law. However, this middle-of-the-road movement is hemorrhaging members. Older observant people are staying, but the young are walking away. While Conservative rabbis can preside at same-sex marriages where both partners are Jewish, the Rabbinical Assembly forbids rabbis to officiate at interfaith weddings. Many younger rabbis find ways to circumvent this policy. The younger generation of Conservative Jews is politically indistinguishable from their Reform cousins, especially in their opposition to an Israeli presence over the Green Line (1949 armistice lines).

Identity and peoplehood for many U.S. Jews are passé. Moreover, for those Reform and Conservative Jews with merely one foot in Judaism, there is the ubiquitous drive to redefine what it means to be religiously Jewish. They have appropriated and rebranded the esoteric, Kabbalistic notion of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) to be synonymous with progressive politics as dictated by The New York Times. Such a path leads Jews to attend redefined Passover seders and observe reimagined Yom Kippurs. They are uncomfortable with the concept of “choseness,” seeing it as self-serving chauvinism, rather than a weighty responsibility.

With so tenuous a connection to Jewish civilization, it is little wonder many American Jews do not place Israel high on their priority list when they vote. Yet a majority still believe Israel is vital to the global Jewish future and feel an emotional attachment to the land. At the same time, most have never visited Israel and have no close family there.

FAILING TO GRASP FACTS

To remedy the situation, thousands of young people have been brought to Israel through a Jewish program intended to connect them to their heritage. However, lately, in the name of inclusiveness, it has expanded to allow sponsors that do
not embrace Zionism, as well as those partial to the Palestinian narrative. Some participants have even exploited their free trips to demonstrate against “the occupation.”

Even visitors with the best intentions fail to grasp Israel’s precarious topography. It is doubtful they realize the hills overlooking Ben Gurion Airport are in the “occupied” West Bank and that a single terrorist armed with an Iranian-supplied surface-to-air Stinger missile could shut down the country’s main airport.

Most American Jews favor establishing what they imagine would be a “demilitarized” Palestinian state. For 67 percent of Israelis, however, such an idea seems fanciful. Since the 1970s, American Jews have been led to believe they can be pro-Israel while advocating for a Palestinian state that basically returns Israel to the indefensible 1949 armistice lines.

Obliviousness to the strategic value of the West Bank and Gaza is only one element of the puzzle. Most U.S. Jews are also unfamiliar with the territorial, covenant-based component of Judaism. Jewish civilization is organic, a product of interpretation and reinterpretation. Traditions are created and recreated.

Nonetheless, there is a core: The Promised Land is central to Jewish civilization. There can be no Judaism without Israel. So many Jewish values are tied directly to the land. Consider Deuteronomy 5:16: “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (emphasis added).

**ISRAEL’S PORTION OF BLAME**

To be fair, Israel bears some responsibility for the estrangement between American and Israeli Jews. Israel has forgotten that the Diaspora has been crucial to building the country—from museums to hospitals to the Knesset to the new national library.

Increasingly, this devotion is not shown respect. Jews in the United States want to see non-Orthodox Judaism strengthened in Israel. They want non-Orthodox rabbis to be permitted to officiate at Israeli weddings. They want an area adjacent to the Western Wall where families can pray together, rather than be segregated by gender, as is the Orthodox practice.

But the Netanyahu government has done everything possible to disrespect, delegitimize, and alienate non-Orthodox American Jews. And it is hard to claim that the prime minister’s policies do not also reflect Israel’s ethos. Of course, it does not help that a plurality of Israelis—many of whom are as ignorant about the non-Orthodox streams in the United States as U.S. Jewry is about Israel—opposes setting aside any space near the Western Wall for non-Orthodox prayers.

**THE TRUMP FACTOR**

Nothing, however, illustrates the divide between American Jews and Israel better than conflicting attitudes toward U.S. President Donald Trump. For Israelis, his election has been a godsend.

Unlike Barack Obama, Trump has not demanded unilateral Israeli concessions. Administration spokespersons do not engage in moral equivalency between Palestinian violence and Israeli repri-sals, nor between Arab terrorism and the construction of Jewish housing over the Green Line. In a refreshing departure from Obama policy, the Trump administration has criticized the Palestinian-Arab leadership for its insincerity. It also moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

When Israel faced Hamas rocket attacks in November 2018, the White House did not employ the Obama-era State Department’s mantra, calling on “both sides” to stop the violence. Washington’s backing of Israel at the United Nations is also more robust. Most important, the Trump administration has pressured Tehran. Iran is the only country in the Middle East that poses an existential threat to Israel’s survival.

For these reasons, Israelis across the political spectrum overwhelmingly approve of Trump’s policy toward Israel. Understandably, the president’s boorish demeanor and his mendacious ways are not the criteria by which he is evaluated in Jerusalem.

In stark contrast, American Jews—including conservative-leaning pundits, such as Bret Stephens, David Brooks, and Bill Kristol—see the president as an unmoored, rabble-rousing demagogue. Only 19 percent of American Jews voted for Trump, according to a recent American Jewish Committee poll. The president’s policies and bearing make Jewish people in the United States cringe.

When the FBI’s 2017 report showed a 37 percent rise in crimes targeting Jewish people and institutions, many saw a Trump connection. He is perceived as a president who fans the flames of discord, rather than a leader who tries to bring people together.

Moreover, American Jews criticized Israelis for downplaying anti-Semitism in Trump’s America and shining for the administration. “He has destroyed all the taboos of civil discourse. And his rhetoric has emboldened and legitimized anti-Semites and other bigots,” said former Anti-Defamation League Director Abraham Foxman. In this atmosphere, Trump’s support for Israel works paradoxically to Jerusalem’s detriment.

All presidents from Lyndon Johnson forward have told American Jews that Israel had to vacate territories beyond the Green Line for its own good and that the best way they could be “pro-Israel” was to support Washington (and European) efforts to extricate Israel from the West Bank.

Trump does not seem fixated on an Israeli withdrawal; and that fact, strangely enough, is why 57 percent of Jews in America disapprove of his handling of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Elliot Jager**

is an American-Israeli journalist, political scientist, and author who lives in Jerusalem.
THE Battle FOR Biblical Truth

A look at the importance of Israel and why Christians could never separate themselves from the Hebrew Scriptures

by Jim Showers
Modern Israel is a miracle. When Mark Twain visited there in the 1800s, he left thinking it was the most miserable place on the face of the earth. The Ottoman Turks let it deteriorate into a barren wasteland. But when you visit Israel today, you see anything but barrenness. Israel is thriving. It has blossomed into a country with an economy much of the world envies. Why? Because God has His hand on the little Jewish nation and is using it—as He promised—to bless the world.

**INNOVATION**

Innovation drives much of Israeli society. About three years ago, I toured a seed company in Israel that focuses on developing new foods and finding ways to produce more fruits and vegetables. The company understands the global need to feed the hungry.

Last year, The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) released a wonderful documentary called To Life: How Israeli Volunteers Are Changing the World. It’s available online for free at tolifethemovie.com. The film shows how Israel is not merely bettering its own country but helping the rest of the world, as well. The film follows six Israeli organizations working outside Israel to make the world a better place.

Israel has taken its advanced technology to Africa to help the nations there use solar power to pump water from the ground without electricity. Israel’s drip irrigation system allows them to grow crops using a minimal amount of water. Because of Israeli innovation, formerly starving Africans now grow and develop their own food.

