

ISRAEL MY GLORY

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ISRAEL!

ON THE ROAD TO ZION

A DEVOTIONAL TOUR
OF THE HOLY LAND





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Join us on a journey through Israel! Our authors will take you on a special devotional tour of God's beloved Holy Land. Along the way, you'll discover the biblical significance of 15 historic locations that tell the story of the beautiful land of Israel from Scripture.

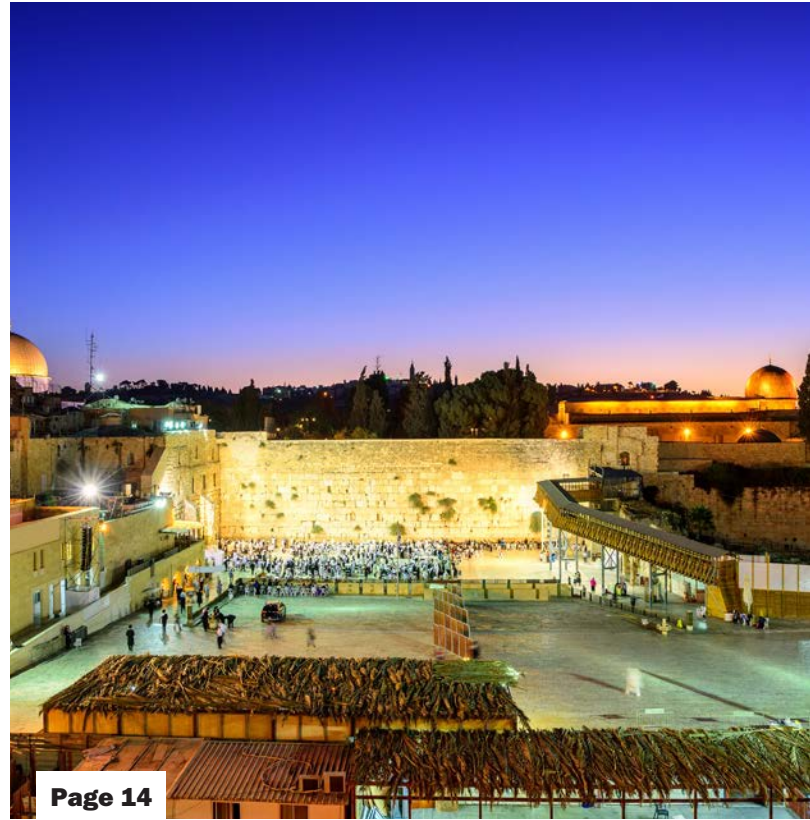
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Happy Birthday, Israel!

This year the Jewish state celebrates 75 years as a modern nation.

Elwood McQuaid



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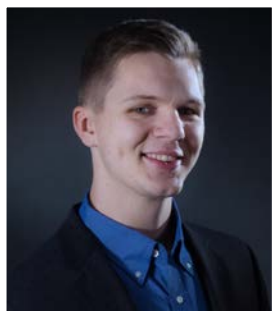


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FROM THE EDITOR



SHALOM, FRIENDS!

The Lord has been gracious to The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI) as we seek to proclaim biblical truth about Israel, the Messiah, and God's Chosen

People.

When I joined FOI, I wanted to obey God and bless the Jewish people as He would guide me. And throughout my life, I've had a deep love for Scripture and for writing. For that reason, it's been my joy and privilege to serve as a writer and editor for FOI over the past four years.

Now I thank God for blessing me richly by allowing me to serve Him as managing editor of *Israel My Glory*. I pray He will continue to encourage and edify all who pick up a copy of this magazine.

I'd like to thank Lorna Simcox for her faithful work as editor-in-chief of *Israel My Glory*. Her long hours of work and commitment to share God's Word over the past 23 years are an inspiration to everyone who strives to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). I'm grateful for Lorna's time and patience in sharing her wisdom with me and training me to carry on this ministry's work.

In His providence, God positioned my wife and me to visit Israel for the first time last March. When I first set foot in Tel Aviv and saw the Promised Land with my own eyes, I felt God's presence in a deeply personal way. From the heights of Mount Carmel to the depths of the Dead Sea, the setting of Scripture came to life and strengthened my faith in the God who gave us His Word.

If you've always wanted to go but have never been to the Holy Land (or if you can't wait to go back), you'll love this issue of *Israel My Glory*. We're taking you on a written journey to the land of Israel, complete with devotional teaching from scriptural passages corresponding to each location. And keep an eye out for a special article on page 33 from our former Executive Director Elwood McQuaid celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Jewish state's establishment.

We hope you enjoy this devotional tour of the land of Israel. It's a great taste of the sights you'll see and the stories you'll hear if you join us on our *Up to Jerusalem* tour, a 10-day trip that will change your life and your relationship with the Lord. May God bless you and grow your love for Israel as you explore its beautiful land!

*In His service,
Jesse King
Managing Editor*



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On our tours to the Holy Land, I teach each group about modern Israel. Many Christians don't realize what it took to bring a country into existence in one day on May 14, 1948, and to create a functioning government. The War of Independence that began the following day further complicated this challenge.

Today, Israel is a flourishing country, celebrating 75 years of existence. Getting to this point has not been an easy path, and the hand of God has been evident throughout the years—even before 1948.

One stop on our tour is the Ayalon Institute Museum, which tells the remarkable story of the secret, underground ammunition factory in Rehovot that operated from 1945 to 1948. Its workers manufactured bullets that were critical to Israel's ability to defend itself in its War of Independence. The factory operated under the noses of the British. Had it been discovered, it would have meant death for all involved.

The historic Jewish Agency for Israel in Jerusalem is another destination on our tour. Here we learn the foresight Israel's Founding Fathers had to form a quasi-government to prepare for the day when Israel would become a nation again. Established in 1929, the agency developed the infrastructure and experience necessary to set up a new government. It did so with the approval of the British high command, which controlled the land from 1918 to 1948.

The Ayalon Institute Museum and the Jewish Agency are only part of the story of how God prepared the way for this nation to be born in one day (cf. Isa. 66:8). God's hand reached around the world to reestablish the nation of Israel.

In the days leading up to the formation of the Jewish state, most foreign ministry and military officials believed it was a mistake to let Israel become a nation, expecting it would be immediately destroyed by its Arab neighbors. They strongly lobbied President Harry Truman not to recognize the new Jewish state, fearing the United States would have blood on its hands when Israel was wiped out.

But President Truman had a longtime Jewish friend, Edward Jacobson. In the spring of 1948, before Israel's rebirth, Jacobson visited President Truman and explained why establishing the State of Israel was necessary to allow the Jewish people a homeland where they could defend themselves. His words resonated with the president.

Hanging on the wall of my office is a facsimile of President Truman's announcement of the United States' recognition of the State of Israel. He issued his proclamation 11 minutes after Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion read Israel's Declaration of Independence in the late afternoon of



* Left to right: President Truman, Israeli statesman Abba Eban, and David Ben-Gurion

May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv. The president was in such a hurry to issue the announcement to the press that he released it with handwritten changes, rather than waiting for it to be retyped.

Truman was motivated to recognize Israel before his advisors arrived at the White House to stop him. A Southern Baptist from Missouri, he later reflected that he felt God had placed him in the presidency for "such a time as this" (Est. 4:14) to give sanction to this reborn nation. Shortly after Truman released his statement, other major countries followed suit.

Even though Israel has fought many wars over the years and faced continuous terrorism from those who oppose its existence, it has prospered. No other nation experiences the international community's ongoing hostility and double standard like Israel. And yet, Israel is the economic envy of the world. It is recognized as the incubator for innovation, and millions of visitors flock to Israel each year.

Israel is a modern miracle of God! There is no other way to explain its rebirth and prosperity in the face of constant opposition.

On behalf of all of your Christian friends, happy 75th birthday, Israel!



by **Jim Showers**,
executive director and president of The Friends
of Israel Gospel Ministry

WHO RULES THE ROOST?

BY CHRIS KATULKA

The Israeli government's proposal to reform its judiciary drew wide-ranging international criticism earlier this year.

In an article titled "Israel unveils controversial plans to overhaul judicial system," *The Guardian* warned the proposed changes to Israel's Supreme Court would weaken the country's democracy.

An NPR headline read, "Israel's far-right government wants the power to override its Supreme Court," suggesting the most right-wing government in Israel's history wishes to fundamentally alter Israel's system of government by undermining judicial powers.

The *Los Angeles Times* asked, "Is Israel's new government destroying democracy?" insinuating that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is acting in bad faith, eroding the democratic foundations of the country.

The foreign press's negative headlines imply Israel's longest-serving prime minister has gone off the rails with the permission of his coalition.

Is Netanyahu destroying Israel's democratic foundations, or is he attempting to strengthen them?

A democracy is governed by the people. The power to rule is vested in the citizens' right to vote, to have their voices represented in every branch of the government.

For instance, when a U.S. Supreme Court seat becomes vacant, American citizens have an indirect say in the process of appointing a new justice. The sitting president nominates an individual for a vacancy on the Court; then the Senate votes to confirm the nominee through a simple majority. Citizens' voices are heard through the executive and legislative branches of the federal government for which they voted.

If Netanyahu's judiciary reforms are meant to damage Israel's democratic basis, then the litmus test will be whether or not the voice of the Israeli people is restricted.

Currently, the Knesset, Israel's legislature, is a unicameral house patterned after the British parliamentary system. According to the Basic Laws of Israel, a

committee comprised of lawyers and Supreme Court justices selects a Supreme Court judge. Thus, elected representatives have little say in appointing justices.

Israel's Supreme Court justices appoint those they wish to see fill a vacant seat, creating a high court built on nepotism, not democracy. The proposed judiciary reform would shift power away from an elite, unelected committee to the government elected by the people.

The proposed reform adds much-needed checks and balances to Israel's Supreme Court. In the 1990s, Aharon Barak, who served as Israeli Supreme Court president, led what he dubbed a "constitutional revolution," which gave the high court the power to overturn any laws set by Israel's legislative branch—a blatant overreach of power that stifles the voice of the elected government. In his *Newsweek* editorial, Josh Hammer called Barak's arrangement a "juristocracy, where a nation's supreme court rules the roost."

A poll found that the Israeli Supreme Court's approval ratings are at an historic low of 42 percent. While citizens stress concerns about government power over the judiciary, 84 percent of Israelis believe the judicial system needs an overhaul; and only 22 percent support everything in the proposed reform.

Whatever decision is made, Israeli democracy is hard at work in the Middle East. The citizens voted for Netanyahu and his conservative government. If they don't like the direction the country is headed under Netanyahu's watch, they can vote him and his coalition out. It's happened before, and it can happen again.

At a glance, it doesn't seem Netanyahu wishes to strip Israel of its democratic bedrock. Instead, it appears he's trying to balance power and strengthen Israeli democracy by giving a voice back to the people.



Chris Katulka

is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry and the host of *The Friends of Israel Today* radio program.

UN SEEKS TO BRAND ISRAEL AS OCCUPIER

The United Nations General Assembly recently asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to provide a legal opinion about Israel's "occupation" of the so-called Palestinian territories. The Hague-based ICJ, also known as the World Court, is the highest UN court that deals with disputes between states. Although its legal opinions are not formally binding, they are influential and, in this case, could be used to shape international policies that are hostile toward Israel.

UN General Assembly Resolution 77/247—Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem—asked the ICJ for an "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences" arising from Israel's "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation . . . including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

The UN resolution, which was passed by a vote of 87–26, with 53 abstentions, represents a significant political victory for the Palestinian Authority and its efforts to mobilize international support for Palestinian claims to Jerusalem and the West Bank. The secretary general of the PLO Executive Committee, Hussein al-Sheikh, described approval of the UN resolution as a "victory" for the Palestinian cause. Basem Naim, an official with Hamas, the terrorist group that controls Gaza, said it was "an important step" toward "confining and isolating" Israel.

French journalist Michel Gurfinkiel noted that the UN's ultimate purpose in

asking the ICJ to render an advisory opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to "consolidate an alternate pro-Palestinian legal reality where Israel will be gradually suffocated." He warned, "One may thus reach a point where the alternate anti-Israel narrative will simply be taken for granted, and steps will be devised at international level against 'rogue State Israel.'"

Gurfinkiel added that while UN General Assembly resolutions are merely declarative, UN Security Council resolutions "may lead to economic sanctions, judicial harassment, and military options." A negative ICJ advisory opinion on "Israeli occupation" could be seen by some anti-Israel activists at the U.S. Department of State or the White House as "an even greater opportunity to get rid of the United States commitment to Israel's security."

The resolution, which the General Assembly adopted one day after Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn in for the sixth time as Israel's prime minister, was widely viewed as the first significant test of his new government. A coalition agreement states that if the Palestinian Authority (PA) "takes steps against Israel in The Hague, the government will formulate policies and measures against the PA and against its actions."

Israel's new government has tried to balance delivering on its promise to respond to the Palestinian move at the UN and trying to avoid antagonizing the European Union and the Biden administration, which has boosted American ties



*
Gilad Erdan

with the Palestinian Authority. Yoni Ben Menachem, a senior analyst for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, warned that if Israel failed to respond forcefully to the PA's challenge, the PA would interpret that as a sign of weakness and would continue to increase the pressure on Israel on the international stage.

Netanyahu said, "The Jewish people are not occupiers in their own land nor occupiers in our eternal capital Jerusalem and no UN resolution can distort that historical truth." He vowed that Israel would not be bound by this "despicable decision." Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, added, "Any decision from a judicial body which receives its mandate from the morally bankrupt and politicized UN is completely illegitimate."

Hebrew University Law Professor Yuval Shany said that Netanyahu's government ultimately would have to decide on how to approach the ICJ's proceedings. It could either cooperate with the court in the hopes of influencing the outcome or boycott the process and risk facing a more hostile decision.



by **Soeren Kern**,
a geopolitical analyst
based in Europe

REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

We often hear the same questions asked at our Friends of Israel (FOI) prophecy conferences: “Where are all the young adults? Do students care about prophecy or Israel and the Jewish people?”

