

ISRAEL MY GLORY



MODERN ISRAEL 101

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH STATE

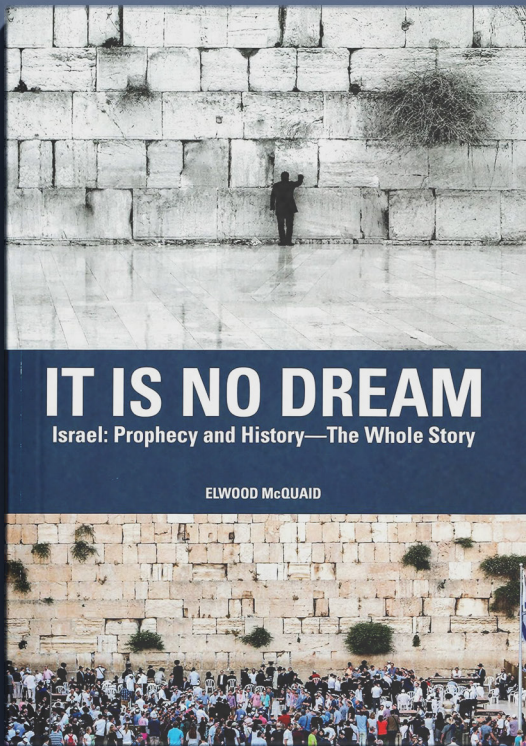


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BORDERING ON NORMAL

THE LAND OF ISRAEL— GOD'S GIFT TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE



IT IS NO DREAM

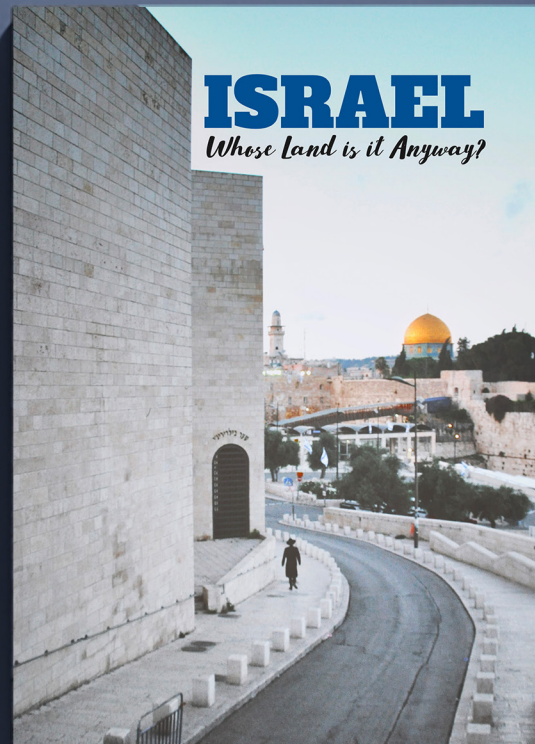
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FROM THE EDITOR

Ever since God promised the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob nearly 4,000 years ago, a yearning to live

in this Holy Land has permeated Jewish hearts.

The children of Israel once enjoyed a strong, prosperous kingdom when King David and King Solomon reigned. But a few hundred years later, they were taken captive; and their kingdom vanished. In the era of the Roman Empire, even Israel's name disappeared; and the area of Judea was renamed Palestina.

For the next 2,000 years, the Jewish people maintained a presence in their Promised Land, carrying the dream to be reborn as a nation. While control of the land shifted between various world powers, God prepared the way for Israel's rejuvenation.

Observing antisemitism in late-19th-century Europe, Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, determined that the Jewish people must have their own nation to ensure their survival. Through his writing and rallying, he became known as the father of Zionism, the movement for the Jewish people to dwell independently in their ancestral homeland; and God set in motion the State of Israel's development.

The World War I defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine, sparked international powers to work toward the creation of a Jewish state in *Eretz Yisrael*: the land of Israel. The systematic slaughter of 6 million Jews during World War II accelerated plans to create a safe haven for the Jewish people, who suffered persecution wherever they settled.

On May 14, 1948, with the United Nations' approval, Jewish statesman David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, fulfilling thousands of years of Jewish longing. What was once little more than a dream became a reality through God's providence.

To fully appreciate the Jewish state today, we need a proper understanding of its history. If you've ever felt like you've missed key pieces to this puzzle of modern Israel, you've come to the right magazine. In this issue of *Israel My Glory*, our authors provide a crash course on the State of Israel's history and some of the defining factors that have shaped it.

Studying Israel's wars, borders, refugees, and enemies reveals its challenges and God's faithful sustenance of the people He called to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

So, class is now in session! We hope this issue will build your expertise on the State of Israel and help you see God's sovereign work through His Chosen People.

*In His service,
Jesse King
Managing Editor*



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Hamas's brutal attack on Israel last October and the subsequent war exposed the current global

rise of antisemitism. Protesters justified Hamas's massacre and declared support for the terrorist organization with the rallying cry "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." But many who chant this phrase don't understand its implications.

"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" is a cry for the elimination of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. It demands the removal (or murder) of all Jewish people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Calling for Israel's demise is not only antisemitic; it's genocidal.

Many within the church sadly fail to understand modern Israel's existence as an act of God's will. Some of these skeptics believe the State of Israel's establishment was an overreaction to the Holocaust of World War II, and they hold the nation responsible for all violence in the Middle East.

Such thinking indicts God for permitting Israel's rebirth and allowing the Jewish people's return to their ancient homeland—a development that began in the late 19th century, prior to the Holocaust. Yet, God did exactly what He said He would do through the prophets (Isa. 11:11; 66:8; Jer. 16:14–15; Ezek. 20:33–34; Hos. 3:4–5). He declared the Jewish people will be replanted in their land, never to be uprooted again (Amos 9:15). Thus, to oppose Israel's existence is to oppose God's will and plan.