Israel’s technological advancements shouldn’t surprise us because God said Israel would bless the world. Our cellphones, tablets, and computers all employ Israeli technology; and many medicines and medical procedures used every day in the United States were developed in Israel.

Israel is blessing the world, and the world should be blessing Israel. In Genesis 12:3, God told Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.” This promise to Abraham is instructive to Gentiles. If we, as Gentiles, want to be blessed by God, we must love and bless His Chosen People.

**ISRAEL’S IMPORTANCE**

Some people today claim modern Israel is a mistake; it should never have been allowed to exist. They are wrong. Israel is a miracle from God, and it is critically important. Christians understand this fact because Israel is crucial to our salvation, demonstrates God’s faithfulness, and tests the church’s commitment to biblical truth.

1. **Our salvation is rooted in the covenant promises God made to Israel.**

Jesus said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22), which means salvation came through the Jewish people—the nation of Israel. There is no other nation on Earth through whom salvation comes. The apostle Paul taught,

> Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise (Gal. 3:15–18).

Paul said our salvation comes through the everlasting promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—which are fulfilled in Christ alone, not by the Law. These promises cannot be annulled or canceled. The Abrahamic Covenant contains everything needed for salvation to come to the world. It includes the promises of a land, nation, Redeemer, and blessing—all for the purpose of bringing salvation to humanity to complete God’s plan of redemption.

It’s important to remember that Israel and the land are inseparable. If Israel had not been in the land, the Messiah would not have been born. God removed Israel from its land more than 500 years before Jesus came, but He returned the nation to it before the Messiah’s arrival. Why? Because Israel needed to be there for God to send the Messiah. (See Micah 5:2.)

Our salvation is rooted in God’s promises to Abraham (Rom. 11:1–32). Those who believe God has forsaken Israel are cutting off the roots, and when a plant’s roots are severed, it dies. The apostle Paul warned Roman believers not to “boast against the branches [Jewish people]. . . . Remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you” (v. 18). God’s promises to Israel form the root, and if He fails to fulfill them, no confidence remains for our salvation.

Because most Jewish people do not believe the gospel, God allowed salvation to go to the Gentiles. But Paul said the Jewish people’s unbelief doesn’t mean God has rejected them. He has chosen Israel to bless the nations, and Israel’s restoration to the land proves He is honoring His promises to the patriarchs. We should be grateful God says of Israel, “The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (v. 29). God will not go back on His election of Israel. Even in unbelief, Israel carries on its redemptive purpose in its national destiny.

2. **Modern Israel’s existence proves God is faithful and will complete His plan of redemption.**

God is preparing the next major phase in His redemptive plan, which includes far more than the salvation of...
mankind, important as that is. His plan also involves re-
storing His creation and Kingdom on Earth. The Almighty
subjected all of creation to a curse after Adam and Eve
sinned, and it eagerly awaits redemption and restoration
to its pre-sin condition:

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits
for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was
subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who
subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be
delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious
liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole
creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until
now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits
of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves,
eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our
body (8:19–23).

God’s redemptive plan for the world flows through Israel,
and it is clear Israel must be in its land for the plan to
succeed. Perhaps that is one reason Satan is working so
hard to push the Jewish nation into the sea.

Mere days before Jesus’ death, the Lord spoke of His
return and the coming of God’s Kingdom: “Do you see
these great buildings?” Jesus asked His disciples as they
looked at the massive Temple complex, thought to be the
largest physical structure in the Roman Empire. “Not one
stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown
down” (Mk. 13:2). Jesus’ words disturbed the disciples, who
could not imagine life without the

Temple.

Forty years

later, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed
the Temple. If

you visit Israel
today, you can see the stones
they heaved off
the south end of
the Temple Mount
when they de-
stroyed the struc-
ture. The stones
remain on the
street below, right
where they fell.

When Jesus’
disciples asked,
“When will these
things be? And
what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of
the age?” (Mt. 24:3), they weren’t talking about the Church
Age. The church had not yet begun. They were talking
about the end of the pre-Messianic age. That’s what the
Jewish people were expectantly anticipating. They were
looking forward to the Messiah coming and ushering in
the Kingdom.

In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus
explained the signs that would
precede His Second Coming. All
of them presume Israel’s presence
in the land, including the future
Temple’s desecration, when the
Antichrist will erect an image
of himself in the holy place and
declare himself to be God.

Modern Israel’s existence is no
coincidence; it is proof of God’s
faithfulness. The land of Israel is
directly connected to our salvation.
If God were not to complete His
plan through Israel, He would break
His promises; and our salvation
would be questionable. Thankfully, God is not like man.
“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny
Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). The Bible testifies that God swore
by Himself when He made the covenant with Abraham,
and it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:13–18).

God will complete His redemptive plan because His
plan does not depend on Israel’s faithfulness; it depends
on God, who is faithful and just and true.
Modern Israel’s existence is no coincidence; it is proof of God’s faithfulness. The land of Israel is directly connected to our salvation.

3. Israel tests the church’s commitment to biblical truth.

If you want to know whether a church holds to the literal interpretation of Scripture, find out where it stands on Israel. Many churches have lost the connection between Israel and the church, divorcing it from its Jewish context.

Yet it was Jewish men who penned the Scripture in its historical, Jewish context. The Bible clearly teaches God is not finished with Israel, and it raises the question of theological malpractice to read what Scripture says and not accept it at face value.

During the second and third centuries of the church, Christians began to spiritualize God’s Word, particularly those passages that spoke of a future for Israel. This allegorical method of interpretation was foundational to the development of Replacement Theology, a teaching that claims Israel has no future role in God’s plan and replaces Israel with the church.

Israel’s rebirth as a nation bothers adherents of this view because the Jewish state’s existence fits the literal interpretation of God’s Word. It contradicts the claim that God has rejected the nation and that today’s Israel has no legitimate biblical foundation. Replacement proponents deny God’s hand in bringing the Jewish people back to their land.

I believe the church’s delegitimization of Israel greatly threatens the nation today. Anti-Zionists claim Israel is the cause of all the trouble in the Middle East, and they have developed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement to injure Israel economically in an effort to destroy the Jewish nation.

Although anti-Zionists say they are not anti-Semites, anti-Zionism is blatantly anti-Semitic. Saying, “I’m against the modern state of Israel but not the Jewish people” is like saying, “I’m anti-America but not anti-American.” You cannot divide the two. The land and the people are one.

Recently, a popular pastor of a major evangelical church in the United States suggested Christians “unhitch” their faith from the Jewish Scriptures. There is so much wrong with this viewpoint, not the least of which is that our very salvation is “hitched” to the Old Testament. Jesus Himself said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22); and God loves them forever (Jer. 31:3).

In Romans 11:1, Paul wrote, “Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!” God has not rejected the Jewish people. Anti-Semitism arises when the world and the church fail to understand the Word of God and the importance of Israel.

History reveals that when the church loses its connection to Israel, it becomes susceptible to anti-Semitism. Over the last 1,500 years, anti-Semitism in the name of Christ has inflicted much pain and suffering on the Jewish people. And the church wonders why so many Jews distrust the church and reject Jesus.

We are in a battle for biblical truth. Does the church accept God’s Word and live by it—including the Jewish Scriptures and the admonition to bless Israel—or does it not?

Jesus warned, “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt. 24:37–39).