We understand your concern, and reaching the next generation is a big priority for us. We want to see more students studying God’s prophetic Word and developing a passion for Israel and the Jewish people.

Recently, Paul Pierce, an FOI Church Ministries representative from Spokane, Washington, shared Scripture about Israel and the Jewish people with 15 college students and came away encouraged.

Keegan, a student at Washington State University, invited Paul to speak at a Bible study. Keegan participated in our Bridges online internship and our Encounter program, where he visited the Jewish community with us. He is a young advocate for Israel and the Jewish people on his college campus.

Attending the study were students from Washington



* Paul Pierce (second from left) teaching

State University and the University of Idaho. They came from various spiritual and cultural backgrounds—some unsaved and others mature believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul and the students enjoyed a deep conversation that evening. The students asked many questions about Jesus’ Second Coming, the role of Israel in prophecy, God’s promise to Abraham, the Rapture of the church,

and Jewish culture and customs. Most importantly, Paul communicated that the God of Israel loves each of the students so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for them.

The students loved Paul’s message. Throughout the following week, Keegan’s friends thought of more questions about the end-times and Israel.



* Washington State University

As he reflected on the evening’s discussion while driving home from the Bible study, Paul was encouraged to see young men and women seeking after God and desiring to know His Word.

We often are led to believe this generation is self-oriented, rejects the church, and embraces unbiblical ideologies. While that may be the case with some young people, Paul found the opposite to be true.

Let’s pray God will continue to use The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry to impact the next generation with biblical truth about Israel and to advance the cause of the gospel.

If you would like to support Paul Pierce and others like him serving in North American outreach with The Friends of Israel, visit foi.org/NAMoutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayers and financial support.

SHARING THE GOSPEL IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST

“What is this? Who wrote it? You?”

Walter’s questions provided a perfect opening for Emanuel Machnicki, our newest Polish field representative, to speak about the Lord. Emanuel was driving Walter and several other Jewish acquaintances to a Holocaust memorial service when Walter, an atheistic sociology professor at the University of Bialystok in Poland, found a copy of the book *Torah for Christians* in the back seat of the van. He waved it and looked knowingly at Emanuel.

“Yes, I wrote it,” said Emanuel. “But it’s really for Christians—to help them love the Bible more.”

“My dear fellow,” said Walter, “instead of talking politics, we can have a serious conversation!” So Emanuel and Walter began to discuss God, the gospel, and why there are Christians around the world who love and support the Jewish people.

Their conversation took place on the way to a commemoration of the Jewish revolt at the Treblinka death camp in Poland. At least 1 million Jews were murdered there in the span of a year. It’s difficult to ascertain the exact number killed because the Nazis exhumed mass graves and burned the bodies of their victims, tilling the land to look like a farm in an effort to hide their atrocities.

But the Polish remember, in part because of the revolt that took place in October 1943, when close to 100 victims escaped and told their stories. And our Polish team remembers as well.

Emanuel poignantly explained to Walter, “Why put your

faith in science and human ‘progress’? Treblinka was built by the most civilized nation of poets, musicians, scientists, and doctors, winning nearly half of the Nobel prizes! Still, their education didn’t stop them from deciding that some of their neighbors were not human and deserved extermination. All the acclaimed progress of science is there behind the barbed wire of Treblinka: railways, machinery, bureaucracy, chemical engineering, societal planning. Can we really trust technological advancement or social progress to save us? What are we progressing towards?”

Emanuel is right. Science and technology cannot change the human heart. Only Jesus can, and our international teams around the world are working hard to show the Jewish people that God loves them and Christians do too. It’s a daunting task, requiring sincerity, gentleness, patience, persistence, and kindness.

Our workers attend memorials, care for Holocaust survivors, and offer countless expressions of love for the “least of these,” Jesus’ brethren (Mt. 25:40).

After returning home following the memorial service, Emanuel was excited to learn that Walter had asked a mutual friend for his phone number. The gospel of Jesus has sparked a light in Walter’s mind. We pray for God to also shine in his heart “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).



* Emanuel holding *Torah for Christians*



* FOI Field Representatives Emanuel Machnicki (left) and Timothy Rabinek

If you would like to support our Polish team and other FOI ministries around the world, visit foi.org/INToutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayers and financial support.

Tolerance for Some: Antisemitism in the Age of Social Justice

Victims of injustice have long found hope in the story of the Israelites. The Jewish journey from enslavement in Egypt to liberation and serving God in the land He promised them is one with which the oppressed of the world have often identified.

It would make sense that those concerned with issues of justice today would ally themselves with the Jewish community in their own struggle against bigotry. Strangely, they don't.

Many social-justice-oriented individuals and entities associate Western Jewry with Whiteness, capitalism, and colonialism—unforgivable sins in their eyes. Because of this viewpoint, they not only fail to fight Jew-hatred but traffic in it themselves.

Ground zero for much of this animosity is the secular college campus. Many U.S. colleges and universities permit the discrimination of Jews as long as it's couched in the geopolitical framework of the Middle East conflict.

Last August at the University of California at Berkeley's School of Law, nine student law associations amended their bylaws to prohibit the invitation of speakers "that have expressed and continued to hold views . . . in support of Zionism, the apartheid state of Israel, and the occupation of Palestine."

This move clearly singles out Jewish speakers, leading some to label these student associations "Jewish-free zones."

The school's Jewish Student Association noted that the fact that its organization was not asked to adopt the measure demonstrates its anti-Jewish bias. Further, it said, the measure puts Jewish people "in a position all too familiar: deny or denigrate a part of their identity, or be excluded from community groups."

Across the country in New England, an activist group is even more blatantly targeting Jewish organizations and those with whom they partner.

The Massachusetts-based Mapping Project identifies Jewish communal organizations—synagogues, schools, and federations—and places them on a virtual, color-coded map. It seeks to identify pro-Israel "entities and networks that enact devastation, so [they] can dismantle them. Every entity has an address, every network can be disrupted."

In a post subsequently removed from their website, the

Project's activists stated, "We have shown physical addresses, named officers and leaders, and mapped connections. These entities exist in the physical world and can be disrupted in the physical world. We hope people will use our map to help figure out how to push back effectively."

If this sounds chillingly familiar, it should. The Nazi regime did the same thing when it enacted the *Judenboycott* (Jewish boycott) in April 1933. The boycott, like that of the Mapping Project, began by identifying Jewish-owned businesses. Later, Nazis painted graffiti on the storefronts, such as Stars of David and *Jude*, German for "Jew," and carried signs throughout Germany that read, "Germans! Defend yourselves! Don't buy from Jews!"

The Mapping Project may veneer its bigotry with social-justice terminology, but its campaign would make Nazi Germany proud.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has taken aim at the Jewish people too. Though originally centered on furthering civil rights for the Black community, some BLM proponents have engaged in discrimination against the Jewish community by tying their own struggle against perceived systemic racism to the conflict the Palestinians have with Israel.

In 2015, BLM-affiliated groups released "When I See Them, I See Us," a video comparing Black Americans' fight against police brutality to the Palestinians' fight against Israel. The video paints an emotionally evocative picture of suffering Palestinians but excludes the perspective of suffering Israelis and fails to provide any context for the Middle East conflict.

Clearly, many groups motivated by social-justice ideology have an antisemitism problem. In their quest for societal equity and the fall of presumed systemic oppression, they perpetrate the very crimes they advocate against.

These groups need to take a good look in the mirror. Then they will find to be true what God said centuries ago: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Many social-justice-oriented individuals and entities associate Western Jewry with Whiteness, capitalism, and colonialism—unforgivable sins in their eyes.



by Ty Perry,

Field Ministries manager and Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Michigan



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PROVERBS

FATHER I
PRAY THESE
THINGS WOULD
BE A REALLY
Purpose and Theme

1 The proverbs of Solomon^a son of David, king of Israel:^b

² for gaining wisdom and instruction;^c for understanding words of insight;

³ for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and

¹¹ ^a 1Ki 4:29-34;
^b Pr 10:1; 25:1;
Ecc 1:1;
^c 1:6 ⁵ Pr 8:5;
⁶ Pr 2:10-11;
8:12;
15:5 ⁸ Pr 9:9;
1:6 ¹ Ps 49:4;
78:2 ⁹ Nu 12:8;
1:7 ³ Job 28:28;
Ps 111:10;
Pr 9:10; 15:33;
Ecc 12:13

¹³ we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder;^d ¹⁴ cast lots with us; we will all share the loot" —

¹⁵ my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot^e on their paths;^f ¹⁶ for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood.^g

¹⁷ How useless to spread a net

²⁵ since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, ²⁶ I in turn will laugh^h when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes youⁱ — ²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

²⁸ "Then they will call to me but I will not answer;^j they will look for me but will not find me,^k

²⁹ since they hated knowledge

1:26 ⁸ Ps 2:4;
¹ Pr 6:15; 10:24;
1:28 ^{15a} 8:18;
Isa 1:15;
Jer 11:1; Mic 3:4;
² Job 27:9;
Pr 8:17;
Eze 8:18;
Zec 7:13;
1:29 ³ Job 21:14;
1:30 ⁶ ver 25;
Ps 8:11;
1:31 ⁹ Job 4:8;
Pr 14:14;
1:33 3:11; Jer 6:19;
1:32 ⁸ Jer 2:19;
1:33 ¹ Ps 25:12;
Pr 3:23;
⁹ Ps 112:8;
2:2 ¹ Pr 22:17;
2:4 ¹ Job 3:21;
Pr 3:14;
Mt 12:44

⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.^l

⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair — every good path.

¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart,^o and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.^p

¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,

¹³ who have left the straight paths

DOING THE RIGHT THING

HOW CAN WE CHOOSE TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT? BY FOLLOWING THE STANDARD FOUND IN GOD'S WORD.

BY STEVE HERZIG

Within hours of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin's midgame cardiac arrest in January, sports writers, reporters, and analysts around the country prefaced their remarks with "our thoughts and prayers are with Damar and his family." Then football analyst Dan Orlovsky of ESPN said something out of character for his network on *NFL Live*:

"I heard the Buffalo Bills organization say that we believe in prayer. Maybe this is not the right thing to do, but it's just on my heart; and I want to pray for Damar Hamlin right now. I'm going to do it out loud, I'm going to close my eyes and bow my head, and I'm just going to pray for him," Orlovsky said. Then, bowing his head and closing his eyes, he prayed, all the while wondering if he was doing the right thing.

Measuring right from wrong is based on a standard, a moral code operating like a compass pointing us to

righteous behavior. Different groups have different standards, but the standard that counts is God's; and He gave us His standard in the Bible. In it, He has taught us how to live through His instructions, such as commands not to lie, steal, or covet and to honor our parents. Jesus provided the two most important examples: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37, 39).

So, how can we follow this code?

Through the Law

Aaron Feuerstein was an Orthodox Jewish businessman living in Massachusetts. He owned Malden Mills, a textile plant that, in 1995, suffered a catastrophic fire that destroyed his plant. Gone were 1,400 jobs. The property was insured for more than \$300 million.

Feuerstein could have used the opportunity to move to a less expensive area and hire cheaper labor. He certainly could have kept the money for himself. Instead, he called a press conference to announce his intentions.

Among the thousands in attendance were several politicians, including senators and congressmen. Feuerstein not only pledged to rebuild his plant in Massachusetts but also promised to pay all his employees their full salary during that time.

Instantly, Feuerstein became a sensation, garnering international interest. President Bill Clinton invited him to the State of the Union address and sat him next to the First Lady. In a *60 Minutes* interview, Morley Safer noted that Feuerstein was 70 years old and could have easily kept the insurance money and retired. Why didn't he?

Feuerstein replied, "What would I do with it? Eat more? Buy another suit? Retire and die?" Rather, he was guided by the Torah: "You are not permitted to oppress the working man, because he's poor and he's needy, amongst your brethren and amongst the non-Jew in your community [cf. Dt. 24:14]. I did it because it was the right thing to do," he said.¹

Feuerstein was governed by a moral standard: Scripture. He did not think of himself but of his employees and their families. No wonder he was called "The Mensch (good person) of Malden Mills." He chose to obey God's Law.

Through Christian Living

Chick-fil-A is an immensely popular fast-food restaurant. Its founder, Samuel Truett Cathy, was guided by the Bible. Like Feuerstein, Cathy's moral code was Scripture; though, unlike Feuerstein, he believed the New Testament too. Directed by that code, Cathy decided to close on Sundays, opting to honor God by providing his employees a day of rest. His policy remains in place to this day. Cathy's daughter, Trudy, said,

My dad built this business based on biblical principles. He felt like his business decisions kind of go hand in hand with biblical principles. That's no secret. There's a lot of things that we are taught in God's Word, and we've been able to put it into practice in our business. We're in business to glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that's been trusted to us and to have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A.²

Like her father, Trudy adopted the Bible as her code: "One of the things that my parents taught us is that the important things can't be bought with dollars and cents," she said. "The important things in life are . . . joy, peace, and hope; and you won't find those things for sale or in a store. Those things you will find in the truth of God's Word and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."³

To this day, the leaders of Chick-fil-A make their business decisions based on God's Word and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Through the Bible

People don't always do the right thing—not even God's people. Jonah, God's prophet, was reluctant to do the right thing.

In the book of Jonah, God described the ancient Ninevites as those "who cannot discern between their right hand and their left" (4:11). They were ignorant of the scriptural standard because they did not have God's Word. Not only did they not know God, but they were enemies of His people Israel, who did have God's Word.

For this reason, the Hebrew prophet Jonah hated them. He believed they deserved God's judgment. So when the Lord commanded him to "go to Nineveh . . . and cry out against . . . their wickedness" (1:2), Jonah did not do the right thing, choosing rather to flee in the opposite direction.