This defiance also impugns God's sovereignty, implying that He was uninvolved in bringing about Israel's return or failed to foresee the trouble it would cause. Claiming Israel's regeneration was an accident accuses God of mistakenly permitting it to happen and denies that He purposefully acted to return the Jewish people home from the places to which they were scattered.

But through a biblical lens, modern Israel fits neatly into God's redemptive plan. Just as God prophesied and fulfilled the scattering of the Jewish people, He also promised to return and restore them from the four corners of the earth. The process of Israel's regathering that began more than a century ago continues today.

Modern Israel is a miracle. There is no other way to explain how the Jewish people were exiled from their Promised Land



*
Aftermath of Hamas's massacre

for 1,900 years and then returned. Yet, everything aligns with God's promise to bring them back.

The fact of Israel's return and restoration is a unique historical phenomenon. Usually, an exiled nation is absorbed into the people groups it joins. It is unnatural for a nation to live in exile for centuries and keep its identity and dream to return home. No other exiled people have ever returned to their homeland to become a nation again. This is why the State of Israel is a miracle unfolding before our eyes.

Israel still faces hatred and violence because the Jewish people are God's uniquely Chosen People and the vehicle through whom He will redeem the world. But continued attempts to wipe Israel from the map, like Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, will result in utter failure. Israel will never be destroyed.

One day, God will complete His plan (Rev. 21:6). He loves the Jewish people "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3) and has promised they will endure forever (vv. 35–36). Seeking Israel's destruction is a fool's errand spearheaded by Satan, God's enemy.

The modern Jewish State of Israel is proof that God continues to fulfill His prophetic Word and that we are quickly approaching the end of this age.



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

CEASE THE CEASEFIRE TALKS

BY CHRIS KATULKA

Shortly after Hamas's brutal October 7, 2023, massacre in Israel, U.S. President Joe Biden demonstrated solidarity with the grief-stricken Jewish nation. He preached accountability in the face of terrorism, stating, "History has taught us that when terrorists don't pay a price for their terror, . . . they cause more chaos and death and more destruction."

The White House robustly supported Israel's military actions in Gaza after October 7; and the president not only endorsed Israel, but he also strategically deployed the USS *Ford* and USS *Eisenhower* carrier strike groups to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to deter further aggression from Hezbollah terrorists along Israel's northern border with Lebanon.

Biden's remarks after the massacre hold profound truth. Since coming to power in Gaza in 2007, Hamas has exemplified the adage "Give them an inch, and they'll take a mile." But it wasn't long before Biden's tone shifted. During a press conference in February, the president called Israel's military operations in Gaza "over the top."

Despite years of enduring incessant rocket attacks from Gaza, Israel always faces international criticism when conflicts arise. Calls for a ceasefire only emerge when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) respond to escalating rocket attacks targeting Israeli civilians.

In December 2023, 153 countries voted in favor of a UN resolution for a Gaza ceasefire; 23 abstained, and only 10 opposed. To make matters worse, South Africa accused Israel of genocide before the International Court of Justice.

Hamas's history shows a pattern of failure to maintain ceasefires. So many ceasefires have been established and promptly violated that the term no longer means much.

The pattern is clear: (1) Hamas unleashes terrorism on Israel; (2) Israel responds with military action after days, weeks, or months of escalated rocket attacks; (3) the news media condemns Israel for targeting Hamas bases and launch sites; (4) Israel faces international pressure to end military operations; (5) a ceasefire is

brokered between Israel and Hamas; and (6) Hamas breaks the ceasefire. Wash, rinse, repeat.

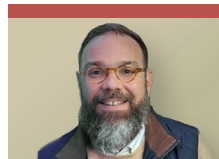
In 2008, in response to several years of Hamas rocket attacks, the IDF initiated Operation Cast Lead, a 22-day conflict in Gaza. Egypt brokered a ceasefire; and almost immediately, Hamas resumed rocket attacks, violating the truce. In 2012, another escalation of rocket fire from Gaza forced the IDF into another conflict, Operation Pillar of Defense. After eight days, a ceasefire was established; but it eroded as Hamas continued terrorizing Israel. Then, Hamas breached several short-lived ceasefires during the 2014 Operation Protective Edge and the 2021 Operation Guardian of the Walls.

Israel's current objective is to eliminate Hamas, ensuring it can no longer govern or operate within Gaza. Ceasefires have proven to be a one-sided deal favoring Hamas. They only give the terrorists time to regroup and rearm, providing breathing room to double down on their efforts to destroy the Jewish state.

The international community urging Israel to embrace a ceasefire cannot ignore October 7. As long as Hamas is in power, the threat of another massacre looms large.

Psalms 83 is a prayer asking God not to remain silent as Israel's enemies try to eliminate Israel and the Jewish people. The enemies say, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more" (v. 4). As pressure mounts on Israel, we must remember that God will act.

We pray President Biden will heed his own words: "When terrorists don't pay a price for their terror, . . . they cause more chaos and death and more destruction." So, let's allow Israel to put an end to Hamas and its chaos, death, and destruction.



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.

THE RETURN OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

It's back. Hamas's October 7 slaughter of more than 1,200 Israelis and Israel's military response to the slaughter have revived international calls for a so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This plan envisions an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, with both states sharing Jerusalem as their capital.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for a "clear, credible, time-bound path to the establishment of a Palestinian state." Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said a Palestinian state is the "only solution" to the conflict. Her French counterpart, Stéphane Séjourné, agreed: "We need a Palestinian state with security guarantees for all." The United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary David Cameron floated the idea of recognizing a Palestinian state to make the process of negotiating a two-state solution "irreversible."