My fear is that the world and many churches are behaving as in the days of Noah, occupied with life and not listening to God and His warnings. May we understand that the Almighty is a God of love but also a God of judgment, and may we hear His Word and heed its truth concerning Israel’s importance in His plan of redemption. After all, Israel is the conduit through which all our blessings flow.
Many Americans scratch their heads trying to figure out Israel’s political system. So we asked our friend Elliot Jager, a Jewish resident of Jerusalem and an American-Israeli with a PhD in political science from New York University, to explain how it works.
Chaim Weizmann is sworn in as first president of the State of Israel.
When my wife, Lisa, and I voted in the Jerusalem municipal elections last year, four candidates were running for mayor. Since no one garnered 40 percent of the vote, a runoff was held in November. Veteran politician Moshe Lion defeated young reformer Ofer Berkovitch.

The election was atypical because we voted for a person. In national elections, Israelis choose a party, not an individual. The more votes the party slate of 120 names receives, the more seats it wins in the 120-seat Knesset, Israel’s parliament.

Lisa and I also voted for the Jerusalem municipal council. As with national elections, we selected one party’s slate from more than a dozen. The more votes a slate receives, the more seats it wins on the 31-member city council.

When the Jerusalem municipal council votes were counted, roughly 20 of the 31 seats went to Orthodox or theologically right-leaning parties. Though Mayor Lion received more than 100,000 votes, the slate he headed did not win a single seat. So in return for city council support, he likely had to divvy up lots of patronage in the form of jobs and budgetary funding.

No city council or Knesset member represents my neighborhood because council members, like Knesset members, are elected at large. There are no districts, no constituencies. Interest groups are represented, yet no one is personally accountable to the voters. I have no elected official I can turn to, for example, to get a traffic light installed on a dangerous corner near my home. And the clout the Orthodox wield at the national level is disproportionate. Merely 22 percent of Israel’s population is Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox. Yet these parties are pivotal in forming most Israeli governments.

When groups with relatively small followings are overrepresented, the process of governing is undermined. Having so many groups in government is what political scientists call hyperpluralism. In my opinion, the rules of the political game need to be changed. Israel’s proportional electoral method needs to be ditched for a scheme closer to the American or British model.

ORIGINS

Israel’s War of Independence was still raging when on July 8, 1948, less than two months after the country declared independence, the pre-state constituent assembly created an election committee chaired by David Bar-Rav-Hai of the Mapai Party. Mapai became the dominant component of Israel’s Labor Party. Bar-Rav-Hai’s task was to come up with a blueprint for Israeli democracy.

Some committee members favored creating electoral districts, as in the United States or Britain, where members of Congress or the House of Commons represent geographical areas, and voters can turn to them for services. However, the committee nixed constituency representation, thinking Israel’s method offered the best chance for marginal and single-issue groups to gain representation. It is also the best way to ensure that no one is disenfranchised.

So no one represents Herzliya or Tel Aviv or Jerusalem in the Knesset. Moreover, within those cities, municipal council members do not represent specific neighborhoods. Israel’s founders, led by David Ben-Gurion, also agreed anyone age 18 or older could vote, and the national legislature should have 120 seats.

When the war was almost over, Israel held its first election on January 25, 1949, for the Constituent Assembly. A political party needed merely 1 percent of the vote to cross the threshold. Today, the qualifying threshold is 3.25 percent, though Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu floated the idea of lowering the electoral threshold to 2 percent. Mathematically, a slate that wins 3.35 percent of the total vote in the anticipated 2019 elections would earn about four seats in the Knesset. The more votes, the more seats.

PERMANENT MINORITY GOVERNMENT

From 1949 until now, no party has ever won a Knesset majority of 61 seats. Every government has been a cobbled-together coalition. Usually, the president calls on the leader of the party holding a plurality of votes to form a government. The leader then bargains with others whose parties have made it into the Knesset, offering them patronage, ministries, and other incentives to join them in government.

In 1949, social-democratic Mapai garnered 46 seats; so its leader, David Ben-Gurion, turned to the United Religious Front (an amalgamation of Orthodox parties) that had 16 seats to build a coalition of 62 seats. To cushion his majority, he brought in the liberal Progressive Party, which had five seats, and the Sephardim and Oriental Communities Party, with its four seats. That gave Ben-Gurion 71 seats. He also invited an Arab party affiliated with his Mapai to join the government, adding two more places and giving him a final majority of 73 seats. Ben-Gurion could have
turned to several other parties, such as Mapam, a pro-Soviet workers party (Stalin did not publicly target Russian Jews until 1952), which held 19 seats. He also could have turned to Menachem Begin’s Herut Party and its 14 seats, but he wanted to exclude both Herut and Mapam from influence.

By October 1950, Ben-Gurion’s coalition had crumbled. New elections were held in July 1951. Again, Mapai won a plurality, and President Chaim Weizmann again asked Ben-Gurion to form the government. Meanwhile, on February 16, 1949, Israel’s legislative body, the Constituent Assembly, had passed the “Law of Transition” and transformed itself into the Knesset.

COBBLING TOGETHER A GOVERNMENT
The 2015 Knesset election was typical in that, again, no party won a majority. Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud won 30 seats, while its main ideological opponent, the Zionist Union, won 24. In other words, 64 percent of Israel’s electorate did not support Netanyahu’s party.

For Netanyahu to govern, he needed to build on his Likud’s 30 seats to form a coalition of at least 61 seats. He turned to the Jewish Home Party (Orthodox, Zionist, supportive of settlements in Judea and Samaria), which had eight seats; Kulanu (center-right, attracts disaffected Likud voters), 10 seats; United Torah Judaism (ultra-Orthodox, European heritage, non-Zionists), six seats; Shas (ultra-Orthodox, Sephardi of North African heritage), seven seats; and belatedly to Yisrael Beiteinu (nationalist, secular, mostly Russian-speakers), five seats. (It started with six seats, but one of its members broke away.) This gave Netanyahu 66 seats. Another election was scheduled for April 2019, after this magazine goes to press.

Netanyahu—like all his predecessors—had to cut deals in return for support. When the dust settled, his coalition was comprised of parties with significant religious and political differences, pulling him in opposite directions, which explains why it’s hard to get things done in Israel.

For example, Netanyahu’s United Torah Judaism partner wants to enshrine draft deferments for ultra-Orthodox youths. His Yisrael Beiteinu partner sees no reason why these young men should not serve their country. Netanyahu gave the Jewish Home Party the Diaspora portfolio, making it responsible for relations with Jewish people abroad. However, this Orthodox party considers Reform and Conservative Judaism inferior, even though most Jews in the United States identify religiously with these progressive streams. Netanyahu regularly promises Reform and Conservative leaders visiting Israel that he will reduce discrimination against them (at the Western Wall complex, for instance) but invariably reverses himself under pressure from his Orthodox coalition partners. He has repeatedly reneged on his promise to allow surrogate births for homosexual couples. Kulanu, which supports same-sex surrogacy, votes with the ultra-Orthodox opponents of gay rights simply to preserve the Netanyahu coalition.

Fifty-six percent of Israelis—including those on the right—favor same-sex surrogacy, but parties representing the 12 percent ultra-Orthodox minority can dig in their heels, rather than compromise.

Though Netanyahu may be the chef, he has to share the kitchen with too many cooks. The dishes they concoct can sometimes turn the stomach.