In response, the sovereign, merciful, and compassionate God interceded in Jonah's life using a storm and a great fish to direct the disobedient prophet to do the right thing. Though Jonah finally went to Nineveh, he maintained his bad attitude. The previously ignorant Ninevites heard the message; and they did the right thing by repenting, thus preventing judgment.

God's Example

Each of these decisions was based on a standard—God's standard. Did they do the right thing?

Orlovsky prayed, believing that actually praying to God was better than talking about it. A fan of *NFL Live* commented on the YouTube clip, "How incredible that God could providentially use such a terrible tragedy for His name to be glorified on a TV station that hates Him." Aaron Feuerstein obeyed the Torah and performed a noble act by paying his employees, who could not work until the mill was rebuilt. Samuel Truett Cathy publicly identified as a follower of Christ and ran his business to glorify Him. Since he rested and worshiped on Sunday, he decided to provide the same opportunity to all of his employees.

Doing the right thing is not always easy. As believers, we desire to take bold action like Orlovsky or respond in obedience like Feuerstein and Cathy. Yet sometimes we identify more with Jonah and allow our flesh to get in the way. But we know that when we do the right thing, God will bless us.

As inspiring as these examples are, none of them compare to the ultimate right thing God did for us. He wrote the code (the Bible). He became the code incarnate: "The Word became flesh" (Jn. 1:14). Then He lived and fulfilled the code. Though He would have been right to condemn all of us because of our sin (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 59:2; Heb. 9:27), instead, through His birth, death, burial, and resurrection, He demonstrated "His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Rebecca Lueng, "The Mensch of Malden Mills," *cbsnews.com*, July 3, 2003 <tinyurl.com/MaldenMills>.
- 2 Christian Ellis, "Chick-fil-A Founder's Daughter: 'We're in Business to Glorify God,'" *cbnnews.com*, February 21, 2019 <tinyurl.com/TrudyCathy>.
- 3 Ibid.



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JERUSALEM OF GOLD

WELCOME TO THE ONLY CITY IN THE WORLD
WHERE GOD HAS CHOSEN TO PLACE HIS NAME!

BY BRUCE SCOTT



If you've never been to Jerusalem, it's time you made the trip. But if you can't go in person, I suggest you relax, put your feet up, and come with me on an imaginary tour of the city of the great King.

The psalmist wrote, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps. 137:5–6). Over the last three millennia, God has never revoked His declaration: "I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there" (2 Chr. 6:6). So, let's go exploring.

THE TUNNEL AND POOL

The Old City is built on two north-to-south ridges of the Judean hills. Its stone wall, about two and a half miles in circumference, encircles and defines the city's perimeter. The stones date from several periods. Some on the eastern side go all the way back to the First-Temple era.

At the beginning of the Davidic kingdom, Jerusalem occupied the southern and lower part of the eastern ridge. King Solomon expanded the city northward to include the top of the eastern ridge, Mount Moriah, where he built the first Temple (3:1).

Approximately 250 years later, to protect his growing population from the threatening Assyrians, King Hezekiah built a massive stone wall 27 feet high and 23 feet wide that incorporated the western ridge of modern-day Jerusalem for the first time (32:5). A portion of this "Broad Wall" still exists.

Hezekiah also brought the waters of the Gihon Spring inside the city walls through an underground tunnel 1,750 feet long (v. 30). Water still runs through it today, sometimes over your knees. As we walk along, we can see a facsimile of a Hebrew inscription written on the tunnel wall by one of Hezekiah's workmen commemorating the completion of the aqueduct.

A 16-year-old Jewish boy, Jacob Eliahu, a believer in Jesus, discovered the original inscription while exploring the tunnel in 1880.¹ Three years later, the boy was formally adopted into the family of Horatio G. Spafford, who wrote the beloved hymn "It Is Well With My Soul." Spafford and his wife lived with their family in Jerusalem for years and started what became known as the American Colony. They are buried in the city's Mount Zion Cemetery.

About 300 feet south of Hezekiah's Tunnel lies the biblical Pool of Siloam,



* Pool of Siloam



where Jesus sent a man blind from birth to wash in order to receive his sight (Jn. 9:7). Only half of this 225-foot-long swimming pool discovered in 2004 has been excavated, but the Israel Antiquities Authority and National Parks Authority recently announced plans to begin further excavation.

We can visualize the blind man painstakingly making his way into the water and emerging able to see the world for the first time. As we sit on the steps pondering this miracle, we rejoice knowing that Jesus not only healed the blind then but that He also heals the spiritually blind today who go to Him for cleansing.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT AREA

From the Pool of Siloam we walk to the Temple Mount area. From AD 30 to 70, we would have walked north with Jewish pilgrims on an amazing, paved street consisting of 10,000 tons of carved stone. It was roughly 26 feet wide, over a third of a mile long, and gained 223 feet in elevation as worshipers ascended its steps.

Unfortunately, we can't take Pilgrimage Road, as it is called today. It is being excavated with hopes of opening it soon to the public. We can, however, travel underneath Pilgrimage Road via a drainage tunnel that dates back to the Second-Temple period. Archaeologists have cleared it so adventurous tourists can walk through it, taking the same northern route the ancient pilgrims used, only beneath the street instead of on it.

At the end of our subterranean trek, we leave our claustrophobia behind and ascend a metal, spiral staircase that opens into daylight at the southwestern section of the retaining wall that surrounds the Temple Mount complex.

To the left sits a pile of enormous stones, a silent witness to Roman demolition, having been tossed from high above onto the Pilgrimage Road below. Although these stones were not part of the Temple buildings themselves, they remind us of Jesus' prophecy: "Do you see these great buildings?

Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mk. 13:2).

On the wall's southern side are the remains of the original stairs most worshipers climbed to enter the Temple's southern gates. Jesus Himself undoubtedly walked these stairs at some point. When tourists to Israel want to "walk where Jesus walked," they can come to this staircase and fulfill their wishes.

From the southern wall, we go to the famous Western Wall. Thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish people visit this retaining wall and its plaza every year. Because it was the closest wall to the holy of holies, this exposed section has become the holiest spot on Earth for the Jewish people. They come from around the world to hold celebrations here and place written prayers between the ancient stones.

Above the wall is the Temple Mount. In 1967, Israel gave the Muslim authorities guardianship over the Temple Mount, once dominated by Solomon's Temple (374 years), then the Second Temple (585 years), and now by the gold-domed Muslim Dome of the Rock. Other Muslim structures are also on the Mount. The Dome of the Rock sits where many believe Abraham offered Isaac and where the Ark of the Covenant sat in Solomon's Temple.

At the beginning of the Second-Temple period, the sacred area of the Temple Mount formed a 500-cubit square (741,321 square feet).² The Court of the Gentiles on the south side is where non-Jews were welcomed. However, twice Jesus drove out money changers from this area, along with people selling sacrificial animals, saying they made His Father's house a "den of thieves" (Mt. 21:12-13).

To the right, along the entire eastern wall, would have been a colonnade known as Solomon's Porch. It was there, during Hanukkah, that Jesus proclaimed He and the Father were one (Jn. 10:22-23, 30).

To the north would have been a stone partition five feet high with Greek and Latin inscriptions warning Gentiles that if they ventured beyond this point, they would have no one to blame for their deaths but themselves. The apostle Paul had this partition in mind when he wrote that Jesus broke down the "middle wall of separation" between Jew and Gentile so that "through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:14, 18).

First-century Israelites could go beyond the warning signs and enter the Temple Court of the Women, otherwise known as the Treasury, through a gate on the east. This is where Mary and Joseph presented Jesus as an infant to the Lord (Lk. 2:22) and where Jesus did much of His teaching as an adult. Nowadays, if we stood at the foot of a flight of stairs 215 feet east of the Dome of the Rock, we would be at the center of the original Court of the Women.

If we went up that flight of stairs, we would be where the impressive Nicanor Gate stood—two large, bronze doors that separated the Court of the Women from the Court of

the Israelites (males only). Beyond those doors was as far as a nonpriest could go.

Going 75 feet farther west on our imaginary tour, and a little to the left, would take us to the immense bronze altar, the place of burnt offerings. Proceeding slightly more west, to today's Muslim Dome of the Chain, would bring us to what was the porch of Herod's Temple.

If we were able to go into the Dome of the Rock, which is not permitted for non-Muslims, many believe we would be standing in the Temple's holy of holies in Jesus' day.

It's awe-inspiring to think of all the biblical events that transpired on this mountaintop and that, someday, another Temple will stand on the Temple Mount; and the God of Israel will dwell within it:

Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple. . . . And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever" (Ezek. 43:6-7).

As we look eastward, the Mount of Olives rises before us. Covered with the graves of Jewish people who hoped for

the coming of the Messiah, it reminds us that, one day, our Savior will return. Jesus, Israel's Messiah, the King of glory, will make His way through the eastern gate of the Millennial Temple that will be built on this very mountain. He will take His seat on the throne of David and reign forever over the whole earth (Ps. 24:7-10; Ezek. 43:1-7; Lk. 1:31-33).

Until that day, we must pray for the peace of Jerusalem. "May they prosper who love you" (Ps. 122:6). ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Bertha Spafford Vester, *Our Jerusalem: An American Family in the Holy City, 1881-1949* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1950), 90-92.
- 2 Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, *Jerusalem: The Temple Mount* (Jerusalem, Israel: Carta/Jerusalem, 2015), 75.



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THE BEREAN BOX

DOES GOD REALLY KNOW ME?

The answer to the title's question is an unequivocal yes! God is omniscient and knows everything about your life. Scripture teaches that "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [soul]" (Gen. 2:7). God has known everything about you—from the day you were conceived to the day you will die (Heb. 9:27)—since eternity past.

Reflecting on God's creation of him, King David wrote, "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought. . . . Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written" (Ps. 139:13, 15-16).

In other words, God knitted every cell of your body together. He sovereignly directed your formation and brought you into this world to experience life and His love. Nothing about your creation was by chance or unknown to God.

God's thoughts of you are precious and immeasurable. David said, "If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand" (v. 18).

Speaking to God, David said, "You have searched [examined] me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You

understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether" (vv. 1-4). God knows your every manner, motive, moment, movement, and meditation. He has instant recall of every thought you have and every word you speak.

David said God's knowledge "is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" (v. 6). He was overwhelmed by God's omniscience because his mind could not comprehend that God knew everything about him and all mankind.

Man cannot hide or flee from God (vv. 7-12). Neither death (vv. 7-8), distance (vv. 9-10), nor the darkest place in the universe (vv. 11-12) can hide you from our omnipresent God.

Acutely aware that God knew his every thought, David requested that God intimately examine him and root out all of his secret or unconfessed sins. David prayed that God would lead him into the way of everlasting life (vv. 23-24).

Is this your desire? If so, ask God to lead you in the paths of righteousness and eternal life through Jesus Christ.

by David M. Levy

LET'S GO TO ISRAEL!
A DEVOTIONAL TOUR OF GOD'S
BELOVED HOLY LAND

VIA DOLOROSA

BY BRUCE SCOTT

The traditional route Jesus traveled to His crucifixion, known in Latin as the *Via Dolorosa* (Way of Sorrow), is debated. We know Jesus appeared before the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate. The prefect's residence was known as the *praetorium*, which medieval Christian tradition places at a Roman military installation, the Antonia Fortress, situated just outside the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. The apostle Paul stood on its steps when he gave his defense to the angry Jewish crowd below (Acts 21:37, 40).

The Antonia Fortress no longer exists, but the narrow street near there became associated with Jesus' path to Golgotha. This *Via Dolorosa* has been retraced by thousands of Christian pilgrims for centuries.

Most modern scholars, however, do not believe Pilate's residence was the Fortress. Roman administrators enjoyed their luxury, so staying at a spartan military installation would not have been their first choice. Instead, Pilate probably stayed at King Herod's former palace in the Upper City section of Jerusalem, south of today's Jaffa Gate.

This palace contained gardens, canals, and colonnades, as well as a barracks for soldiers. In fact, farther south, along the outside wall, we can see the remains of steps that led to a gate into Herod's palace, probably near the barracks. Shimon Gibson, an Israeli archaeologist, makes

a plausible case that behind this gate was a paved courtyard and the location of Jesus' tribunal before Pilate.¹

After Jesus was condemned and mocked, Roman soldiers led the Lord about a half mile to His place of execution. From Herod's

palace, they walked northeast and through the Gennath (Garden) Gate in the northern section of the city wall (not today's Old City wall). Then they took Jesus to the place of crucifixion, where He "suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

We don't know the exact spot of Jesus' crucifixion or resurrection. However, in my opinion, the archaeological, historical, and traditional evidence is stronger for a location near the present-day Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Admittedly, it's difficult to contemplate the significance of Christ's death and resurrection amid the church's gaudy interior, let alone the bustle of tourists.



Nevertheless, this well could be where the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God, took upon Himself the sin of the world, yours and mine, and then rose from the dead three days later to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. ★

ENDNOTE

¹ Shimon Gibson, *The Final Days of Jesus: The Archaeological Evidence* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 104–106.

GORDON'S CALVARY

BY PETER COLÓN



* Gordon's Calvary



* Church of the Holy Sepulchre stairway

There is a distinctive, rocky outcropping north of Jerusalem that, in 1842, Otto Thenius, a German preacher, proposed to be the actual place of Christ's crucifixion. For Pastor Thenius, the outcropping looked exactly like a skull.

He wasn't alone in his thinking. In 1871, an American Presbyterian minister wrote a book, *The True Site of Calvary*. In it he supported the same view.

However, the most famous individual who advocated for the site was British officer Major-General Charles George Gordon. A devout Christian, Gordon spent a year in 1883 study-

ing his Bible in Israel, which was then occupied by the Ottoman Turks. He studied the rocky knoll and came to the conviction that, indeed, "skull hill" is where Jesus was crucified. Because of Gordon's bigger-than-life persona, his name has become associated with the place now known as Gordon's Calvary.