The European Union's (EU) Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell drafted a 10-point roadmap for a "credible, comprehensive" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "We believe that a two-state solution should be imposed from the outside to bring peace," he said.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the idea, claiming a Palestinian state would become a launching pad for attacks on Israel. "I will not compromise on full Israeli security control over all the territory west of Jordan—and this is contrary to a Palestinian state," he posted on social media. A day later, his office issued a statement: "In his conversation with President Biden, Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterated his



policy that after Hamas is destroyed, Israel must retain security control over Gaza to ensure that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel, a requirement that contradicts the demand for Palestinian sovereignty."

Predictably, Netanyahu's comments sparked outrage. UN Secretary General António Guterres said Netanyahu's "repeated refusal" to accept a two-state solution is "totally unacceptable." Ireland's Foreign Minister Micheál Martin urged the Israeli prime minister to "listen to the vast majority of the world who want a peace and who want a two-state solution." Latvia's Foreign Minister Krišjānis Kariņš called on the EU to force concessions from Israel. "Europe's largest leverage has always been its wallet," he said. "We see that, in internal EU politics, money can help to focus minds; and I think we should start thinking about this internationally."

However, few Israelis or Palestinians endorse a two-state solution. A recent Gallup poll found only one in four Israeli adults support an independent Palestinian state, while 65% oppose it. Another poll found that only 24% of Palestinians support a two-state solution. Moreover, almost three out of four Palestinians believe Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel

was correct, according to the Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research.

Hamas leader Khaled Mashal firmly rejected a two-state solution "because it means . . . you are required to recognize the legitimacy of the other state, which is the Zionist entity. This is unacceptable." Instead, he called for a one-state solution requiring Israel's elimination. "Following October 7, I believe that the dream and the hope for Palestine from the river to the sea, and from the north to the south, has been renewed . . . from Rosh Hanikra [the farthest point north on Israel's Mediterranean coastline] to Eilat [Israel's southernmost city]."

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said that after October 7, "no Israeli in their right mind" is thinking of a Palestinian state. "Everybody wants to know: Can we be promised real safety in the future? Every Israeli wants to know that he will not be attacked in the same way from north or south or east."



by **Soeren Kern**,
a writing fellow for
the Middle East Forum

INTERNS SERVE CHICAGO'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

In November, as one of the final phases of our Friends of Israel (FOI) Equip internship program, five FOI interns traveled to Chicago for a special ministry opportunity. There, under the expert tutelage of FOI field representative Jonathan Craft and North American Ministries

Israeli goodies to people in Chicago's Jewish community. Each basket gave the recipients a tangible taste of the Messiah's love through these young adults who love and support them.

The interns also served at Chicago Loop Synagogue, where they helped update its library, spoke with staff members, and distributed Hanukkah boxes. A few days later, they attended the synagogue's Shabbat service.

They had a memorable learning experience when they visited the Illinois Holocaust Museum and asked questions to a hologram of a Holocaust survivor, which answered in real time.

The group also attended "Israel & the Middle East: A Night of Prayer, Education, and Worship" at Chicago's historic Moody Church. Christians from all backgrounds gathered to pray. But the interns noticed they were by far the youngest in the room, a fact that clearly revealed a concerning lack of support for Israel among young people today. Understanding the rise of antisemitism in their generation, our interns realized they need to model and teach the importance of supporting Israel and the Jewish people.

Throughout the trip, the interns enjoyed lots of delicious Jewish foods, wrestled with tough theological questions, and brainstormed new ministry ideas to implement when they returned home.

Intern Claire Sanderson shared, "I'm reminded of Romans 11 and the gift it is to be 'grafted in' to God's blessing of salvation through Jesus and the beautiful responsibility I have towards the branches—the Jewish people. I pray that, one day, we will meet many Jewish people in heaven who came to know the love of Yeshua because of the seeds that were planted from this Chicago trip."



* Jonathan Craft (second from left) and the Equip team in Chicago Loop Synagogue

volunteer coordinator Linda Craft, they enjoyed fellowship with believers who love Israel and the Jewish people. It was an encouragement to many of them, who often feel alone while ministering back home.

The Israel-Hamas war altered their agenda in Chicago because of the threat of terrorism against the Jewish community. But even though their itinerary changed nearly every day, God answered their prayers and led them exactly where they needed to go.

The Crafts' wealth of wisdom and stories from decades of ministry greatly encouraged the interns, who distributed more than 150 Hanukkah baskets and boxes full of

salvation through Jesus and the beautiful responsibility I have towards the branches—the Jewish people. I pray that, one day, we will meet many Jewish people in heaven who came to know the love of Yeshua because of the seeds that were planted from this Chicago trip."

If you would like to support FOI Equip and programs like it in North American Ministries, please visit foi.org/NAMoutreach. You can also call our toll-free ministry-support line at 800-257-7843. Thank you for your prayer and financial support.

UNITED WE STAND AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

The whole world is witnessing the dramatic rise in antisemitism. The Anti-Defamation League reports record numbers of antisemitic incidents and attacks on Jewish people, and we see these terrible events assaulting our Jewish friends around the world.

However, since the start of the war in Gaza in October, the problem has become increasingly perceptible. It's visible on our TVs and streets and in places of worship.

FOI's International Ministry teams around the world are pushing back against this vicious evil and standing with our Jewish friends and neighbors in a variety of ways.