ENCOURAGING MODERATION
To fix the problems caused by hyperpluralism, the rules of the political game must change. Israel’s proportional electoral method needs to be exchanged for something closer to the American or British model.

In Israel, if you garner only 3.25 percent of the vote, you “win a little.” Politicians have more incentive to frame public policy along doctrinal, rather than pragmatic, lines. In contrast, a winner-take-all electoral system is supposed to discourage narrow, single-issue, or radical candidates or immoderate parties that cater to only a sliver of the population.

Today, however, the notion that a winner-take-all electoral system discourages extremism has become shaky. Americans are viscerally divided over Donald Trump’s presidency. Nonetheless, if they elected their representatives using Israel’s political system, fanatics festering at either extreme of the political spectrum would have far more clout.

CONSTITUTION
Students of the Arab-Israeli conflict recall that United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, best known as the Partition Plan, called for the division of British Mandate Palestine into one Arab and one Jewish state living side-by-side in peace. The Arabs rejected the Partition Plan
and war ensued.

What many people may not know is that the plan also required the Arab and Jewish states to draft democratic constitutions. With that in mind, the Israel Declaration of Independence promised a constitution would be adopted no later than October 1, 1948. David Ben-Gurion invested some effort in a draft constitution, but the (Orthodox Zionist) Mizrahi Party and the ultra-Orthodox parties rejected any document not anchored in the Shulchan Aruch, or Code of Jewish religious law (a 1563 compendium that even its author did not mean to be the final word).

Ben-Gurion quickly lost his enthusiasm for a constitution. In his book Ben-Gurion: A State at All Costs (available in English this summer), historian Tom Segev maintains Ben-Gurion never wanted a constitution. That may be so because his Mapai Party was dependent on the Orthodox to retain power. As a workaround, he agreed in 1950 to what became known as the Harari compromise: Israel’s constitution would be built chapter by chapter through separate “Basic Laws.” Eight years later, the Knesset enacted the first Basic Law. With 11 Basic Laws to date, Israel’s constitution remains a work in progress.

The downside of this system is that a Basic Law can be amended by a simple majority—61 of the 120 Knesset members—making it relatively easy to change Israel’s “constitution” and cater to the passions of the moment. And that is precisely why the framers of the U.S. Constitution designed an obstacle-filled amendment process: to make it hard to abruptly change the rules of the political game.

If and when Israel’s politicians ever get serious about completing the country’s constitution, the Israel Democracy Institute, a good-government think-tank, has crafted a “consensus” constitution to get the ball rolling. **Politicians have more incentive to frame public policy along doctrinal, rather than pragmatic, lines.**

**CHECKS AND BALANCES**

While Israel has no constitution, the Office of the Attorney General (AG) and the Supreme Court make it difficult for a runaway Knesset majority to trample civil liberties, tolerance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The AG has evolved into perhaps the second most powerful institution in the country. On paper, it serves as the lawyer of the sitting government. It also directs the State Prosecutor’s Office and supervises a bureau that reviews proposed legislation to ensure bills are in harmony with Basic Laws, societal values, and even international law.

These responsibilities give Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit a say in virtually any public legal matter. The AG sits atop a network of deputies ensconced in almost every government ministry, including finance, justice, and defense. To undermine this watchdog function, the Jewish Home Party has proposed legislation that would give ministers control over the deputy AGs assigned to their fiefdoms. The party and others on the populist right are irked because not much can happen if the AG opposes an issue. Thus, even if an overwhelming majority of Knesset members wanted to pass a bill that required citizens to wear red suspenders on Mondays, the AG could block it.

The ultimate check on Israel’s hyperpluralist political system is the Supreme Court. It consists of 15 justices appointed by a judicial selection committee that includes representatives from the court itself, Bar Association, prime minister’s government, and Knesset. The current chief justice is Esther Hayut.

Israel’s Supreme Court rules as a court of original jurisdiction in matters regarding the legality of state decisions. It can grant relief against government actions “in the interests of justice.” In 1995, under Chief Justice Aharon Barak, the court decided Basic Laws have supremacy over lesser Knesset laws, and it gave itself the power of judicial review—much as the U.S. Supreme Court in 1803 gave itself the power of judicial review in Marbury v. Madison.

The Israel Supreme Court also has appellate jurisdiction over criminal, civil, and military court judgments and other decisions of the District Courts.

The Israeli justices need to be workaholics. Whereas the U.S. Supreme Court generally hears fewer than 100 cases a year, Israel’s Supreme Court has an annual caseload that can easily top 3,000. In the United States, a petitioner must show that an issue directly affects him before he can go before the court. Israel’s requirements are less stringent. The court is magnanimous in allowing petitioners access to its bench.

**PROSPECTS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM**

For those who concur Israel’s political system needs revamping, there is scant reason for optimism. Parochial parties will not give up their disproportionate influence without a fight. Electoral reform will remain a bridge-too-far unless the major parties temporarily bury their differences. And without changing how the Knesset is elected, there is little prospect...
The apostle John told Christians, “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death” (1 Jn. 5:16–17).

The word if refers to a hypothetical situation. John revealed nothing about the one praying, the sinner, or the sin. However, he did emphasize the importance and obligation of praying for a Christian who sins.

The apostle told us the result of such prayer: “He [the Lord] will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death” (v. 16). The one interceding for the sinning believer should pray that the sinner sees the error of his way and confesses his sin. God will respond by providing life.

The word life does not refer to being regenerated but, rather, to spiritual restoration and revival, resulting in the wayward Christian’s renewed commitment to live for the Savior.

Three times John mentioned a sin that does not lead “to death” (vv. 16–17) and once, a “sin leading to death” (v. 16). Scripture does not identify the sin leading to death; but commentators have presented various views. Some teach it is a sin that will receive the immediate punishment of physical death. Examples include the swift deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10) and the deaths of those who profaned the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:30).

Others believe the sin refers to the practice of false teachers who separated from the church and rejected Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God. They would be cut off from forgiveness and, subsequently, from salvation. Still others believe the sin may be one particular sin or a state of sin that an individual has no intention of leaving. Thus, the sin “leading to death” is a willful, ongoing practice of a particular sin for which the individual never repents. Finally, some believe it is a sin someone continually commits that will culminate in his death.

John never identified the sin. What we do know is that God alone chooses or determines when an unrepentant sinner should die. He tells us, “I do not say that he should pray about that” (1 Jn. 5:16), meaning, there is no directive to pray for someone in such a situation.

BY DAVID M. LEVY

What is the sin leading to death?

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BY DAVID M. LEVY
Helping Israel’s Lone Soldiers

What do you do when you have no place to go for Shabbat? That’s when the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin becomes a lifesaver—in more ways than one.

Joshua Flaster grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, the grandson of Holocaust survivors. Although he wasn’t particularly religious, he took pride in being Jewish and identified so strongly with his people that 12 hours after he graduated from Yale University in 2005, he was on a plane to Israel and never looked back. Within a month he was serving with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and found himself in a situation that changed his life.

“I remember my first week in the army was about 36 hours long,” Flaster told The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry during a recent visit to our headquarters in New Jersey. “They drafted us on a Wednesday, and Friday morning a bunch of buses pulled up, and I was told, ‘Shabbat Shalom, we’ll see you on Sunday.’ I was very, very confused because I had signed up to serve in the Israel Defense Forces, and I did not know where they were sending me for the weekend. Everyone was going home.