Gordon identified the site based on his own speculative deductions. He imagined a skeleton overlaid on Jerusalem and placed the skeleton's pelvis at the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount; its legs, southward on the City of David; and its feet, at the Pool of Siloam. With this unusual alignment, the hill north of the Damascus Gate formed the skeleton's skull. Gordon's view became popular after his tragic but heroic death in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1885 at the hands of Muslim forces.

There are two places in Jerusalem believed to be the site where Jesus was crucified: Gordon's Calvary and the traditional site, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, located in the Old City's northwest quarter.

Inside the church, a stairway leads up to the possible site of the crucifixion. A Dominican priest, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (1935–2013), who wrote an illustrated guide of the Holy Land, said this about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

One desires holiness, only to encounter a jealous possessiveness: the six groups of occupants—Latin Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, Ethiopians—watch one another suspiciously for any infringement of rights. The frailty of man is nowhere more apparent than here; it epitomizes the human condition.¹

Gordon's Calvary has experienced significant erosion in recent years; and though it may or may not be where Christ was crucified, it still signifies triumph. Consider what Gordon thought as he looked upon skull hill: "Christ's sufferings are the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world, made once and for ever on the cross."² ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43.
- 2 Charles George Gordon, *Reflections in Palestine* (London, England: Macmillan, 1884), 115.



* Church of the Holy Sepulchre

* The Garden Tomb



THE GARDEN TOMB

BY TOM SIMCOX



* The Garden Tomb

Nothing compares to taking communion while sitting on the benches in the picturesque setting of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. Considered by many Protestants to be where Jesus was buried and arose, the atmosphere here reaches deep into the soul.

Some people bring instruments and quietly sing hymns like “Amazing Grace” with a reverence and emotion that make it impossible not to join in and praise the Savior who conquered death and arose from the grave.

The tomb itself, unearthed in 1867, is carved out of the side of a rock hill located beneath Gordon’s Calvary. Since 1894, the Garden Tomb and its surrounding gardens have been maintained by The Garden Tomb (Jerusalem) Association as a place for Christians to worship.

The association refrains from claiming that this is the authentic tomb of Jesus, but guides point out many similarities between the site and the descriptions in the Bible. Though others claim the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the location of the Lord’s crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, the Garden Tomb seems more evocative of the events described in the Gospels.

Guests enter a room apparently designed for people to be

able to weep over their departed loved one. To the right of the entrance is the burial chamber where the deceased’s body would lie. The entire location feels like the Lord’s empty tomb, which the Bible describes as a “new tomb” that was “hewn out of the rock” (Mt. 27:60). There is no evidence this tomb was ever used.

The Garden Tomb area is beautiful, tranquil, and quiet. Many touring groups take communion there and recall Christ’s words to His disciples at the Last Supper before He went to the cross: “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me’” (Lk. 22:19).

After Jesus’ death, Joseph of Arimathea secured His body from Pontius Pilate, “wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed” (Mt. 27:59–60). Three days later, the stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled away; and the chamber was empty. The Lord had risen from the grave. We serve a living Savior who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven and who someday will come again. ★



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

BY CHRIS KATULKA

The Mount of Olives is the best place to stand in Israel to get a bird's-eye view of Bible prophecy. Perched “on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city” (Ezek. 11:23), all of Jerusalem is visible—from the City of David to the Old City to the Temple Mount, which is separated from the Mount of Olives by the Kidron Valley.

Here Jesus taught His disciples about Jerusalem’s prophetic fate and His glorious Second Coming (Mt. 24—25), described by the prophet Zechariah: “In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley” (Zech. 14:4).

After riding down the Mount of Olives en route to Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (Mt. 21:1–11), Jesus later walked from the upper room in Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount’s eastern slope. There He cried out to His Father in agony, “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (Lk. 22:42).

More than a month after His crucifixion, the disciples stood on the Mount with the resurrected, glorified Messiah

and asked, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). The question was timely, relevant, and suitable to where their feet were planted. The resurrected Lord had just spent 40 days with them, teaching them about the Kingdom. So, their thoughts probably ventured to Zechariah’s vision of the Messiah’s feet touching down on the Mount in the last days.

That day, they had front-row seats to the prophetic drama of God’s plan for the ages. But Jesus had work for them to do, though He never denied that Kingdom restoration will one day occur as the prophets foretold. Jesus gave His disciples the consequential task of being witnesses for Him throughout the world—the same task He has given us (v. 8).

Moments later, right before their eyes, the risen Lord ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 8:1). An angel then appeared and told the bewildered men, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11)—a promise of Messiah’s return to the Mount of Olives, when He will usher in an era of true *shalom* (peace). ★

BETHLEHEM

BY TOM SIMCOX

A short bus ride from Jerusalem lies the city of Bethlehem. It is located a mere six miles south of Israel's capital in what traditionally was Judea and today is called the West Bank.

Politically, Bethlehem has a complicated history. Jordan seized it in 1948 during Israel's War of Independence, and Israel retrieved it during the Six-Day War in 1967. On December 21, 1995, Israel withdrew from Bethlehem; and three days later, terrorist Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority moved in and still claims it today.

Historically, the city was assigned to the tribe of Judah. Outside Bethlehem is where Jacob buried Rachel after she birthed Benjamin (Gen. 35:16–20). Though too small to be listed among the towns of Judah, it nevertheless figures prominently in the history of the Jewish people:

- Ibzan, Israel's 10th judge, was from Bethlehem (Jud. 12:8–10).
- The book of Ruth unfolds in and around Bethlehem.
- Samuel anointed David the shepherd to be king over Israel in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:4, 11–13; 17:15).
- David desired a drink from the well of Bethlehem. When he received one, he poured the water out as an offering to the Lord (2 Sam. 23:15–17).
- Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1–7).
- The shepherds and magi worshiped Jesus in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:7–11; Lk. 2:15–16).
- King Herod the Great murdered all male Jewish children in Bethlehem aged two and under in an attempt to kill the Messiah (Mt. 2:16–18).



* Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity

The most popular tourist site in Bethlehem is the Church of the Nativity, an active Greek Orthodox church built over a grotto where tradition says Jesus was born. The church is the oldest basilica in the Holy Land, commissioned by Roman Emperor Constantine.

The grotto is a dimly lit cave with a marble floor and 14-point silver star that supposedly marks the place where the Lord was born. Many tourists weep profusely when they see it. But in truth, no one really knows the exact location of Jesus' birth. What we do know is that God told the shepherds in the field, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2:11).

The King of kings came like a humble lamb in a stable and was laid in a feeding trough. The next time He comes, He'll arrive like a lion. ★



* Cave of Milk Grotto



* Bethlehem

VALLEY OF ELAH

BY LORNA SIMCOX

One of the most famous upsets of all time took place in the Valley of Elah: The Israelite shepherd boy David slew the Philistine warrior giant, Goliath.

Named after the shady terebinth (Hebrew, *elah*) trees that grow there, the Valley of Elah is located in Judea about 15 miles west of Bethlehem, where King David grew up. The prophet Samuel already had anointed young David to be the second king of Israel before David faced Goliath. God was finished with King Saul and made plans to replace him with a man after His own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

David went to the Valley of Elah because his father, Jesse, sent him there with grain, bread, and cheese to check up on his older brothers who were fighting the Philistines. When David arrived, he learned all the soldiers were terrified of Goliath and fled from him. So, David offered to fight, even though he was a youth and Goliath was “a man of war from his youth” (17:33).

But David wasn’t afraid and told Saul how God had helped him kill a lion and a bear who came after his sheep; “and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the

living God” (v. 36).

Armed with nothing but a slingshot, David took five smooth stones from the Brook of Elah and 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. . . . I will strike you and take your head from you” (vv. 45–46).

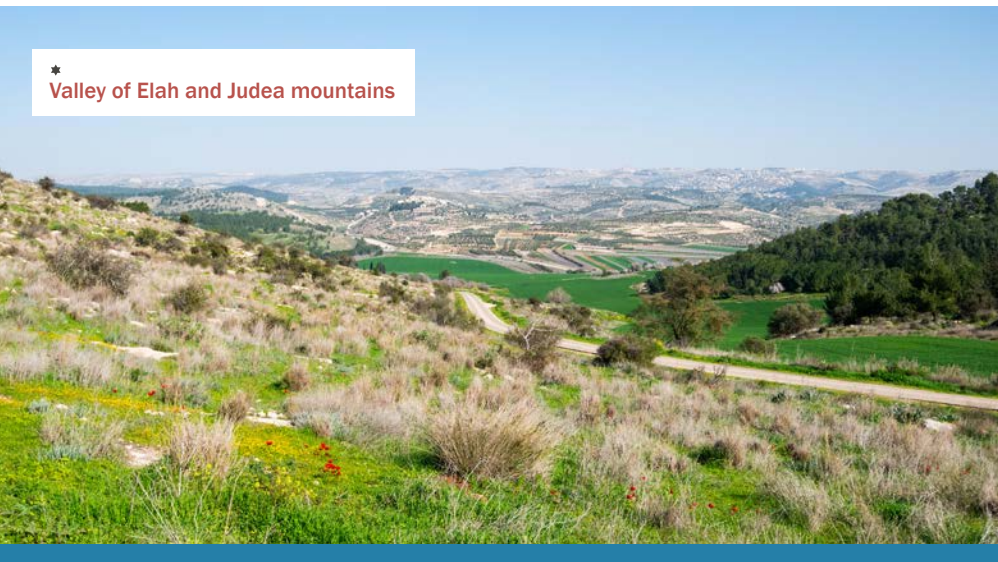
Then he revealed His motive: “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s” (vv. 46–47). The very first stone struck Goliath in the forehead.

He crashed to the ground, and David cut off his head with the giant’s own sword.

David’s sole goal was to glorify God, and God honored that desire. Approximately 3,000 years have passed since the famous face-off in the Valley of Elah, but God’s ability to fight for His people has not diminished. The Valley of Elah reminds us, “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chr. 16:9). ★



* Tel Azekah overlooking the Valley of Elah



* Valley of Elah and Judea mountains

JOPPA

BY DAN PRICE

On the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, in an ancient section of what is now Tel Aviv, lies one of the oldest cities in the world: Joppa (also called Jaffa and Yafo). Notable structures, including its port, date back thousands of years. Some claim Joppa was named after its founder following the universal flood: Noah's son Japheth.

Many empires and people groups have controlled Joppa over the centuries. The apostle Peter ministered to a small Christian community God raised up there at the home of Simon the tanner. Acts 10 records the vision God gave Peter in Joppa, affirming His inclusion of Gentiles into the body of believers in Messiah Jesus.

But one of the most striking stories is the account of those who rejected Joppa. That's the story of the tribe of Dan. When Joshua led the Israelites to conquer Canaan as God commanded, seven tribes did not immediately claim their inheritances, apparently because of the difficulty of conquering the remaining fortified cities. Joshua even chided them, asking how long they would delay taking the land God had provided (Josh. 18:2-3).

These tribes were given land by casting lots. Dan received its inheritance last: the coastal plain surrounding Joppa and the low foothills to the east, abutting the terrifying city-states of the Philistines and Amorites. Dan took the hill country but never conquered the coast, including Joppa. In fact, the book of Judges records the life of Samson the Danite, a story of Dan's assimilation into Canaanite culture.

Ultimately, Dan rejected its mission altogether; uprooted itself; and sought greener pastures far to the north. In the process, the Danites became idol worshippers, corrupted a priest, and destroyed a people God never asked them to destroy (Jud. 18). The Danites rejected Joppa because the task God gave them looked too hard, and they took an easier path.

How often do we do likewise when the tasks God gives us look too difficult? Yet God's mission for us often transcends the boundaries of our comforts or strengths to force us to depend on His help.

When God directs us, He will go with us. For the tasks He commands, He will provide the strength. He has given us the power of the Holy Spirit and the promise of His presence and will never leave us or forsake us. Joppa is a reminder of what is possible when we truly trust in Him. ★



* Old town of Jaffa



* Port of Jaffa



* Tel Aviv Namal Yafo historic Old Jaffa port

CAESAREA MARITIME

BY JIM SHOWERS

*
Caesarea Maritime



*
Roman mosaics at Caesarea

When I lead our *Up to Jerusalem* tours to Israel, I enjoy seeing the excitement of those who have never seen the Holy Land. On our first full day of touring, we stop at Caesarea Maritime, a manmade marvel built in 25 BC by Herod the Great. He took a piece of coastline and turned it into the land's major port city, naming it after Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus.

Today it is a city of ruins. However, part of the ancient port has been excavated; and the Roman theater, whose stones are a memorial to the city's former splendor, has been partially reconstructed.

The Bible's account of Cornelius of Caesarea, a Roman centurion, helps explain why we visit the Holy Land. Cornelius feared God, gave alms to the needy, and always prayed (Acts 10:1-2); but he needed Christ.

An angel told him to send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. So Cornelius sent two servants and a soldier (vv. 3-8). As they journeyed, Peter was praying on the roof of Simon the tanner's house when he saw a perplexing vision. A great sheet descended with all types of ceremonially unclean creatures. The Lord told Peter to eat; but Peter replied, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The Lord responded, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (vv. 9-15).

This happened three times before the sheet disappeared. At that moment, Cornelius's men arrived; and the Spirit

of God told Peter to go with them, doubting nothing (vv. 16-20).

God was changing Peter's thinking. Peter believed the gospel was for the Jewish people alone. God was showing him that, while salvation was of the Jews (Jn. 4:22), God would begin fulfilling His promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:3).

Consequently, Peter had a change of heart: "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). He went with the men to Caesarea to preach the gospel to Cornelius, and many in Cornelius's home believed and received the Holy Spirit (vv. 24-48).