In Poland, our teams participated in events demanding the return of the Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas. Each year, our Polish team also takes part in the International March of the Living, an educational program held at the former Nazi extermination camp of Auschwitz, designed predominantly to teach Jewish high school students the brutal history of the Holocaust. Additionally, our workers provide food, medicine, building materials, and many other vital items to synagogues and Jewish communities throughout Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and elsewhere. In the process, they invite local churches

* **Meno Kalisher (left) prays with his son, Danny, an Israeli FOI field representative and IDF soldier.**



* **Elizabeth and Les Crawford, Australian field director, support Israel at a rally in Adelaide.**

to join them in blessing the Jewish people and fighting antisemitism.

In England, our representatives build bridges with the Jewish community of London, offering support, friendship, and a consistent reminder that Christians love the Jewish people. FOI United Kingdom provides educational guided tours through historic Jewish sites in the old quarter of London.

And in Israel, our teams stand strong to show as many Jewish people as possible that Bible-believing Christians around the world love them; support them; and care deeply about their lives, country, and spiritual condition.

Elsewhere, including in Australia, France, Germany, and New Zealand, our teams care for Holocaust survivors; stand in solidarity with Jewish communities; and teach the biblical truth of God's love and plans for His beloved people, Israel.

The Friends of Israel is deeply committed to fighting antisemitism and the ugly violence it brings against God's Chosen People. FOI's International Ministries are on the front lines of this spiritual battle as we share the gospel of Jesus the Messiah and seek to bless the Jewish people wherever they live.

If you would like to support our International 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 prayer and financial support.

The Battle to Define Antisemitism

If we were to title the last 10 years of American cultural history, we might dub them “The Age of Redefinition.” From the Supreme Court’s 2015 redefinition of marriage to the current cultural confusion about simple terms like *man* and *woman*, the past decade has been characterized by battles over the meaning of words.

One front in the war centers on the term *antisemitism*—or is it *anti-Semitism*? The debate surrounding the use or nonuse of a hyphen in the term has generated a buzz because that little mark sends a message, often subliminally, about the nature and identity of the Jewish people.

In her 2019 book, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, Ambassador Deborah E. Lipstadt, U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, noted, “In most cases the right side of a hyphenated word can stand alone as a word in its own right,” such as in “anti-immigration, anti-trade, or anti-taxes.”

But “Semitism”? There’s no such thing. Yet Israel’s enemies weaponize the concept of “Semitism” to conceal their animosity against the Jewish people.

As Lipstadt points out, some Arabs erroneously claim, “It’s impossible for them to be antisemitic because they themselves are ‘Semites.’” However, German journalist Wilhelm Marr popularized the term *antisemitism* in the late 1800s to describe his hatred not of Arabs, Amorites, Arameans, or any other alleged “Semitic” people, but of the Jewish people.

Dropping the hyphen better articulates that Jews are not a “Semitic race” and more precisely defines *antisemitism* as hatred of the Jewish people.

It’s a step in the right direction, though only a small one. Yair Rosenberg wrote in *The Atlantic*, “Time and energy spent on [the battle to dehyphenate *antisemitism*] would be much better spent on combatting anti-Semites and educating allies.”

To do so, the Biden administration issued the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism (NSCA) in May 2023. The document says it constitutes “a whole-of-society effort to combat antisemitism, including unprecedented, coordinated, and bold actions that will be implemented across government agencies, as well as calls to action for . . . Americans from every sector, industry, and walk of life.”

However, some argue the document fails to accurately define the very hatred it purports to thwart.

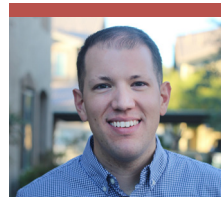
The administration rightly uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of *antisemitism*. This definition includes certain anti-Israel/anti-Zionist activities, including “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination,” “applying double standards” to Israel, “using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism . . . to characterize Israel or Israelis,” comparing “contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis,” and “holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.”

However, the administration also “welcomes and appreciates” the Nexus Document, a Left-leaning definition of *antisemitism* that does not consider anti-Zionism inherently antisemitic. Dr. Ruth R. Wisse, distinguished senior fellow at the Tikvah Fund and one of the NSCA’s most thoughtful critics, wrote of Nexus:

This “kick me” document assures anti-Semites that “criticism of Zionism and Israel,” “even contentious, strident, or harsh criticism of Israel for its policies and actions, including those that led to the creation of Israel,” plus “opposition to Zionism and/or Israel,” or “paying disproportionate attention to Israel and treating Israel differently”—none of this is dangerous.

The Nexus Document’s authors only view anti-Zionism as antisemitism “when Israel is singled out because of anti-Jewish hatred.” They fail to understand that anti-Zionism is anti-Jewish hatred itself.

Cultural redefinition has left carnage in its “progressive” wake, demonstrating that defining terms correctly matters. One thing is for sure—God views the Jewish nation and the land of Israel as inextricably linked. He preserves both land and people and promises judgment on those who plunder either of them.



by Ty Perry,
Field Ministries manager and Bible teacher for
The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Michigan



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Conquering Our *Kvetching*

Are you a *kvetch*? If you are, here's your reminder to stop complaining and start "setting the Lord before you."

BY STEVE HERZIG

My beloved mother was a five-star *kvetch*. This Yiddish term describes a habitual complainer—and my mother was really good at complaining. She once displayed her hall-of-fame-level *kvetching* when she demanded—and received—the 52 cents left on a gift card by grumbling all the way to upper management at a well-known department store.