“I had come to base with all of my earthly belongings because I thought, per the American model, I was government property and that it would be a year or two until I went anywhere. But that’s not how the IDF works. They send the soldiers home every single weekend to be with their families. So a big gap exists for the lone soldiers because they don’t have families to go home to.”

Suddenly, Joshua had become one of the country’s 7,000 lone soldiers—men and women without immediate family in Israel—who compose a significant portion of the IDF fighting units. “If you’re going to leave behind your family and friends in the U.S., Canada, France, Mexico, wherever you came from, to go around the world to try to protect Israel, then you want to be in combat.”

Today Flaster serves Israel as the director of the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin, a Bucks County, Pennsylvania, native who was killed on the battlefield at age 22 during Israel’s 2006 war with Hezbollah terrorists in
Lebanon. An IDF paratrooper, Michael was a lone soldier with a passion for looking out for others. He also was Joshua’s friend.

“Michael was a big unifier,” Flaster said. “He brought everyone together. Michael lived in an apartment across from Zion Square in the middle of downtown Jerusalem, and he would have large groups of other lone soldiers over on Friday and Saturday nights. It would be the first place to go before you did anything else. You’d stop by Michael’s and hang out with him. It was the nucleus that brought all of the lone soldiers together in a formal community in Jerusalem in 2004, 2005, 2006.”

Even though only a small percentage of Jewish people in Israel are religious, 60 percent of the country celebrates the Sabbath. It’s a way of life. “Having four soldiers for Shabbat is actually not that fun,” Flaster explained. “Shabbat is about family and communities coming together: 10, 15, 20 people gathering around a Shabbat table and breaking bread and enjoying family, community, and fellowship.”

The weekends at home are credited with reducing the incidents of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among IDF soldiers. “Israel does not have that many problems with PTSD for a country that fights a lot,” Flaster said. “You have this amazing setup where a young man goes off on a mission or fights a war, and he comes back home to a dad, an uncle, a grandparent who also was most likely a combat soldier and went off to war and came back and had to deal with the stress and trauma of losing friends or seeing something upsetting.”

Life for lone soldiers can be difficult, which is why Michael Levin touched so many lives. “We’d go by Mikey’s place for meals and a place to sleep closer to the middle of Jerusalem,” said Flaster. “Mikey’s spirit of giving and hospitality and love of Israel and trying to bring together lone soldiers that he met on a bus, that he met on the street, was one of the driving forces, if not the critical driving force, behind our desire to do something to help out lone soldiers after Michael was killed.”

Flaster helped found the center in 2009. “When a group of us who were friends with Michael finished in the army,” he said, “we wanted to do something beyond putting up a plaque or planting trees. We saw that the appropriate thing to do for Michael was help other people, help other soldiers coming into the army, to have a living memorial to what Michael had stood for, looking out for other guys, looking out for soldiers who need help.

“You can never replace a family unit. And that’s what the lone soldiers miss. They don’t have their family unit in Israel. But our ultimate goal is to provide all of the help and love and support and a safe place to return home that a family would provide.”

Today the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin provides housing for 150 lone soldiers in seven buildings around the country. When the buses arrive on Friday morning, there is somewhere lone soldiers can go, minimizing their loneliness and homesickness.

The center also offers counseling, Flaster said. It has hired people with master’s degrees in social work to help lone soldiers deal with trauma and baggage, especially those from the ultra-Orthodox community who have been ostracized by their families. “When young people from the [ultra-Orthodox] community decide to serve in the IDF, they’re cut off from their families and kicked out of their homes. So we have a significant population today of people who are defined as lone soldiers because their families have cut them off entirely,” Flaster said. “They come to the army with real baggage that needs to be dealt with to have a successful service and a successful life.”

The center also focuses on providing for the soldiers on holidays. “We host 100 plus soldiers for Friday night dinner or Jewish holidays throughout the year. We have very big meals that bring soldiers together because they don’t have family to celebrate those holidays with,” Flaster said.

About 50 percent of the lone soldiers remain in Israel following their military service. “A sizeable portion who return to their native countries would like to stay in Israel,” Flaster said, “but it’s hard to find work.” The center hopes to continue to grow to house more lone soldiers in the future and help more remain in Israel when their IDF service ends.

For more information about the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin, log on to lonesoldiercenter.com.

by Israel My Glory staff
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What’s in a Name?

When Moses encountered God for the first time, he asked Him, “When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” (Ex. 3:13).

God replied, “I AM WHO I AM” (v. 14), adding, “This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations” (v. 15). God revealed to Moses the name YHWH, tied to His historical, covenantal relationship with the patriarchs.

Some people have been confused by the later statement in Exodus 6:3: “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name L/O.sc/R.sc/D.sc [YHWH] I was not known to them.” This text does not mean God was not called YHWH in the time of the patriarchs (the term appears more than 100 times between Genesis 12–50) but, rather, that Israel as a nation had not yet experienced who YHWH was. That knowledge would be revealed during the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt.

Understanding YHWH as an active participant in Israel’s history who demonstrated who He was in a personal way lies behind the meaning of the name itself. That is why God told Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14). “I AM” probably comes from the Hebrew verb haya (to be, exist), which connotes something about the doer, especially as demonstrated in an unfolding event. An example is the title “the Lord [YHWH] who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 134:3; cf. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8).

In the Exodus, YHWH is the Redeemer who saves Israel from its enemies (Ex. 15:1–3) and is, therefore, uniquely Israel’s God: “Who is like You, O [YHWH], among the gods?” (v. 11).

YHWH is the King of Israel (Isa. 44:6). He is not simply the one and only God; He is Israel’s God. In the New Testament, the Messiah is identified with YHWH on the basis of His act as Redeemer (Rom. 10:9, 13) and is depicted, especially in His Second Advent, by a “new exodus” motif. (See Romans 11:26–27.)

Early Judaism considered the name too sacred to pronounce (cf. Jud. 13:18). Therefore, the Jewish scribes at Qumran (ca. 100 BC) wrote YHWH in an old script used in first-Temple times. Later, in the 10th century AD, the Masoretes placed the vowels for the Hebrew word Adonai (my Lord) or sometimes Elohim (God) under the four consonants to prevent pronouncing them. Most Orthodox Jews simply say Ha-Shem (the Name).

Unfortunately, early Christian scholars misunderstood the scribal substitution and rendered the term as “Jehovah,” a Germanic pronunciation of the Latinized transliteration of YHWH. Since this form never existed, modern English translations simply use the word Lord to distinguish the tetragrammaton (four letters) from common uses of lord.

Liberal scholars often argue that YHWH was originally an Edomite or Midianite god because of His localized actions (Dt. 33:2; Jud. 5:4–5; Hab. 3:3) and because similar letters designated the Midianite deity. They contend that, during Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness, the new religion fashioned was influenced by local pagan beliefs because Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was a Midianite priest (Ex. 3:1). However, the Bible clearly teaches that YHWH is unique and divinely revealed—not borrowed from a pagan source.

Although the earliest mention (840 BC) of YHWH is from a pagan inscription (Moabite Stone or Mesha Stele), YHWH is depicted as uniquely the God of Israel. There it is recorded that King Mesha defeated the Israelites in a battle and “took the vessels of YHWH to Kemosh,” the chief Moabite god. Thus separate deities existed for Israel and Moab.

Therefore, when God revealed Himself to Israel as YHWH, it was so that His unique (memorial) name might be understood in a covenantal relationship with His Chosen People and that through them, the one supreme and sovereign Savior might be known to the nations (Ezek. 36:23).