Because Peter obeyed, the gospel reached the Gentiles, who became believers. And from this port city, the Good News went out to the whole world.

As believers in Jesus, we come to Israel as living memorials to the gospel that was preached to Gentiles in Acts 10. Through the gospel, we are believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and are Zionists who have experienced great things through the Jewish people, to whom we are indebted. We are living testimonies to the story of Acts 10. ★

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Caesarea National Park historic port



MOUNT CARMEL

BY JIM SHOWERS

My college professor once invited a missionary to speak in our class on the history of the Christian faith. She had spent many months providing humanitarian aid—a righteous endeavor. But when a student asked if she shared her faith with the people she helped, she said, “No, because they already have their own faith; and all roads lead to heaven.”

Not much has changed in the past 3,000 years. In the days of Elijah the prophet, the Israelites were divided on whether to worship God or Baal. It was on Mount Carmel that Elijah challenged King Ahab and his 450 prophets of Baal to a contest to prove who was the true God.

Mount Carmel is a mountain range in northern Israel that runs 17 miles southeast from Haifa on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to Megiddo. The range rises 1,724 feet above sea level.

Elijah gathered the Israelites at Mount Carmel to witness the contest and asked them, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him” (1 Ki. 18:21). The response was stunning: “The people answered him not a word” (v. 21). They didn’t know which road led to heaven.

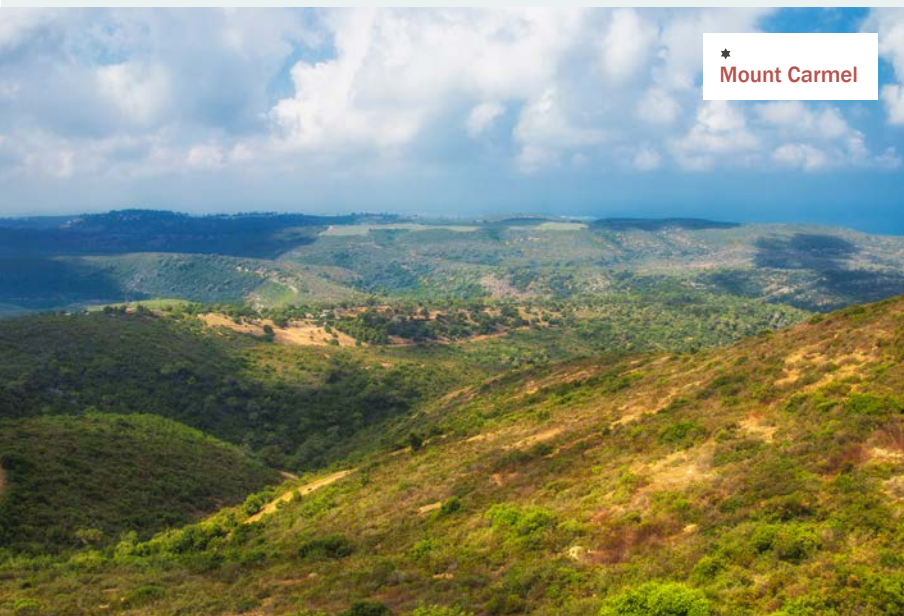
Elijah called on the prophets of Baal to prove their god’s

legitimacy by preparing a sacrifice of a bull on an altar and calling on Baal to send fire to consume the sacrifice. From morning to evening Baal’s prophets labored and cried out to Baal, but he did not answer (vv. 23–29). Why? Because Baal was not the true God. He was a figment of their imaginations.

Then Elijah commanded that 12 pots of water be poured out on his bull sacrifice on the altar of 12 stones; and he prayed to the one, true God, “Let it be known this day that You are God in Israel” (v. 36). Unlike the prophets of Baal, who petitioned their god for hours, Elijah made one request; and fire from heaven consumed the bull, the stones, the dust, and even the water (v. 38).

Witnessing this awesome display of God’s power, the people fell prostrate before the Lord and said, “The LORD, He is God!” (v. 39). Their opinion was no longer divided. The question of whom to follow was settled, and the people put the prophets of Baal to death.

Perhaps we would benefit from such a display of God’s power today, but God has given us something better—His Word. The missionary in my class read her Bible wrong. She believed in a god she made up in her mind, one who is love but not justice. God tells us His way, through His Son, Jesus Christ, is the only way to eternal life with Him (Jn. 14:6). ★



MEGIDDO

BY JIM SHOWERS



In 2002, the CBS television news show *60 Minutes* ran a segment on what it proposed motivated evangelical support for Israel. The broadcast claimed we believe that once all Jewish people return to Israel, Armageddon will occur as Jesus returns to Earth to eliminate them. In other words, the Christians win and the Jewish people lose.

Sea turned inland to cross the Jezreel Valley. Megiddo is arguably the most famous biblical battlefield, and Scripture records several battles fought here. Today the area is better known as Armageddon, which means “Hill of Megiddo.”

The Bible teaches that Armageddon is a prelude, not to the destruction of the Jewish people but, rather, to the greatest period of Jewish history. At that time, God will judge the nations for their mistreatment of the Jewish people and prepare Israel to receive its Messiah.

The apostle John wrote of Armageddon in Revelation 16:13–16, when the nations of the world will come against Israel and stage their forces in the Jezreel Valley. Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah, will return from heaven with His army of saints on a white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11–16) and strike the nations, rather than the Jewish people, with the words of His mouth.

He will defend Jerusalem, destroy the enemy armies (Zech. 12:8–9), and judge the nations for their evil in mistreating the Jews (1:14–15). The Lord Himself will bring the nations to Armageddon to

judge them on behalf of His people, Israel, whom they scattered and whose land they divided (Joel 3:2–3).

Forget *60 Minutes*. Only what God says matters, and He says Armageddon is about saving Israel and righting the wrongs Gentile nations have brought on the Jewish people. Israel’s ultimate destiny is to lead the world in worship of the Lord, as God makes Israel His glory above all the other nations of the earth (Isa. 46:13). In that day, 10 men from every nation will plead with a Jewish man to take them up to Jerusalem so they can worship God (Zech. 8:20–23). ★



* Ruins of Tel Megiddo

This age-old assumption misunderstands our support for Israel and what the Bible teaches about Christ’s return. When our tour groups visit Megiddo, I tell them how *60 Minutes* got it wrong.

Megiddo is a hill at the southeastern end of the Carmel mountain range, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. It is actually an archaeological tel, an ancient city with more than 20 layers of civilization, each one built on top of the previous one like a layer cake.

Historically, Megiddo was a strategic military city that controlled access through a mountain pass as the main road along the Mediterranean



GIDEON'S SPRING

BY JIM SHOWERS

Scripture teaches time and time again that bad choices lead to bad outcomes. Man's disregard for God and His Word leads to destruction. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel chose to do evil in God's sight, turning from Him and worshiping idols. Such was the case in the book of Judges.

For seven years, God gave His people into the hands of their enemies, the Midianites (Jud. 6:1). Each year at harvest, the Midianites would invade Israel from the east like swarms of locusts and ravage the land, taking its grain harvest. Impoverished, the Israelites fled to the mountains to hide in caves, clefts, and strongholds.

When we visit the Spring of Harod (Gideon's Spring) today at the base of Mount Gilboa, the account of Gideon and his 300 men comes into focus. Gideon gathered 32,000 Israelites at the spring (7:1-3). Across the valley, four miles to the north, the Midianite army of 135,000 was encamped on the hill of Moreh.

Gideon and his men had a direct line of sight to this terrifying Midianite army that outnumbered Israel's army four to one. But Gideon didn't have to trust in his own strength.

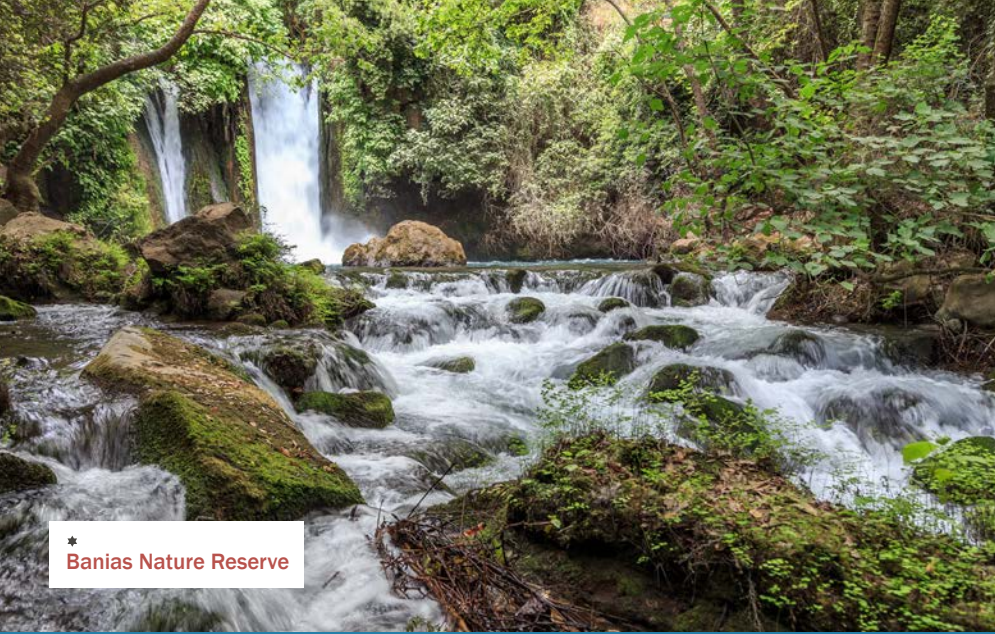
God told him to send the fearful men home; and 22,000 departed, leaving 10,000 men (v. 3). Then He told Gideon to take the rest to the stream flowing from the spring and have them drink water. God chose only those who lapped the water, leaving Gideon with only 300 men. "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand" (v. 7).

That night, Gideon's 300 men took trumpets, along with lamps shielded by pitchers (but no weapons), and surrounded the Midianite camp. They blew their horns, broke their pitchers, and shouted, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" (v. 20). Every man stood in his place as God confused the Midianite army and turned their swords against one another (vv. 21-22). Thus, the Midianite army was defeated without Gideon or his men wielding a single sword.

The lesson of Israel's victory is clear: The God who judged Israel for doing evil is also the God who saves Israel. When the "battle" ended, no one but God could take the credit. Gideon's Spring reminds us how much we need God. He alone provides salvation from judgment for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. ★

* Spring of Harod





*
Baniyas Nature Reserve



CAESAREA PHILIPPI

BY JESSE KING

The crystal water rippling through the springs of the Baniyas Nature Reserve creates an idyllic background for visitors walking through Caesarea Philippi in northern Israel. This is the site of a great moment in Jesus’ ministry when the apostle Peter proclaimed Jesus to be “the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16).

Jesus responded by blessing him and saying, “You are Peter [Greek, *petros*], and on this rock [Greek, *petra*] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (v. 18).

Caesarea Philippi was a pagan city devoted to the worship of false gods, especially the Greek god Pan. That’s why Peter’s acknowledgment of Jesus’ deity here was particularly powerful.

When Peter first met the Lord, Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated, A Stone)” (Jn. 1:42). *Cephas* is Aramaic. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus

used a Greek play on words, saying, “You are *petros*,” then immediately added, “and on this *petra* I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18).

Jesus honored Peter with a name evoking the strong, steadfast qualities of a rock, even though Peter had been too fearful to walk on water with Him (14:22–33). Because *petros* and *petra* are not identical, many scholars believe Jesus was not talking about building His church on Peter. Rather, He was talking about building it on Himself. And this announcement at this location held particular significance.

At the top of this site lies a pool of water within a hollowed-out part of the rock next to what looks like a doorway. In Jesus’ day, this doorway was called “the gates of hell.” The pagan residents believed it was a gateway to the underworld, and they came to worship fertility gods they thought lived there in winter. It was here, at “the gates of hell,” that Jesus declared He would build His church and promised that Satan’s kingdom would not prevail against Him.

Jesus made His declaration in perhaps the most spiritually dark place in Israel at the time. Today, He continues to bring light to the darkest places and redeem those who come to Him by grace through faith. Before we are saved, our hearts are dim and far from Him. But Jesus came as “the light of the world,” promising that whoever “follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (Jn 8:12). ★



*
Caesarea Philippi

SEA OF GALILEE

BY BECKY MEISSNER



The Sea of Galilee is Israel's largest freshwater lake and the lowest freshwater lake on Earth, lying 700 feet below sea level. It measures slightly more than 13 miles north to south, is about eight miles at its widest point from east to west, and is 33 miles around. Its maximum depth is approximately 140 feet, and it is fed by underground streams and the Jordan River.

Also called the Sea of Tiberias, Lake Kinneret, and Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Galilee was once Israel's main source of drinking water, making its water level of utmost concern. Today, however, much of the country's potable water comes from desalinated seawater.

To Christians, the Sea of Galilee is particularly special because of what happened there 2,000 years ago. The apostle Simon Peter had finished a long day ministering to thousands of people. Jesus commanded His disciples to get into a boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He went to a nearby mountain to pray.

The hills surrounding the Sea of Galilee can form a wind tunnel that churns up the water in the evening, making it difficult to see what lurks below the surface, which is probably why 1st-century fishermen called the Kinneret "the abyss."

When Peter's boat was in the middle of the water, turbulent evening winds began tossing it around. Hours passed, and the men were getting nowhere. Suddenly, they saw Jesus walking to them on the water. Thinking He was a ghost from the abyss, they began crying out in terror. Immediately, Jesus called, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27).