Several years ago, I sent a fruit basket to my mother as a gift. A few days later, the company that sold me the basket sent me an apology email. It seemed my mother was not satisfied with the fruit. She had filed a complaint, causing the company to promise me a refund. Knowing my mother, I called the company to find out what happened and to ask

it to forget the refund because I knew the fruit was fine.

While speaking with a company representative, I referenced the sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond* in which Marie Barone complained to her son Raymond that he had been sending her too many pears from the Fruit-of-the-Month Club. Raymond explained that the fruit was a gift and that most people like it, but Marie pleaded with him to stop the deliveries.

The representative remembered the episode. "Ma'am," I said, "we are the Barone family, only Jewish." I had hoped this comparison would dissuade her from acquiescing to my mother's complaint, but company policy dictated that it return my money.

Afterward, I called my mother. She thanked me profusely for the fruit. I told her the company was giving me a refund and asked why she complained. "I don't like that kind of apple, and I should have the kind I like," she said.

"Mom, those apples came with the basket I chose," I said. "It's not the company's fault."

"Oh, honey," she said, "yes, it is!"

My mother's *kvetching* may have earned me a refund I didn't request, but it also guaranteed the company would

never fill orders for her again. Evidently, it was not her first complaint to them.

To Kvetch Is Human

My mother's behavior was not unique. All of us *kvetch* sometimes about something, and some of us *kvetch* all the time about everything. After all, there are so many things to complain about. We *kvetch* about the weather; traffic; our neighbors; our neighbors' kids; the government; the economy; crime; the service in restaurants; the food in restaurants; the job market; and, even among believers, the church.

Have you ever wondered what God thinks about all that *kvetching*? Adam, the first man, was the first to complain. He excused his sinful disobedience to God by deflecting blame to his wife, Eve: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). Eve followed with her own grumbling, blaming Satan: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (v. 13). God handed down swift punishment to the two *kvetches*.

The ancient Israelites set the gold standard for complaining. Even as God was delivering them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, they saw Pharaoh's army pursuing them and cried out to the Lord. "Have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?" they asked Moses. "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:11–12).

Later, they complained they were hungry; and God gave them manna (16:4). Then they complained about the manna, and God gave them meat (v. 13). Then they complained they were thirsty, and God gave them water from a rock (17:6). Again and again, it was the same old story—complain, complain, complain.

All of this *kvetching* directly attacked the person and work of God. Each time, the Israelites believed they were better off as slaves in Egypt than as free people with God in the wilderness. They trusted Egypt more than they trusted the Almighty. They devalued God's power, provision, and presence. Had they not seen God's amazing power when He sent 10 plagues upon Egypt or when He split the Red Sea and brought the waters back again (chaps. 7–14)? Had they not benefited from God's provision when He gave them manna, daily bread from heaven (chap. 16)? And had they not seen God lead them with His physical presence as a visible cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (13:21)?

Caution Against Complaining

Complaining is not exclusive to the ancient Hebrews. Believers in the early church must have *kvetched* a lot because the New Testament authors addressed such behavior repeatedly in their epistles.

To the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). To the Philippians, he wrote, "Do all things without

complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God" (Phil. 2:14–15).

James, Jesus' half-brother, wrote, "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door" (Jas. 5:9). And the apostle Peter wrote, "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet. 4:9). God's Word is clear: *Kvetching* is not fitting for the body of Christ.

The Kvetching Cure

Are you a *kvetch*? Fear not. Though the children of Israel failed the test of allegiance to God in the wilderness, one of their own, King David, later taught the way to guard against *kvetching*. "I have set the LORD always before me," he wrote; "because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices" (Ps. 16:8–9).

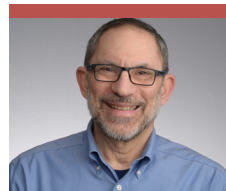
Consider the phrase *I have set the LORD always before me*. Keeping Him in front of us helps us stop complaining, grumbling, and speaking corruptly.

Many Jewish people place a plaque or poster called a *sheviti* (Hebrew for "set" or "place") in their homes and synagogue sanctuaries. The *sheviti* reads, "*Adonai L'negdi Tamid*"—"I have set the LORD always before me."

In the synagogue, the *sheviti* plaque usually is placed at the front near the *bema* (platform from which the Torah is read) to remind worshipers why they come. Some designers arrange the text of Psalm 67, a song of praise to the Lord, on the *sheviti* in such a way that it forms a seven-branched menorah. The menorah was the only light in the holy place of the Tabernacle and Temple of the Lord, making it an appropriate symbol to remind worshipers to set the Lord before them.

While believers are not mandated to have a *sheviti* for worship, we should remember to consciously and continually place the Lord always before us each and every day, to "set [our minds] on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). We do not want to be five-star *kvetches*. If the Lord is in His rightful place on the throne of our hearts, He will, through the power of the Holy Spirit, mute our *kvetching* and turn our complaints to praise.

A few weeks after I wrote this article, my mother passed away at the age of 100. I spent 49 years sharing my faith with her; and, by God's grace, she came to saving faith in Jesus in her final days. In the next issue of Israel My Glory, I will share how God worked in her life and turned her heart toward heaven, where she is now in glory with Him. ★




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Burned vehicles collected after
the October 7 massacre



An aerial photograph showing the wreckage of several cars on a dirt road. A person wearing a green cap and orange gloves is standing near the center, inspecting the damage. The scene is filled with twisted metal, tires, and debris.

THE FIGHT TO SURVIVE

**A look at the State of Israel's remarkable
resilience throughout its history of defensive wars**

by Ty Perry

From Egypt’s Pharaoh to Persia’s Haman to Germany’s Hitler, many a world leader has attempted to destroy the Jewish people, defying God’s declaration that He will “curse him who curses” Israel (Gen. 12:3). Even today, motivated by a satanic hatred, many say, “Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more” (Ps. 83:4).