Randall Price
is a university professor, author and coauthor of 30 books, and world-renowned archaeologist. He is also the founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries (worldofthebible.com) and has taken more than 100 trips to Israel.
It’s easy to become discouraged and misled by false reports. That’s why it is so important to be able to discern between truth and error. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1–5, the apostle Paul corrected false doctrine that apparently was spreading via a letter forged in Paul’s name.

The letter claimed believers were already living in the Day of the Lord. The news shocked and disrupted the church because, if true, it meant the church had missed the Rapture and was destined to suffer the Day of the Lord’s wrath.

The teaching contradicted Paul’s earlier instruction in 1 Thessalonians, where he taught the church would be raptured before the Day of the Lord. Thus Paul quickly penned 2 Thessalonians to calm the church’s fears, correct the false teaching, and clear up any confusion concerning the Day of the Lord. He also described the Antichrist, whose appearance will precede the Day of the Lord.

Paul addressed the church with loving affection: “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come” (2:1–2).

Paul clearly stated the subject of his letter was “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,” which refers to the Rapture (cf. 1 Th. 4:13–18). He used the phrase we ask you, or we beseech you (2 Th. 2:1, KJV), to appeal gently but authoritatively to the Thessalonians to reject the idea the “day of Christ” (Day of the Lord) had already come.

He exhorted believers not to be confused or to allow such rumors to derail their commitment to Christ. In other words, the Rapture had not taken place, and their current persecution was not the Day of the Lord’s wrath.

Paul refuted the false teachers’ lies, hoping to calm the church’s fear and dispel its confusion concerning the Lord’s Second Coming and to provide correct instruction on the timing of the Rapture and Day of the Lord.

He already had taught that the Rapture would be imminent, meaning no prophecy need be fulfilled before it occurs (1 Th. 4:13–18). He also taught that the church will never experience the Day of the Lord’s wrath (1:10; 5:9) because it will occur after the Rapture, during the seven-year Tribulation.

The phrase Day of the Lord refers to the time of God’s future intervention into history following the Rapture, when He will pour out His wrath and judgment on the wicked during the Tribulation (Rev. 6:1—19:21).

Unlike the Rapture, which will have no warning signs, many signs will identify the Day of the Lord. In fact, near the end of His ministry, Jesus revealed key events that will take place on Earth during the Day of the Lord’s wrath (Mt. 24:4–31).

In addition to judgment, the Day of the Lord will also include the blessing of the Messianic Kingdom, which the Lord Jesus Christ will establish on Earth for 1,000 years.

Before revealing the first two events that will accompany the Day of the Lord, Paul told the church, “Let no one deceive you by any means [in any way or manner]” (2 Th. 2:3). He warned the Thessalonians to guard against deceptive teaching so they would not be deluded or beguiled by spurious teachers or doctrinal error that leads to erroneous beliefs and causes defection from the faith.

Today many gullible Christians are being led into unscriptural
practices and teachings, especially when false teachers are persuasive communicators or have dynamic personalities.

Paul cautioned, “For that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (v. 3). The preposition for introduces Paul’s two reasons for warning the Thessalonians.

First, the Day of the Lord will not come “unless the falling away comes first.” The phrase falling away (Greek, apostasia) is apostasy in English. Apostatize means to revolt, defect, fall away, or depart from the true God. Paul used apostasia to connote a willful, conscious withdrawal from God, resulting in a total rejection of belief in Christ.

This apostasy will be more than a general apostasy because the text calls it “the apostasy,” indicating a specific apostasy. The people deceived will hate the truth, believe the Anti-christ’s lie, take pleasure in unrighteousness, and remain unsaved.

The word apostasy appears only one other time in the New Testament. Luke, the author of Acts, used it in reference to a charge made by Jewish leaders claiming Paul taught Jewish people “to forsake [apostatize] Moses” (Acts 21:21). They claimed Paul taught others to forsake the Law of Moses and Judaism, which in their eyes was a sin.

Throughout church history, professing Christians have defected from Christ. But “the apostasy” will be a specific departure from the faith prior to the Day of the Lord.

Some commentators interpret apostasia (departure) as the Rapture of the church. But this interpretation doesn’t fit with the congruity of the Rapture, when Christ will snatch away believers to meet Him in the air and take them to heaven (1 Th. 4:16–17). And Scripture never uses the term departure to refer to that event.

Apostasia primarily refers to a situation wherein a rebellious person departs from belief in Christ. Most Bible commentators believe professing Christians who commit apostasy were never truly saved.

Second, the Day of the Lord will not come unless “the man of sin [lawlessness] is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Th. 2:3; cf. 6–8). Paul said a specific man (the Antichrist) will be publicly revealed, or unveiled, at a specific time in history. This means he will have been living for some time before his manifestation as the lawless one. At his unveiling, people will know the Day of the Lord has arrived.

Paul called the coming Antichrist a “man of lawlessness” and “the son of perdition.” Lawlessness refers to his wicked character. Though not Satan, the Antichrist will be the total embodiment of evil—one who completely disregards, degrades, and tries to destroy any semblance of God’s will and goodness on Earth.

The phrase the son of perdition means “the son of doom and destruction.” Jesus Christ first used the title to describe Judas Iscariot (Jn. 17:12). The Antichrist will have Satan’s destructive nature, and he will be destined to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10).

He will come to power, lead a confederacy known as the revived Roman Empire (Dan. 7:23–25), and establish a historic, binding covenant with many in the nation of Israel (9:27). This covenant will begin Daniel’s 70th week, also known as the seven-year Tribulation.

Satan will energize and empower the Antichrist to lead a planned program to dominate the world politically and religiously. The Antichrist will be one “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Th. 2:4). He will oppose God by blaspheming His name, His dwelling place, and those dwelling in heaven (Rev. 13:6). He not only will oppose God, Christ, and His followers, but he will oppose all forms of religious worship.

He will “[exalt] himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped” (2 Th. 2:4). With Satan’s help, the Antichrist will elevate himself above every religion and form of worship during the Tribulation. He will seize power and dominate and subdue all religious systems under his authority.

He also will “[sit] as God in the temple of God” (v. 4). The Antichrist will enter a rebuilt Jewish Temple during the Tribulation and desecrate it by sitting in the inner sanctuary as an apostate Gentile. Worse yet, he will erect an image of himself in the Temple, and anyone who refuses to worship it will be killed (Rev. 13:14–15). Jesus referred to this event as “the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (Mt. 24:15).

In addition, the Antichrist will “[show] himself that he is God” (2 Th. 2:4). His self-exaltation will lead to his self-deification and denial of all other gods (Dan. 11:36–37). His worldwide power will cause all unsaved people on Earth to worship him (Rev. 13:8).

Paul asked the Thessalonians, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” (2 Th. 2:5). He reminded them that his teaching about the Antichrist and the Day of the Lord was not new, for he had personally and fully taught them about both when he was with them.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul made it very clear: No believer in Christ will ever experience the Great Tribulation, live under the rule of the Antichrist, or go through the Day of the Lord’s wrath. Hallelujah!

by David M. Levy, director of Education and Ministry Relations and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry
AN APPEAL FOR SPONTANEITY

In the short, handwritten note from the apostle Paul to his friend Philemon, we step into a captivating story of grace and divine providence. Onesimus, a bondservant in Philemon’s home, apparently had absconded with his master’s property. His long flight from justice eventually led him to Paul in Rome. The result: The gospel of Jesus Christ marvelously transformed Onesimus.