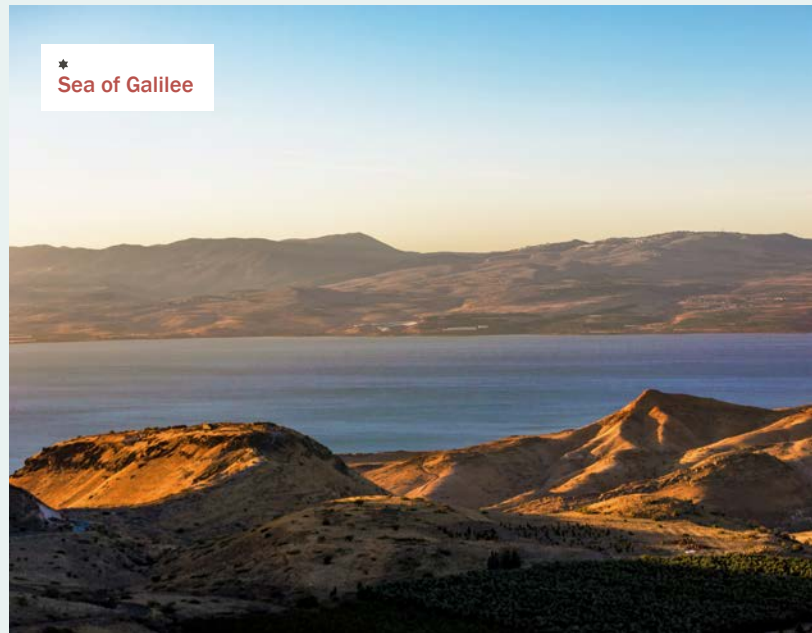
Peter replied, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (v. 28), to which Jesus said, "Come" (v. 29).

Peter got out of the boat and began walking to Jesus on the water. But when he saw the strong wind, he was afraid, began to sink, and cried out, "Lord, save me!" (v. 30).

Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Then He said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (v. 31).

When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God" (v. 33).

Today, Jesus still reaches out His hand, ready to catch people from falling into Satan's abyss. He is always ready to save us when we acknowledge that, truly, He is the Son of God and we ask Him for His free gift of salvation. ★





* Masada Fortress



* Masada Fortress

MASADA

BY PAUL PIERCE

Spectacular. Mighty. Imposing. Remarkable. All these words aptly describe this desert plateau that rises more than 1,400 feet above the shores of the Dead Sea. Views from this famous mountaintop fortress are stunning. This is Masada, Herod the Great’s summer “palace of refuge.”

Built between 37 and 31 BC, Masada treats visitors today to the remains of Herod’s huge storehouses, 12 massive cisterns that held several months’ worth of food and water, barracks, luxurious bathhouses, not one palace but two, a synagogue, and more.

About 100 years after Herod built Masada, it became home to a group of Jewish Zealots. After Jerusalem fell to the Romans in AD 70, it became the final holdout the Romans set out to conquer.

They assaulted Masada for two years. General Flavius Silva’s Roman legion built a siege ramp up the side of the mountain and used a massive battering ram to break through

the heavily fortified gate—only to find more than 900 Jews led by Eleazer Ben Yair already dead. They had considered mass suicide preferable to becoming slaves of Rome.

Today Masada is a national symbol of heroism in Israel; and the words *Masada*, *Never Again!* encourage Israelis to continue fighting for their country and their freedom in an antisemitic world.

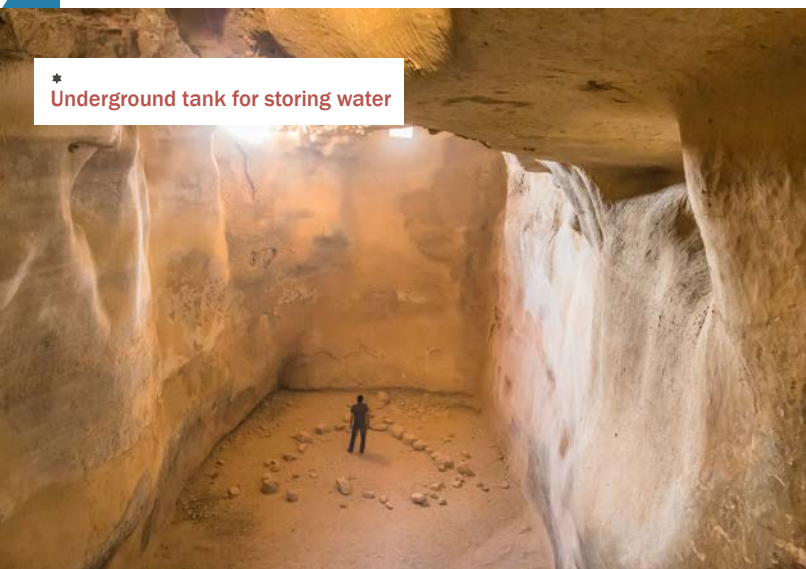
Located near En Gedi where David hid from King Saul in a cave, *masada* in Hebrew means “stronghold.” Scripture mentions strongholds in 1 Samuel 22:4–5; 23:14; 24:22; 2 Samuel 5:17; 23:14; and 1 Chronicles 11:16. Though we don’t know if David found refuge from his enemies at what later became Masada, it seems a possibility.

Yet, David knew his true stronghold was God, in whom he found refuge, strength, and comfort: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Ps. 18:2).

David faced many enemies and, like us, struggled with doubt, fear, and uncertainty. A mountain refuge may protect us physically, but it will do nothing to combat the attacks of our true adversary. As the apostle Paul wrote,

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

Satan’s fiery darts can only be extinguished by faith and by putting on the armor of God, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). May our hearts find comfort in His Word, knowing “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). ★



* Underground tank for storing water

EN GEDI

BY DAN PRICE

The landscape surrounding the Dead Sea looks like something from another world. Barren mountains of rock, crystalized salt formations, and sinkholes that swallow roads all conspire to remind you that you really are at the lowest elevation on Earth and are surrounded by nature that will poison, burn, dehydrate, or otherwise kill you.

Yet, in the midst of this dangerous desert, there's an oasis called En Gedi, a name formed from two Hebrew words: *en*, meaning "spring," and *gedi*, meaning "young goat." And it's lovely.

Ibexes (wild goats) climb the cliff faces, and furry little hyraxes come close enough to touch. But the best part is the water. A beautiful spring of fresh water gushes out of the limestone, tumbling down the cliffs on its way to the depths of the Dead Sea. Bursting with the only real vegetation for miles, En Gedi has streams and waterfalls that feel like life in the midst of death.

King Solomon mentioned vineyards here (Song 1:14), and some believe Jesus fasted in the wilderness here (Mk. 1:13). However, David's time at En Gedi is what usually comes to mind, reminding us how difficult it can be to wait for an oasis from God when we're living in the desert.

When David and his troops were running for their lives from King Saul, one of the places they hid was En Gedi, in the many caves around the spring. First Samuel 24 says Saul went into a cave to relieve himself, unaware that David's little army was hidden farther back in the cave.

David had already been anointed king, but he was waiting for God to remove Saul. Instead of killing Saul, which he easily could have done, David snuck up and cut off the corner of Saul's robe, symbolically dishonoring and removing Saul's identity as God's chosen ruler. But David quickly repented of his actions, realizing he was trying to speed up God's work.



Have you ever grown weary waiting on God? It's hard to be content when we feel like we're living in the desert and need a spring. Our hearts can grow cynical, our minds can grow anxious, and our feet want to rush ahead. Like David, it's easy to feel like our timing is better than the Lord's.

But God has reasons for His timing, and He knows our weakness in waiting. So, we should draw near to Him for grace and mercy in our time of need, as we wait for God's springs in the desert (Heb. 4:14-16). ★

OUR DEVOTIONAL TOUR GUIDES



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THIS YEAR THE JEWISH STATE CELEBRATES 75 YEARS AS A MODERN NATION.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ISRAEL!

BY ELWOOD MCQUAID

On May 14, 1948, people the world over awoke to begin what was for them just another day. But it wasn't just another day. It was a day when history was being made.

In a small room in faraway British Mandate Palestine, Jewish statesman David Ben-Gurion rose to his feet before an assembly of Jewish dignitaries and declared that Israel, after 2,000 dreary years of displacement, was again a sovereign nation in its own land. A mere 11 minutes later, American President Harry S. Truman affirmed U.S. support for the fledgling State of Israel.

For me, as with many others in my small Michigan community back then, events affecting a tiny strip of land in the Middle East escaped notice. We were preoccupied with manufacturing automobiles. But all that changed when I recognized how indispensable Israel and the Jewish people were to my Christian faith.

For Jewish people, though, many of whom barely survived the horrors of the Holocaust, the emergence of the State of Israel projected a new and longed-for reality. Homeless wanderers for more than 2,000 years, they could breathe a collective sigh of relief. Because of what occurred in Jerusalem that evening, the Jews at long last could begin to go home.

HERZL'S DREAM

Theodor Herzl (the founder of modern Zionism) had a dream that was at last beginning to take shape. A Jewish visionary, Herzl was deeply disturbed by Europe's antisemitism in the late 1800s. He saw an onslaught on

the horizon and concluded the answer was to establish a Jewish state where Jewish people would be safe.

Most of European Jewry at the time did not agree with him. In fact, many thought him quite mad. But the journalist-turned-statesman clung to his position; and rampaging antisemitism, the Holocaust, and brutal military conflicts unfortunately proved his vision correct.

NEVER FORGET

The great stain, never to be removed from the grim period of tyranny's bloody march from the 1930s through the mid-1940s, was the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler's manic ambition was to fashion a Third Reich—an empire free of Jews that would endure for 1,000 years.

The grand design was a failure. And a remnant of Jewish people, survivors of the Nazis' shattered obsession to destroy them, began to go home—to a land awaiting them since the days of Moses and Joshua.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

The Israelis were not supposed to win, but they did.

Little Israel, set upon by superior Arab forces in June 1967 and again in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, was forced to fight for its survival against seemingly insurmountable forces. The conflicts produced names that became immortal: Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan,

*
Theodor Herzl



Yitzhak Rabin, and Ariel Sharon, among others.

What can be said of these men and women who emerged heroes in these dramatic struggles was expressed to me by a friend, Israeli Major General Uzi Narkiss. It was General Narkiss who secured Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and stood with men of his brigade, looking up at the revered Western Wall (Kotel) after years of being denied access to that holy place.

Asked to express his feelings, the normally loquacious general replied, “I suddenly found myself speechless. But as I stood there, I became suddenly conscious that

in some inexpressible way, every Jew who had ever lived over the last 2,000 years seemed to be gathered at the wall with me.”

So it was then. And today, after 75 years of statehood, Israelis, along with Jews of the Diaspora and Gentile friends of Israel, have reason to celebrate.

WELCOME HOME

The phenomenon of the current Jewish return to Israel from around the world presses us to remember the menace of antisemitism. Theodor Herzl, through his vision and fortitude, opened a door to the Promised Land for generations of Jewish people whom he would never live to see.

Of like mind were Christian Zionists who saw, as Herzl did, what others did not. Inspired by the Bible, they knew that little plot of land in the Middle East was more than a place—a settlement for Jewish refugees. It was the Jewish homeland, given to the Jewish people by God; and as Bible-believing Christians, they felt a directive, a biblical mandate, to help the Jewish people settle in it.

Engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor are the hallowed words of another place for another people: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest



* Rabbi Shlomo Goren blows the shofar in front of the Western Wall.

tossed to me.”

Those words were not meant exclusively for Jews, but for all who have suffered deprivation and exile from their ancient homelands. The author, Emma Lazarus, was a Jewish woman who was deeply concerned for Russian Jews afflicted by brutal antisemitism in that country. She also was an early advocate of a homeland for the Jewish people in Israel.

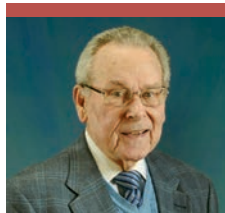
Israel holds fast to the spirit of her sacred invitation and stands as a bastion of freedom, blessing the world in more ways than can be put into words.

HAPPY 75TH!

When God promised that piece of land in the Middle East to Abraham—then to Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s descendants—He gave it to them forever:

And the LORD said to Abram, . . . “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (Gen. 13:14–17).

So, we send heartfelt best wishes to our friends in Israel at its 75th year, remembering with hearts of love God’s promise to His people of still better things to come. ★



Elwood McQuaid

is a former executive director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry and a retired editor-in-chief of *Israel My Glory* magazine. His latest book, *Almost There*, is now available.

THE WITNESS OF JOSHUA'S ALTAR

* Joshua's altar



➔ Joshua built an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal as a place of worship and witness (Josh. 8:30–31). He constructed it using only uncut field stones, as Moses instructed (cf. Dt. 27:4–6). There Joshua and the priests conducted a covenant renewal ceremony with the new generation of Israelites who had not shared their parents' experience at Mount Sinai (Josh. 8:32–35).

In this ceremony, Joshua wrote a copy of the Mosaic Covenant; separated the congregation into equal groups on Mount Ebal and adjacent Mount Gerazim; and recited to them the blessing and cursing sections of the Law. The witness of the blessing was to be placed on Mount Gerazim and the cursing on Mt. Ebal (Dt. 11:29). This covenant ratification was important in ancient Israel's history, and this central site was of continued religious significance in the nation's life.

Despite this national importance, the site seems to have been abandoned after the First-Temple period. In modern times, critical scholars deemed the altar, like much of the Joshua account, legendary.

However, in 1980, Israeli archaeologist Adam Zertal discovered on Mount Ebal a circular stone repository with an adjacent area containing hammerstones and a chalice.¹ Such areas were used to store sacred utensils no longer in use. Nearby were scattered hearths, potsherds, and large quantities of ash and animal bones.

The site had been remodeled in the Iron Age I (ca. 1200–1140 BC), including a structure of unhewn stones filled with layers of animal bones, ash, and Iron I pottery. On the southeastern side of the main structure, a ramp sat at a 22-degree incline. The biblical command required that a ramp, not steps, give access to a legitimate altar (Ex. 20:26).