Modern Israel’s history has been a fight for survival. Though often battered and humbled by brutal assaults, the Jewish nation lives, demonstrating the futility of attempts to annihilate it.

WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE (1948)

On May 14, 1948, Britain’s 31-year mandate over Palestine, as it was then known, came to an end; and Israel gained its independence. Six months earlier, the United Nations gave part of the area to the Jews and part to the Arabs. The dream for a revived Jewish nation in its Promised Land became a reality.

No sooner was the State of Israel born than its neighbors—Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq—banded together to invade it. Their goal: Wipe the Jewish state off the map. But they could not.

Israel’s War of Independence lasted ten months and went

down in history as the country’s bloodiest conflict. Of its 650,000 Jewish citizens in 1948, 6,373¹ (approximately one-third of whom were Holocaust survivors²) perished. But the little Jewish nation pulled through, defeating massive, well-equipped Arab armies.

SIX-DAY WAR (1967)

Yet the Arab nations persisted in refusing to accept the Jewish state’s existence. For them, the 1949 armistice lines merely marked where their next attacks should begin.

In May 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, advised by false intelligence from the Soviet Union, began moving 80,000 Egyptian troops, 550 tanks, and 1,000 pieces of artillery into the Sinai Peninsula. On May 23, he cut off Israel’s shipping lanes by blocking the Straits of Tiran, a direct violation of UN Security Council resolution 118.³ This was, by all definitions, an act of war.

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Six-Day War: Charging into battle at Rafa



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Yom Kippur War: Soldiers in foxholes in southern Sinai



By early June, five Arab nations had allied against Israel and assembled their armies on Israel's borders: 80,000 Egyptian troops; 60,000 Jordanian troops, plus Iraqi forces; 50,000 Syrian troops; and a combined Arab air force of some 600 planes.⁴

On June 5, 1967, Israel's air force, flying low to avoid radar detection, made its way to Egypt. Before Egypt's air force could get its jets in the air, Israel bombed Egypt's runways and took out two-thirds of Egypt's air force, the largest in the Arab world—all in merely four hours.

What Egypt had promised would be "the extermination of Zionist existence"⁵ was anything but. Though Egypt's forces outnumbered Israel's by three to one, its army retreated in defeat. Israel took control of the Sinai and opened the Port of Sharm el-Sheikh, reopening the sea lanes.

The defeats of the other Arab armies came in quick succession. Most significantly, on June 7, Israel pushed Jordan's forces out of eastern Jerusalem, taking control of the Temple Mount. This was the first time in 2,000 years that a united Jerusalem lay in the hands of a sovereign Jewish nation.⁶ Jordan's assault on Israel was over.

In merely six days, Israel not only defeated its powerful Arab neighbors, but it also captured militarily strategic

territory (the Golan Heights from Syria, Judea and Samaria from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Sinai from Egypt), making it far easier for Israel to protect its people.

YOM KIPPUR WAR (1973)

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is Judaism's holiest day of the year. In Israel, everything shuts down as Jewish people fast and pray. Israel's Arab neighbors, still incensed at their defeat six years earlier, chose this day to launch a war that nearly destroyed the Jewish state.

Though Israel knew war lay ahead, a series of intelligence failures, false alarms, and a sense of national hubris caused the government to doubt its imminence. By October 5, 1973, however, it became clear the Egyptians were planning an attack. Prime Minister Golda Meir, under pressure from the United States not to launch a preemptive strike, mobilized an insufficient number of troops.

On October 6, 1973, Syria and Egypt, backed by the Soviet Union and nine other nations, attacked. Some 1,400 Syrian tanks assailed Israel's 180 tanks. Israel had a mere 500 soldiers stationed along the Suez Canal when 600,000 Egyptian soldiers struck.⁷ In the north, Syria overwhelmed Israeli forces. A staggering 40,000 Syrian troops flooded the Golan Heights, their 1,500 tanks far outnumbering Israel's pitiful 177.⁸

At Israel's helm were Prime Minister Golda Meir and Minister



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War of Independence: Hoisting the Israeli flag after surrender of Iraq Sueidan Police Station in Israel

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Modern Israel's history has been a fight for survival.

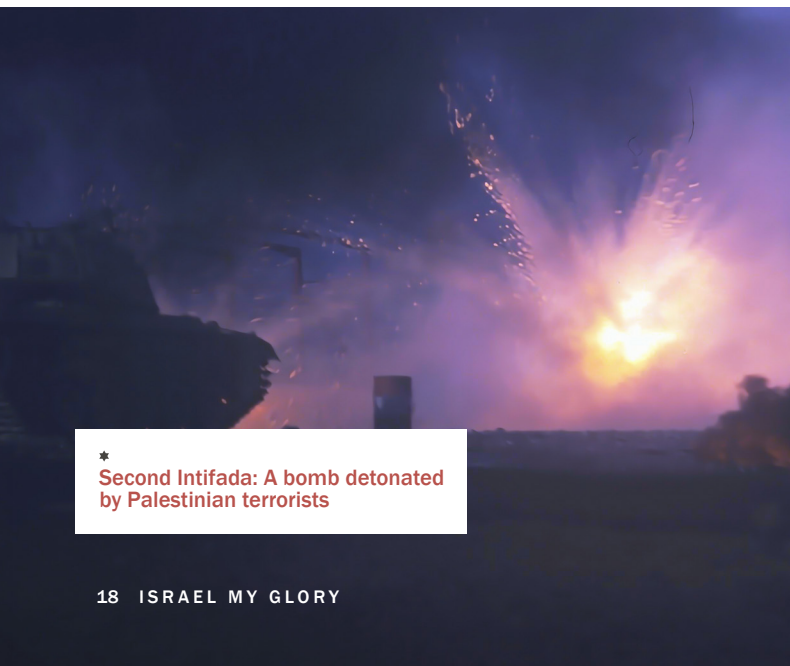
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First Intifada: Violent Palestinian demonstration



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Second Intifada: A burning ambulance ignited by Palestinian rioters



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Second Intifada: A bomb detonated by Palestinian terrorists

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More than 700 attacks targeted Israeli soldiers and civilians in the first four years of the First Intifada.