The time eventually came for the broken relationship between master and slave to be reconciled and for the once useless, now redeemed, slave to go home. Philemon was about to come face-to-face with Onesimus. How would he react to his wayward servant’s return when he learned they were now brothers in Christ?

Onesimus carried Paul’s letter on his journey home. It dealt with decisions Philemon would face regarding consequences for Onesimus and restitution.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, Paul's epistle offered encouragement and provided vital information and instruction to help Philemon decide what to do. Paul testified of Philemon’s widely known reputation as a man of faith who sincerely loved the Lord and his fellow Christians. He also endorsed the genuineness of Onesimus’ newfound faith and advised obedience concerning how to receive Onesimus.

It may seem odd that Paul directed a lesson on obedience to the godly master, rather than to the wayward slave. Yet Paul’s instructions to Philemon did not come as an authoritative, apostolic command but, rather, as an appeal to Philemon’s heart:

Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart (Phile. 1:8–12).

Based on Philemon’s exemplary character and Christlike display of love, Paul appealed to him to forgive and receive Onesimus. His words were bold and frank, yet tempered in the appropriateness of dealing with a brother in Christ. Paul told Philemon he could order him to do the right thing as a superior commands a soldier, but instead he appealed to him in love.

By doing so, he called Philemon to a more mature level of spiritual obedience, appealing to him on the basis of their mutual love for the Lord, one another, and their Christian brothers and sisters. Instead of issuing a command, Paul urged his dear brother to respond from the depths of his relationship with the Savior (v. 9), and he knew Philemon would accept such a directive and fulfill it wholeheartedly.

Paul told Philemon of the dramatic change in the runaway’s life since Onesimus came to Christ. Onesimus had become so valuable to the ministry that Paul even wanted to keep him in Rome, which may have been permissible. But Paul felt it was more appropriate to send Onesimus back to his master.

Paul wrote, “Without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary” (v. 14). Paul gave Philemon the opportunity to obey, choosing not to impose on him a required response and unwanted burden. Paul wanted Philemon’s consent before he took action. If Paul had forced Philemon to accept Onesimus, it would have robbed Philemon of his blessing.
CHOOSING SPONTANEOUS OBEDIENCE

Paul encouraged Philemon to live spontaneously. Today the word spontaneous often describes someone who acts or speaks impulsively; makes decisions without thinking; or embarks on carefree, fun-loving escapades without plan or reason. But the word actually comes from the Latin word sponte, which means “voluntarily,” or “of one’s free will.”

Though Paul was raised and trained in the rigid, legalistic Pharisaic system, he encouraged spontaneity in the lives of those he taught and influenced. On the one hand, his writings emphasized unquestioning obedience to God’s Word. But on the other hand, they encouraged spontaneity of obedience that emanates from grace.

Though it would have been easier to tell Philemon what to do, Paul—a skilled and insightful maker of disciples—wanted to lead Philemon into a deeper level of Christlikeness. If Philemon had merely executed Paul’s command, he would have missed the opportunity to take responsibility for the blessing or pain of his personal choice.

Paul distinguished between imposed obedience and spontaneous obedience in three main ways:

➜ Imposed obedience begins with an authoritative command, while spontaneous obedience emanates from an appeal to love.

➜ Imposed obedience responds to an obligatory action, whereas spontaneous obedience appeals to a choice for the good.

➜ Imposed obedience is compulsory and forced, but spontaneous obedience is a voluntary choice of one’s free will.

Scripture doesn’t reveal the outcome of Paul’s appeal for Onesimus. We don’t know how Philemon responded. But we do know Paul was convinced Philemon would react positively: “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say” (v. 21).

Years ago, I heard someone say, “You never call a man to greatness by making him feel small.” Paul’s statement of absolute confidence in Philemon’s character and obedience probably plumbed the depths of Philemon’s heart, infusing him with a desire to love and serve more richly. Paul called Philemon to put the following verses into practice: “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:4–6).

Paul commonly called others to greatness, not by making them feel small, but by expressing his confidence in the largesse of their hearts. Paul expressed his confidence in the godly character of the church at Rome (Rom. 15:14), the Corinthians’ ability to do the right thing when challenged (2 Cor. 7:16; 8:22), the Galatians’ obedience to the truth (Gal. 5:10), and the Thessalonians’ ability to follow the Lord’s commands (2 Th. 3:4).

Knowing when to offer the choice to obey requires insight and discernment. Not everyone is mature enough to handle such liberty (Heb. 5:14). Paul’s well-informed confidence in Philemon moved Philemon from simply doing what was commanded or imposed on him into a freedom that allowed him to go beyond what was asked of him (Phil. 1:21).

Obedience is a prominent theme in Scripture. Paul’s words to Philemon do nothing to negate the importance of obedience. In fact, they elevate it to a higher level of spiritual maturity. Forty-six of the more than 200 uses of both the positive and negative aspects of the English word occur in the Pauline Epistles.

The value of our obedience is determined not by what we do but, rather, by why we do it. Obedience out of compulsion has little value compared to voluntary and spontaneous obedience. The depth of our love for the Lord and others will determine the burdensome weight we choose to bear when called to obey (1 Jn. 5:3).

Obedience to the Lord is paramount. It is easier to sing wholeheartedly, “There is joy in serving Jesus,” when we obey spontaneously out of love, rather than when we obey out of compulsion.

Just as Paul confidently called Philemon to Christlike greatness, the Lord is likewise calling us to Christlike greatness through joyful, spontaneous obedience. Nothing is impossible with the Lord. Blessing and joy can overflow from even the simplest act of voluntary obedience to Him.
THREE WOMEN TO WATCH IN CONGRESS

Several loud anti-Israel voices were elected to Congress in 2018, and many people wonder what their influence will do to U.S.-Israel relations.


In 2012 she tweeted, “Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel. #Gaza #Palestine #Israel.” She also wants to normalize relations with Iran. Omar was recently appointed by speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) is a 29-year-old Bronx-born socialist from New York who worked on Bernie Sanders’ 2016 presidential campaign. She refers to the “occupation of Palestine”; has called Israel’s defensive operations on its Gaza border a “massacre”; and praises British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has a long history of condemning Israel.

In the 1980s Corbyn sponsored a movement that stated it wanted to “eradicate Zionism.” “Last fall,” reported The Times of Israel, “a video was discovered in which Corbyn in 2011 was filmed applauding a speaker at a conference who called for the dismantlement of Israel.”

Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) is a 42-year-old Detroit native who was born to Palestinian immigrants. She wants to cut aid to the Jewish state because supporting it “doesn’t fit the values of our country,” The New York Post reported.

In January she made headlines by employing an age-old anti-Semitic tactic by suggesting U.S. senators who backed an anti-Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions bill hold dual loyalties and are not fully faithful to the United States.
U.S. BUYS IRON DOMES

The United States has purchased Iron Dome systems from Israel for the U.S. Army to use against ballistic and airborne threats. The army had asked Congress for $373 million to buy two batteries that included 12 launchers, two sensors, two battlement management centers, and 240 interceptors. Washington wants delivery by 2020.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CROSSES LINE

Showing its ignorance of Middle East history, Amnesty International is throwing its support to Airbnb and demanding that online tourism companies stop doing business in Judea and Samaria, United With Israel reported. Viewing the areas as “occupied territory,” even though they have been part of Israel since biblical times, Amnesty International says Israel’s presence there breaks international law and doing business there constitutes “war crimes.” Airbnb, which will book lodging in other parts of Israel, refuses to do so in Judea and Samaria.