An Egyptian scarab of Thutmose III found inside the ruins fixed a 15th-century B.C. date to the establishment of the site. This date accords with the biblical account that Joshua built the altar after the conquest of Jericho. Sometime later the entire site was deliberately covered over with stones, apparently to preserve it.

Zertal, who was secular, was confused by his discovery. Back

at his kibbutz, he showed a sketch to a religious Jew who immediately recognized it as an ancient altar and showed him the biblical text where Joshua had built such an altar on Mount Ebal.

This revelation caused Zertal to take the biblical accounts seriously, perhaps for the first time. Based on the consistency of the archaeological evidence with the details from the Bible, he identified the structure as Joshua's altar. But his secular colleagues only challenged and ridiculed his claim because it argued for the historicity of Scripture.

After Zertal's death, a second witness from Joshua's altar was discovered in 2022 in the remains of his excavation: a small, engraved lead tablet bearing

a curse inscription in very early script.² It is significant because:

1. It confirms Mount Ebal as the site where the Bible says curses were recited.
2. It contains one of the earliest forms of written language in Canaan, most likely by an Israelite who knew the significance of the site.
3. It has the oldest known use of the proper name of God (YHWH) in an ancient inscription. Some biblical critics have contended that this name only evolved at a much later time in the Israelite culture. This find argues for its early use by the Hebrews, which concurs with Scripture's account of Joshua writing the commandments on a stone for the renewal ceremony (Josh. 8:32).

In biblical times, Joshua's altar was a place of worship and a witness to the Word of God. Today it again serves this purpose and challenges critics and skeptics to reconsider the historicity of biblical events and the Person and power of Israel's God behind them.

ENDNOTES

- 1 "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site On Mount Ebal: Excavation seasons 1982–1987" (Preliminary report by Adam Zertal). See also Zertal, "Has Joshua's Altar Been Found on Mt. Ebal?" *Biblical Archaeological Review* (February, 1985).
- 2 "ABR Researchers Discover the Oldest Known Proto-Hebrew Inscription Ever Found," biblearchaeology.org <tinyurl.com/abrttablet>.



Randall Price

is a well-known author and world-renowned archaeologist. He is also the founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries (worldofthebible.com).

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 1:21–30

An old martyr once told his executioners, “You take a life from me that I cannot keep and bestow a life upon me that I cannot lose.” We all know that life goes by quickly. Job said, “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle” (Job 7:6); and James called life “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14).

A famous evangelist once was asked, “What has been the greatest surprise in your life?”

He replied, “The brevity of life.” He was 99 years old!

Scripture pictures death as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). People who do not know God cling to what they have in this world; but someday, they must leave it all behind. For them, there is no gain, only loss. They enter a never-ending existence of judgment and damnation, separated from God for eternity (Heb. 9:27). Not so for believers in Jesus.

PAUL’S DEDICATION

The apostle Paul knew the meaning of life: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Christ was the center of his life and reason for his existence. He was not pessimistic, cynical, indifferent, or stoical. He merely placed himself in God’s hands, knowing the Lord would choose the time and means of his death; and he viewed death as “gain,” or spiritual profit. Bible teacher Dr. John MacArthur wrote,

He trusted, loved, served, witnessed for, and in every way was devoted to and dependent on Him [Christ]. His only hope, his only purpose, his only reason to live was Christ.

He traveled for Christ, preached for Christ, and was persecuted and imprisoned for Christ. Ultimately, he would die for Christ. But even death, by God’s marvelous grace, was ultimately for Paul’s eternal gain.¹

PAUL’S DILEMMA

Paul saw a great advantage in dying and being with Christ. Yet he knew he was still needed on Earth:

If I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you (vv. 22–24).

In Christ’s presence, Paul would be free of suffering, beatings, imprisonments, hunger, and thirst; and he finally would be rid of his thorn in the flesh that tormented him throughout his ministry. He also would be free of the problems he faced overseeing the churches and dealing with false brethren. But above all, he would have a glorified body and experience all the rewards Christ promised him.

Paul knew the joy that awaited him because he already had been “caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4). And he desired to be with Christ: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven” (5:1–2). Paul knew with joyful confidence, “To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord” (v. 8).

But he also knew he was still needed on Earth and told the Philippian church, “Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you” (Phil. 1:24). Convinced the Lord wanted him to finish his ministry, Paul assured and encouraged the Philippians: “Being confident of this, I know that I shall remain

and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith” (v. 25).

The word *confident* refers to Paul’s inner conviction that he would not die at this time. The words *I know* in Greek mean Paul knew innately (possibly by the Holy Spirit) that he would not be convicted and sentenced to death and

WE ARE NOT TO BE FRIGHTENED OR INTIMIDATED BY OPPOSITION, NOR GIVE IN TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE CHRIST.

would be released from prison.

Verse 25 contains three thoughts: (1) Paul planned to come alongside the Philippians and minister to and with them; (2) he would come for their “progress” (Greek, *prokope*), meaning “furtherance or advancement” in their spiritual lives; and (3) Paul’s presence would produce the “joy of faith,” adding instruction and encouragement that would increase the Philippians’ joy in Christ.

Paul’s visit was for their joy more than his own: “That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again” (v. 26). In other words, Paul’s presence would gladden and encourage the Philippian Christians, and they would see God had answered their prayers and freed the apostle from prison. His presence would inspire them to share their faith boldly, even though it meant persecution.

PAUL’S DIRECTIVES

Should Paul be delayed in coming to them, he still expected them to live in a manner appropriate to the gospel of Christ:

Only let your conduct [“conversation” in KJV] be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (v. 27).

The word *conduct* (*politeuesthe*) is a Greek verb derived from *polis*, meaning “city,” and implying citizens should live according to the laws of their residence. Philippi was a colony of Rome, and its people possessed Roman citizenship. Paul was telling these Christians to behave like citizens belonging to Christ and to live in a manner worthy of the gospel by doing four things:

1. Standing fast (v. 27). They were to stand firm and hold their ground in their Christian commitment to truth, living upright lives without compromise, no matter what it would cost them personally.

2. Being “in one spirit, with one mind [soul]” (v. 27). The word *soul* refers to a believer’s inner being: emotions, reason, and will. Christians are to function in genuine unity and harmony of heart and mind. This oneness in Christ is extremely important to win spiritual battles. The early church evidenced such unity, guided by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42–46; 4:32).

3. “Striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27). Believers must contend together against the evil trying to destroy both them and the Christian faith.

4. Being courageous. Paul admonished them, “not in any way terrified by your adversaries” (v. 28). The word *terrified* means to be frightened, like a horse that is easily spooked

CHRIST WAS THE CENTER OF HIS LIFE AND REASON FOR HIS EXISTENCE.

by every sound or movement. The Philippians knew Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned for their faith, yet remained unafraid. In fact, other prisoners overheard them praying, singing hymns, and praising God (Acts 16:22–25), “which is to them,” Paul said, “a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God” (Phil 1:28).

We are not to be frightened or intimidated by opposition, nor give in to those who oppose Christ. Our bold, united stand is “proof of perdition,” or the ruin and ultimate destruction of unbelievers. But to Christians, it is a divine sign of salvation.

Christians are called to suffer for Christ: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (v. 29). Believing in Christ and suffering for Him are privileges, as well as inseparable experiences: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

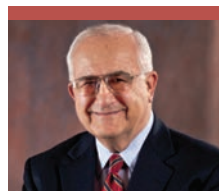
The apostles were beaten and imprisoned; yet when released, they departed, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:40–41).

Paul wrote this epistle while suffering in prison, “having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me” (Phil. 1:30). The word *conflict* (Greek, *agona*) means to struggle or fight to win, as in an athletic or gladiatorial contest. The Philippians saw how Paul was beaten, imprisoned, and severely persecuted in Philippi for preaching the gospel. They understood what he was saying because of what they were going through themselves.

Let us take to heart what Paul meant when he said, “To live is Christ”; and let us stand together for biblical truth and for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTE

¹ John MacArthur Jr., *Philippians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2001), 76, exported from Logos Bible Software.



by **David M. Levy,**

Bible teacher, author, and former pastor, as well as the retired director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry

LOOKING FOR FAITH IN ALL THE WRONG FACES

BY LINDA CRAFT

If you were to ask me if I believe in the prosperity gospel, I would answer unequivocally, “No, of course not!” The Good News of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins so we can be forgiven and spend eternity with Him. It is not, as the prosperity gospel proclaims, that if we accept Jesus, we will have a healthy, wealthy, happy, and successful life on this earth.

The belief that more faith produces more health and wealth is a drastic perversion of the gospel and has no real foundation in Scripture. If the prosperity gospel were true, we would be masters of our own destinies; and faith would be reduced to a magic wand used for nothing more than to make our dreams come true. It turns the relationship between God and man into an equal exchange, a business deal, or a political *quid pro quo*—“I’ve got the faith, God, so give me what I want.”

FALSE FAITH

Discerning Christians can usually see through the slick and shiny TV proponents of this false faith gospel, but a much subtler perversion is sneaking its way into evangelical circles. Phrases such as “life on my terms,” “believing in myself,” “empowering myself,” “doing what I want,” and “living my best life now” all sound enticing. Who doesn’t want those things?

If those sayings are to be believed, all it takes is faith to make everything we want become ours. The object of faith, then, becomes ourselves and our ability to create the life we think we deserve; and exercising that faith means designing

the life of our dreams on our own terms. Ultimately, we would use God to accomplish our desires for our happiness, whereas biblical Christianity affirms that God uses us to accomplish His purposes.

The prosperity gospel and the teachings of its splinter groups masquerade as faith in God; but much of this doctrine is nothing more than self-promoting hype and faith in yourself, which these groups preach will result in health, wealth, material blessings, and success in all you do. But missing from this equation is the biblical view of suffering and

Jesus’ promise that “in the world you will have tribulation” (Jn. 16:33). When we have trouble, we are to “count it all joy” (Jas. 1:2).

ENDURING FAITH

I have a young friend whose life is marked by hurt, rejection, sorrow, pain, depression, and abuse. I can’t imagine having to go through what she has experienced both in the past and in the present. Her constant, sometimes crippling and debilitating pain was likely caused by the physical abuse in her past.

She has lost friends and family members because they cannot deal with all of the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain in her life. They either deny or make light of her struggles. As she learns to forgive those who hurt her and move past many terrible experiences, she battles a chronic illness.

She has every human reason to be angry, despair, and give up on her newfound relationship with God; but she doesn’t. By faith she believes her sovereign God is protecting her and guiding her life.

My friend doesn’t walk around with a fake smile. Often her pain is plain to see. But she has hope—genuine hope

and anticipation of the day when her Lord returns and takes away her relentless pain forever. She does what she can each day with what God has given her, but her eyes are on the hope of the future.

The saints listed in Hebrews 11 “waited for the city” (v. 10). Theirs was that Blessed Hope of God’s promises coming to pass even though they never experienced them in their lives on Earth but saw them coming and eagerly anticipated their fulfillment. Hebrews 11:1 verifies their hope: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Can we pray for healing? Yes, because God can heal miraculously. Should we pray for healing? Yes, because “if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 Jn. 5:14). But real faith—true biblical faith—means that no matter our circumstance, whether God heals or not, improves our situation or not, gives us a wonderful family and beautiful home or not, we will trust God.

The apostle Paul attested to this truth in Philippians when he wrote that he was able to be content in whatever situation

The psalms are filled with cries to the Lord for relief—relief from pain, false accusation, betrayal by friends, and sleepless nights with pillows wet from tears. At the end of these psalms usually comes a resolution but not necessarily a change of circumstance or healing. The writer changes his focus from his self-absorption to a vision of the triune God, as he remembers His glorious power and greatness.

FINDING GENUINE FAITH

I recognize real faith in the resolve of my young friend to trust the Lord no matter how her life unfolds as her disease continues to destroy her body but her hope renews her soul.

I see it in the endurance of my dear friends who lost both of their children within a year yet found their way to church the day after they buried their second child and, with tears streaming down their faces, still sang “Amazing Grace.”

I find faith in the life of my cousin who, only a short time after coming to Christ as a young adult, was injured in a surfing accident that left him a quadriplegic. His confidence in the sovereign plan of God and hope of future healing and

He counted his former life of social status, power, wealth, and influence as rubbish compared to the unsurpassed joy of knowing Christ.

God placed him (4:11). That’s quite a statement for someone who was once an educated, privileged, respected man of power and influence as a “Pharisee of Pharisees” (cf. Acts 23:6) before becoming, in his own words, “a fool for Christ” (1 Cor. 4:10), often running for his life as he endured cold, hunger, beatings, shipwreck, stoning, and imprisonment. He suffered from an issue that he begged God to take from him, and God told him that His strength would be made perfect in Paul’s weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Scripture never indicates God told Paul if he only had more faith, he would be healed, find increased wealth or notoriety, or escape his captors when they came to put him to death for his testimony concerning the risen Christ.

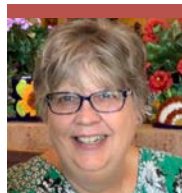
Yet Paul is the “faith expert.” He wrote more about faith than any other topic. However, his faith was neither dictated nor renewed by his circumstances. He trusted God relentlessly. He counted his former life of social status, power, wealth, and influence as rubbish compared to the unsurpassed joy of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8). His joy did not depend on health and wealth. Concerning his “thorn,” he said, “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

glory have defined his life, having not only suffered for a year or two but for 40 long years.

That’s the type of faith I want to emulate. That’s a living faith, not in a God who grants wishes but in a God who says He will work out all things—even trials, pain, and crushing sorrow—for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

How can we look for faith in all the right places? We should look in the faces of believers undergoing great trials and suffering. Look into their pain-filled eyes, and see the flame of unwavering trust in their heavenly Father flickering deeply in their souls even through the roughest times.

This faith is worth pursuing because it doesn’t depend on our personal health or the possession of material things. It depends on the faithfulness of God and His promises—and He will never change.