”

of Defense Moshe Dayan. But even these bold, competent leaders feared Israel's demise was at hand. Riddled with anxiety at the catastrophe, Dayan even considered a nuclear option.⁹

Thanks to help from the United States, Israel was pulled back from the verge of defeat and turned the tide against the Arab invaders, pushing the Egyptians out of the Sinai and all the way back to the Egyptian capital of Cairo. In the north, Israel recaptured Mount Hermon in the Golan and advanced to 25 miles outside Damascus.

The war officially ended on October 28, 1973. Though technically it was a victory for Israel, the victory came at enormous cost. Israel lost 2,656 soldiers, three times the casualties of the 1967 war.

FIRST INTIFADA (1987)

Twenty years after the Six-Day War, peace was no more in reach than it had been in the 1960s. In December 1987, an Israeli in Gaza was murdered. The next day, an Israeli truck driver accidentally crashed into a row of cars at a Gaza checkpoint, killing four Palestinians and seriously injuring seven.¹⁰

A rumor spread in the Palestinian territories that the crash was an intentional response to the Israeli murdered in Gaza. Protests sprang up throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, demonstrations unlike any Israel or even the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had ever seen.

What was supposedly a nonviolent *intifada* (Arabic for “shaking off”) against Israel quickly became violent.¹¹ The Palestinians began rioting and attacking not only Israeli soldiers and civilians but also fellow Arabs accused of collaborating with Israel. In fact, by 1991, “the number of Arabs killed for political and other reasons by Palestinian death squads . . . exceeded the number killed in clashes with Israeli troops.”¹²

Still, Israelis were the main target. More than 700 attacks targeted Israeli soldiers and civilians in the first four years of the First Intifada. Israel suffered not only at the hands of the Palestinians, but also at the hands of the international news media, which majored in turning

* Hamas War: Hadas Calderon cries in her home three weeks after the October 7 massacre. Her mother was brutally murdered; and her two children, Sahar and Erez, and their father, Ofer, were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists.



“

For Israel, the public-relations battle is as intense as the physical fighting.

”



* Hamas War: Evacuating the elderly population in Sderot following the outbreak of the war



* Hamas War: Kibbutz Nir Oz after Hamas terrorists brutally slaughtered the residents on October 7

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Not since the Holocaust have so many Jewish people been killed in a single day.

”

little Israel into the big, powerful “occupier” of “Palestinian land” and making the massive, aggressive Arab nations the victims. The narrative had changed.

SECOND INTIFADA (2000)

In September 2000, Ariel Sharon, then opposition leader in Israel’s Knesset (parliament), and six members of the Likud Party visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Israel had cleared the trip with the Palestinian Preventive Security organization, which assured the Israelis that no problems would ensue as long as the delegation did not enter any mosques. The promise proved false.

Arab radio broadcasts claimed Sharon had intruded on Muslim holy sites. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat incited Palestinians to “move immediately to stop these aggressions and Israeli practices against holy Jerusalem.”¹³ A wave of violence followed that became known as the Second Intifada.

From 2000 to 2005, Arab terrorists unleashed random, bloody attacks on Israeli civilians throughout the country. Israelis feared going out in public and riding buses, which suicide bombers routinely blew up. Arabs murdered 1,137 Israelis during the Second Intifada.

HAMAS WAR (2023)

October 7, 2023, will forever be engraved on the hearts of the Jewish people. That was when Hamas terrorists from the Gaza Strip invaded Israel and murdered, raped, mutilated, immolated, and beheaded more than 1,200 of the most vulnerable Israelis.

In a well-coordinated attack two years in the planning, Hamas infiltrated Israel by land, sea, and air. Some terrorists paraglided into an outdoor music festival being held in the Negev Desert, where they slaughtered more than 360 young people and took at least 40 hostage.¹⁴

Throughout the day, Hamas launched thousands of rockets from Gaza into Israel and took some 240 hostages, 32 of them children, the youngest only 9 months old. Not since the Holocaust have so many Jewish people been killed in a single day.

In response, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the nation, “Citizens of Israel, we are at war. Not an operation, not a round [of fighting], at war!”¹⁵

That war meant a ground invasion of Gaza. Unlike any other country, Israel warns its enemies that it’s about to strike and urges civilians to seek safety. It urged the Palestinians to flee to the southern part of the Gaza Strip, while the Jewish state tried to eliminate Hamas. Israel began its ground invasion on October 27.

Yet one of the toughest fronts Israel faces is the war in the media. Hamas intentionally hides in densely populated civilian areas, and it built a 300-mile labyrinthine maze of tunnels under the Gaza Strip.¹⁶ The IDF discovered that Hamas’s primary base of operations was underneath the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.¹⁷

Hamas deliberately uses civilian areas—such as schools, mosques, and hospitals—as shields, forcing Israel to bomb these sites, so Hamas can claim Israel is committing war crimes against Palestinian civilians. For Israel, the public-relations battle is as intense as the physical fighting.