FENCE GOES UP AROUND GAZA

Israel is building the final phase of a 20-foot-high, 40-mile-long galvanized steel fence with barbed wire and sensors that will completely surround the Gaza Strip in hopes of blocking terrorists from infiltrating into Israel. “The fence will connect to the barrier recently built out into the Mediterranean Sea from north of Gaza,” The Times of Israel reported. “Over the past two years,” The Times said, “work has persisted on the underground sensor-studded concrete wall, despite regular riots and clashes along the border and occasional attacks on the construction sites.” The project is projected to cost $833 million.

ISRAELI COMPANY DEVELOPS X-RAY-LIKE SURGICAL GOGGLES

Israel-based Augmedics Ltd. has developed goggles called xvision that give surgeons X-ray-like capabilities, The Algemeiner reported. They enable surgeons to “see” through the patient’s skin, muscle tissue, and bone. “The imaging is projected onto the surgeons’ retina using the transparent display headset, allowing surgeons to simultaneously look at their patient and see the necessary navigation data without averting their eyes to a remote screen.” Dr. Daniel Sciubba, professor of neurological surgery, oncology, and orthopedic surgery at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine praised the invention: “With xvision, I can actually see the details of the three-dimensional anatomy through the patient,” he said in a statement. “It is lightweight, easy to use, and translucent, so you can see through the actual image.”

OHIO DOCTOR WOULD GIVE JEWS WRONG MEDS

The prominent Cleveland Clinic in Ohio fired a first-year resident after discovering her anti-Semitic posts on social media, including a 2012 tweet that said, “I’ll purposely give all the yahood the wrong meds.” Yahood is an Arabic term for Jewish people. In other tweets, Lara Kollab, 27, referred to Jews as “dogs” and said in Arabic, “Allah will take the Jews.” Other posts called for violence against Jews, defended Hamas, and trivialized the Holocaust, CBS News said. Kollab has since taken down her tweets.

TERRORISTS USING BITCOIN

Terrorists are taking advantage of the anonymity of cryptocurrency to raise funds to carry out attacks, a report in The Wall Street Journal uncovered. “Cryptocurrencies,” reported JNS.org, “use a digital ledger called a blockchain to trade without relying on banks and exchanges, and therefore are not subject to legislation applied to those institutions.” Terror groups can fake profiles online and conceal themselves. The Journal report “detailed how in 2015, Virginia teenager Ali Shukri Amin was sentenced to 11 years in prison for explaining on Twitter how to send bitcoin to the Islamic State,” JNS.org said.

FARRAKHAN DEFENDS OMAR, CALLS JEWS ‘WICKED’

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan defended Congresswoman Ilhan Omar following an anti-Semitic Twitter storm in which she accused the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) of paying American politicians to be pro-Israel, The Jerusalem Post reported. At an event in Chicago, Farrakhan spewed anti-Semitic venom, calling Jews “wicked” and blaming them for anti-Black racism, colonialism, dehumanization, “pervasive rape culture, sex trafficking and prostitution,” and claiming they have “exploited the American people through institutional usury and predatory lending practices.” Farrakhan also claimed the Federal Reserve is run by “a family of rich Jews,” The Algemeiner reported. Farrakhan’s remarks came a month before Omar (D-MN) was scheduled to speak at a benefit for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which “has a long history of affiliation with the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah,” The Jerusalem Post said.

VIOLENCE AGAINST JEWS UP IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

Anti-Semitic violence in Germany is up a staggering 60 percent over 2018, the BBC reported. And in eastern France, around 80 Jewish graves were defaced with swastikas recently amid a 74 percent surge in anti-Semitic acts. France houses the largest Jewish population in Europe.

$55 MILLION PROJECT TO IMPROVE JEWISH QUARTER IN OLD CITY

An Israeli government-owned company has $55 million in projects underway to improve the Jewish Quarter for residents and tourists. They include providing shaded and recreational areas; installing uniform outdoor furniture and advanced lighting; and laying out clearly marked tourist routes, including signs leading to the Western Wall, JNS.org reported.
Israel's Independence Day is fast approaching. That is when we celebrate our independence in the land. I fought in the War of Independence in 1948 so that we, the Jewish people, could live in our homeland and not be scattered like sheep among wolves.

But our nationhood did not begin in 1948. No, it began when God promised Abraham,

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 12:2–3).

The Jewish people have remembered God's promise from generation to generation. But independence did not come easily. People did not give us this land on a silver platter. We paid the price of much blood to celebrate the great day of independence.

We suffered much because, as a people, we did not put our trust in the Lord. But after we had suffered much, we began to look toward heaven and beg for help. As it is written in Psalm 121:1–2, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

In 1948 we were so few in number, and our enemies surrounded us like mighty locusts. They had great confidence they would devour us and erase us from the map. I asked my fellow Jewish soldiers at the time, "Do you think we can fight against such forces alone? Our weapons will not save us!" I told them how the Lord would defend us and asked them to read aloud Psalm 124, which says, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side . . . when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive" (vv. 1–3).

Even though the surrounding Arab nations had better and far more weapons
than we had, we won because the Lord was on our side. As it is written in Ephesians, we do not need the weapons of this world; we need to “put on the whole armor of God” (6:11). I have shared this truth with many Israelis, telling them God was with us as He was with King David when David stood before the giant Goliath.

David told Goliath, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand” (1 Sam. 17:45–46).

David was a mere boy in comparison to the Philistine giant. Yet David defeated Goliath with a stone and sling. I also have shared this truth with many Arabs throughout the years, showing them in the Holy Scriptures how God defends the Jewish people and has given us the land of Israel.

And here we are today in the same situation—standing before not one Goliath, but many. We are surrounded by nations that want to destroy us. But as we say in Israel, “Barking dogs never bite.” The Lord has promised to keep His Chosen People, and His Word is eternal. The nations that fight against us will be cast into the sea, like Pharaoh’s armies that drowned during Israel’s Exodus from Egypt. We know their end.

Many people here in Israel live in great fear. But we who believe in the Lord must come alongside and encourage them. How? By telling them how to trust in the Lord and by showing them the truth of the Scriptures. Truth conquers all things. Let us not be afraid, as the Lord has commanded us.

Zvi Kalisher (1928–2014) was a Holocaust survivor who was known for his unswerving faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry for more than 55 years.
Our multi-day National Prophecy Conferences feature sound biblical teaching, a Focus on Israel Night, a Shepherds’ Gathering for pastors, and plenty of fellowship opportunities with other believers!

THY KINGDOM COME

From the creation of the universe to the future eternal state, the Kingdom of God is foundational to God’s plan for humanity. The Lord Jesus placed such a high priority on the Kingdom that He said our first and foremost prayer should be “Thy Kingdom come.”

Yet most of us don’t pray for God’s Kingdom to come or even fully comprehend what the Kingdom is. So we have many questions and few answers. Our lack of knowledge impedes our understanding of the Almighty’s plan for the ages: past, present, and future. Join us as we open the Bible and study the exciting and incomparable Kingdom of God—the key to unlocking our understanding of human history.

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