Linda Craft

is the volunteer coordinator for North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

POUNDRING ISRAEL WITH LIES

BY NURIT GREENGER

(JNS)—Lying about the Jewish state is antisemitism. Here are the most prominent of those lies:

“PALESTINE” AND “PALESTINIANS”

The concepts of “Palestinians” and “Palestine” are political tools used to subvert, demonize, and destroy the Jews’ legal right to the land of Israel. Before the Arabs assumed the name “Palestinians” in 1964, they were simply “Arabs.” Before 1964 no concept of the “Palestinian nation” existed.

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THE LAND

After their Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites established their first commonwealth. They named the land after their forefather Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel,” meaning “a struggle with God.”

One of the Israelite tribes named its part of the land “Judea.” The land is also referred to as “Zion,” a biblical name for Jerusalem, from which the term “Zionism” was born.

Jews have been living in the land of Israel for close to 4,000 years, though for 2,000 years they were not a sovereign entity. The Arabs invaded the land of Israel and occupied it for 451 years without ever forming any sovereign entity. Clearly, Jews are the indigenous people of the land of Israel.

ISRAEL COMMITS GENOCIDE AGAINST ARABS

Approximately 156,000 Arabs lived in Israel in 1948, comprising about 19 percent of the population. In 2001, the Arab population was 1.2 million, remaining at 19 percent. Moreover, the Israeli Arab population increases by 3.4 percent each year.

Genocide does not increase the population of its targeted group. Accusing Israel of committing genocide against its Arabs, as the Nazis did to the Jews, is a dangerous blood libel.

ISRAEL OCCUPIES ARAB LANDS

Israel’s detractors refer to the land the Jewish state liberated during the 1967 Six-Day War—Judea and Samaria—as “occupied territory.” Even the Gaza Strip, from which Israel unilaterally withdrew, is ludicrously described as “occupied.”

Before Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, governance of these lands was split between Egypt, which occupied Gaza, and Jordan, which occupied Judea and Samaria.

Thus, Israel is not “occupying” any land that it “conquered” from a sovereign country. Israel has territorial claims to the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The



hostile Arab population of Judea and Samaria is still squatting on Israeli land and enjoying the huge concessions Israel has made to them.

ISRAEL IS AN APARTHEID STATE

Apartheid is the system of racial segregation and discrimination practiced for decades in South Africa. Despite the claim that Israel is an apartheid state, all Israelis enjoy the same human rights; and Israel has no system of racial segregation and discrimination.

THE WRONG TERMINOLOGY

So long as Israelis, Jews, pro-Israel activists, misguided politicians, and the media wrongly use terms like *West Bank* instead of *Judea and Samaria*; *Palestinians* and *Palestine* instead of *Arabs* and *Arabs living in Israel*; or *East Jerusalem* instead of simply *Jerusalem*, there will never be peace in the region.

Because of the systemic subversion of Israel as a sovereign state through these lies, the attacks on Israel and Jews will grow, producing an ongoing worldwide tidal wave of anti-Israel extremism and antisemitism.

This is the Jews’ history. It is fact. It is unchangeable. If we do not defend it, it will be stolen away from us, if it has not been stolen already.



Nurit Greenger

is a writer and journalist who focuses on humanitarian issues and advocates for Israel and the Jewish people.

For news about Israel updated daily, log on to foi.org/news.



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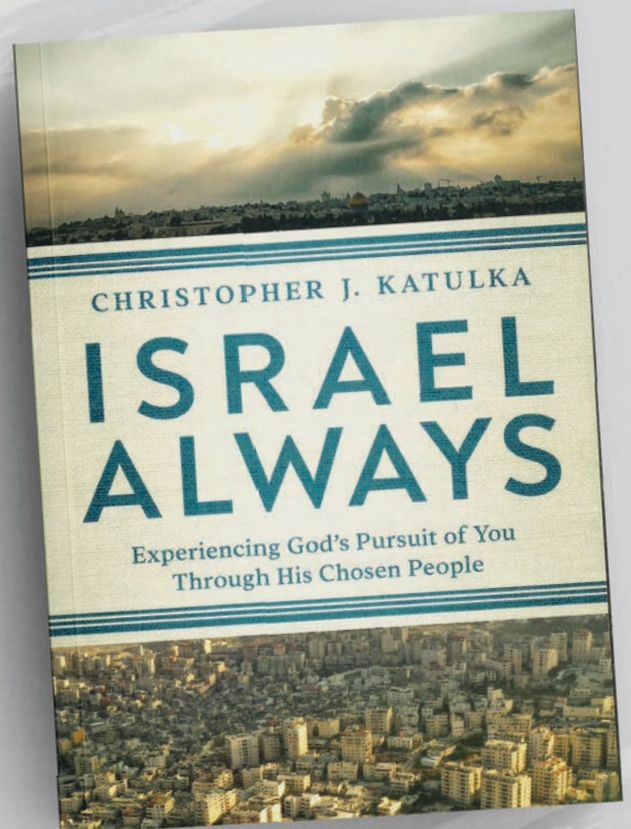
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*
Zvi Kalisher



PHOTO: THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL ARCHIVES

“I have seen great miracles the Lord has done for His Chosen People, Israel.

by Zvi Kalisher

We live very close to our Arab neighbors, so we see each other almost every day. A few months ago I had a long conversation with some of them.

“We are very powerful,” one of them told me, “and one day all of Jerusalem will belong to the Arabs.”

I spoke with five of them. They felt strong as a group speaking to me. But I showed them Deuteronomy 7:17–18, which tells us not to be afraid of the nations that were larger than ours. In our earlier conversations they never wanted to listen to me when I spoke about the Bible; but over time, they came to see that what was written has been fulfilled.

Still, one of them said to me, “You are nothing. Your people are a tiny group in a small section of land.”

“You say that you are united,” I responded. “But it is written in the Holy Bible, ‘I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against

kingdom” (Isa. 19:2).

They challenged me quickly, as they were astonished that these words could be from the Bible. I opened my Bible and showed them where I found this verse to prove that I was not making up stories.

“Have you heard of the book of Psalms?” I asked them.

“Of course,” one said. “It is a good book.”

“You have told me you will take Jerusalem back. But the book of Psalms says something different about Jerusalem.”

I read from Psalms 122:2–3; 137:5–6; and Zechariah 8:4–8 to show them God will never forget Jerusalem and will re-gather His Chosen People in the city. His Word says these promises are eternal. These men were so sure they would outsmart me, but I read of Jerusalem from Jeremiah 33:9 to them: “Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise,

and an honor before all nations of the earth.”

“How many times have your people come against us?” I asked them. “You fought against Israel in 1948, ’56, ’67, and ’73. You came as mighty locusts against Israel, which Isaiah 41 calls ‘this poor worm.’ Yet you lost! Not because we were strong, but because the Lord fought for us, as it is written in Exodus 14:14. Even now you come against us, but God does not change. His Word is eternal, and He will not fail us.”

“You can only speak this way because you have read about these wars in books,” one told me.

“I did not learn this from books. I fought in those wars myself,” I said. “I have seen great miracles the Lord has done for His Chosen People, Israel.

“Our population of half a million people was attacked by eight Arab countries in 1948, which had more than 20 million people. They came confidently to destroy us. But ‘this poor worm’ was not alone. The Lord said to our people, ‘I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you’ [Isa 41:9–10].

“Now you come against us again, not just with eight Arab countries but with 56 Muslim countries with 1.5 billion people. We only have 5 million people! Yet we do not fear because the Lord tells us not to be afraid. You put your trust in your numbers, but we put our trust in the Almighty God.”

I continued. “This is the same as when Goliath the Philistine thought he would destroy little David. But David said, ‘I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel’ [1 Sam. 17:45]. The victory went not to the Philistines but to Israel. Now we are in the same situation, except now the many countries that need oil from Arab countries have to dance to their music and allow them to attack us.

“We put our trust not in the false promises of those countries but in the Lord alone. His Word is eternal. So no matter how little we are, we are big in the eyes of the Lord. He said in Isaiah 49:3, ‘You are My servant, O Israel.’”

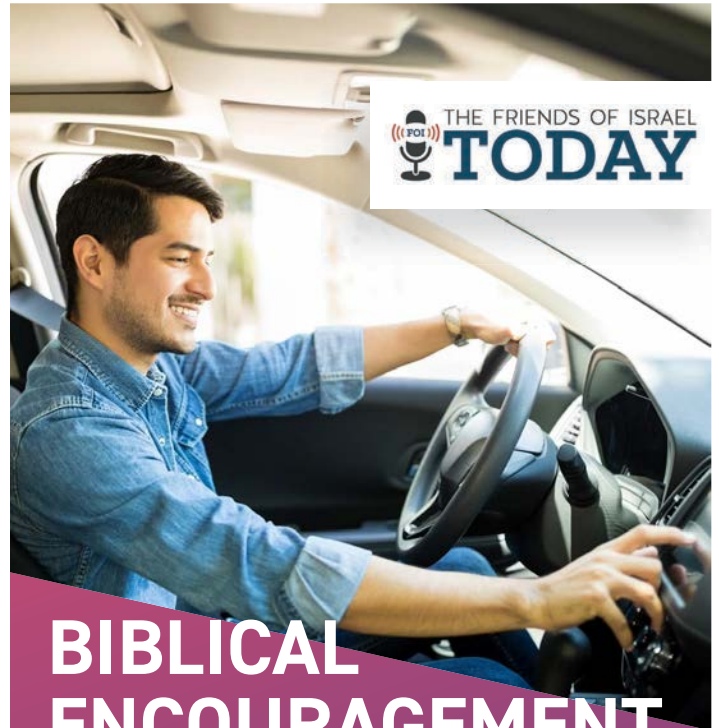
So many enemies have come to destroy us; but we are still here, proclaiming God’s salvation. It is written in Isaiah 2:3, “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” Please pray these men would come to know the Lord and His holy Word.

From The Friends of Israel archives



Zvi Kalisher (1928–2014) was a Holocaust survivor who was known for his unwavering faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry for more than 55 years.

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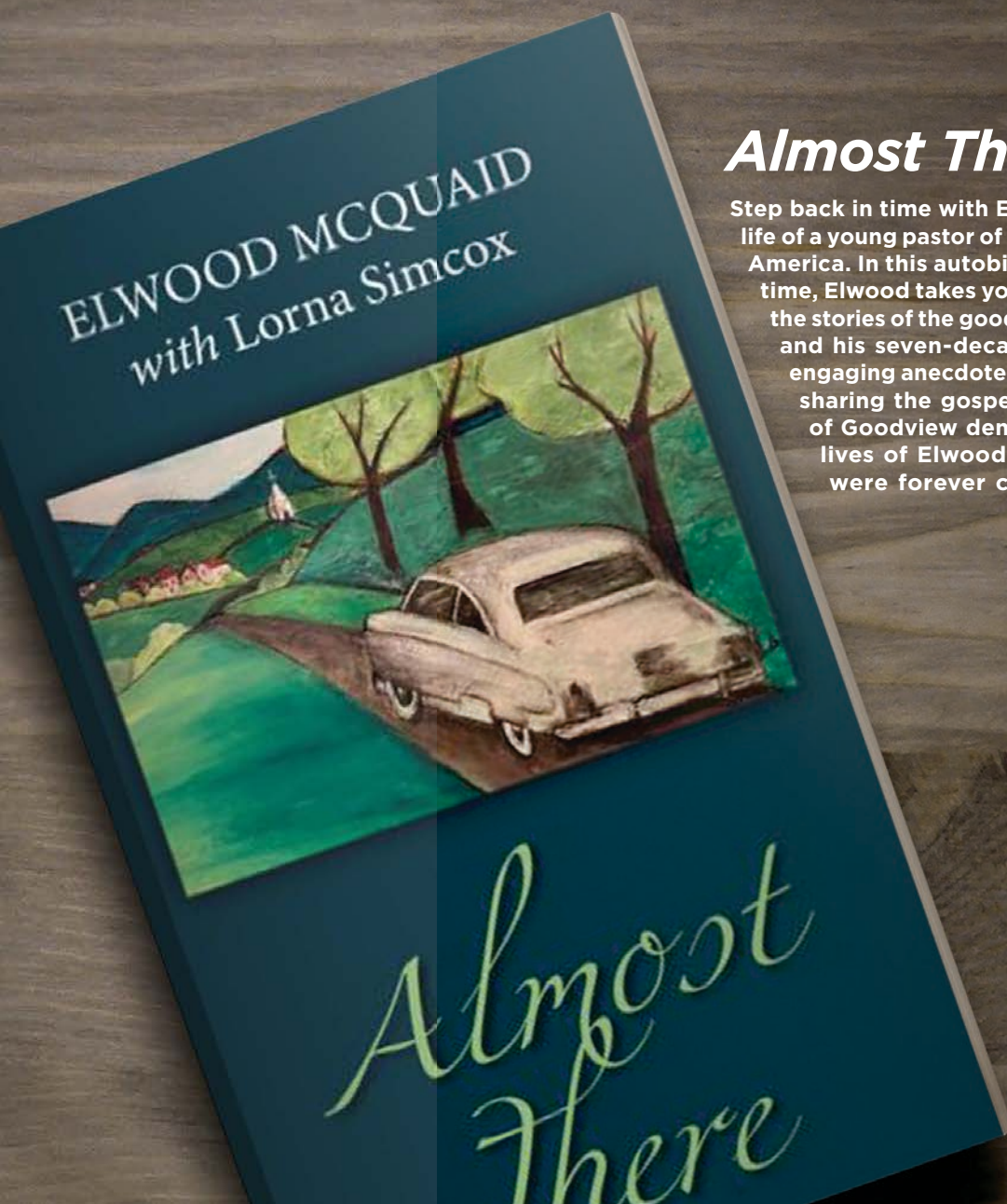
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