At the time of this writing, Israel continues to wage war against Hamas. And Hamas joins the millions of others who, for millennia, have tried to destroy the Jewish people. However, despite all their attempts, including those today, the Jewish people live on.

A song frequently sung at Israel solidarity events is “Am Yisrael Chai,” Hebrew for “The people of Israel live.” And they will continue to live because almighty God has decreed it (Jer. 31:35–37). And what He has decreed, no one can reverse (Isa. 43:13). ★

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Hamas War: IDF soldier after the massacre on October 7



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The world talks incessantly about Arab refugees.
But what about other refugees who lost everything—like the Jews?

The Forgotten Ones

by Les Crawford

As of June 2023, according to the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees, the world has 108.4 million displaced people, of which 35.3 million are refugees. News reports on the Middle East often refer to the Palestinian refugees and their plight, but they never mention Jewish refugees. Is this because there have been no Jewish refugees? What is the truth about refugees in the Middle East?

Arab refugees resulted from the anticipation of war between the Arabs and Jews after the UN partitioned British Mandate Palestine into two states in 1947: One was to be Jewish; the other, Arab. The Arabs rejected the partition and tried to eliminate the Jewish presence entirely by forming a military coalition of Arab nations and attacking Israel on the morning of May 15, 1948, the day after Israel declared independence.

Even before the war broke out, some 30,000 wealthy Arabs who feared the imminent fighting fled to neighboring Arab countries. Less wealthy Arabs of mixed ethnicity moved eastward to all-Arab towns to wait out the war with relatives or friends. Both groups expected an early Arab victory and a safe return to their homes. That was not the case.

ASSESSING CULPABILITY

The early exodus alarmed the Arab Higher Committee, the

Arabs' political group established in 1936 and headed by Adolf Hitler's ally, the grand mufti of Jerusalem. The Arab Higher Committee asked neighboring Arab countries to prevent their brethren from gaining entrance.

The battle for Deir Yassin to protect the transport corridor to Jerusalem became a catalyst for the exodus. A report of a massacre fueled Arab fears of abuse and death, even though the report was inaccurate. According to eminent Israeli scholar Eliezer Tauber, the Irgun (the attacking Jewish force) killed 101 people, 61 in combat, leaving an escape corridor for more than 200 residents. The Irgun suffered four dead and 41 casualties. Allegations of rape and massacre were unsubstantiated; but the Palestine Broadcasting Service used them to provoke action from the Arab armies, not realizing how local Arabs would react.

The British, who had controlled Palestine for 30 years, were due to withdraw on May 14, 1948. They assisted Arab evacuations when Jewish forces gained control of Tiberias and Haifa in April 1948. These initial military conflicts arose because the Arabs continuously attacked the Jews, prompting the Haganah (Jewish paramilitary group) to act to protect the Jewish population. A full-scale war could not start until the British withdrew and cleared the way for the Arab coalition to invade.

At first, Jewish leaders urged Arabs to remain in the new State of Israel, as expressed in Israel's Declaration of Independence:

We appeal—in this very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.¹

This detente would only work if the Arabs supported Israel's existence. After the war broke out, only Arabs willing to support Israel could be permitted to stay. Consequently, Israel required some to leave; but they were a minority compared with the vast numbers who left of their own accord.

Estimates of the number of Arab refugees resulting from the War of Independence vary from 400,000 to 1 million, with the more probable number being around 600,000. In UN Resolution 194, passed on December 11, 1948, the UN told the Arab nations and Israel to handle the situation. It called for refugees to return to their homes in peace; and it supported Israel's non-repatriation of hostile Arabs who would threaten Israel's security and, therefore, would need resettlement in Arab states.

Israel's response was positive. In the words of President Chaim Weizmann, "We are anxious to help such resettlement provided that real peace is established and the Arab states do their part of the job."²

Peace negotiations included the refugee issue, and Israel was willing to take back a significant number. The Arabs rejected such offers to avoid recognizing Israel as a legitimate entity. Consequently, the Arab nations confined a large majority of Arab refugees to camps. Jordan was the only Arab state to accept the refugees and grant them citizenship.

The other Arab states contributed nothing to resettling the refugees, whereas Israel did its part, according to a 1950 UN report. Some 27,000 Arabs in Israel claimed refugee status, for which Israel took responsibility, not requiring UN funding for their needs. Over the years, Israel has provided millions of dollars in compensation to more than 11,000 claimants and has supplied more than 20,000 acres of substitute land grants.

The current Arab refugee situation is tragic and was largely avoidable if Arab nations had helped their brethren at the beginning of their plight. Sadly, the Palestinian refugee camps in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and Gaza now hold more than 2 million people; few, if any, are the original refugees. These camps are largely maintained as a symbol of so-called Israeli oppression and provide personnel for terrorist factions.

THE JEWISH SITUATION

The Arabs, however, were not the only refugees associated with Israel's War of Independence.

First, Arab attacks on Jewish villages produced 60,000 to

70,000 Jewish refugees in the land itself. Unlike the Arabs, who could flee beyond Israel's borders, Jewish people had limited options. They remained within Israel, some taking refuge in immigrant and refugee absorption camps called *ma'abarot* in Hebrew.

Second, many Jews were forced to flee from Arab countries where they had lived for generations. Most left with only the clothes on their backs. Estimates place the number of Jewish refugees at 850,000.³

Targeted and violent persecution in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Yemen forced Jewish people from their longstanding homes. But these refugees had no interest in returning. More than half a million settled in Israel at the fledgling Israeli government's expense, without any compensation from their Arab homelands. Several hundred thousand found refuge in Europe and the United States.

Their property, confiscated by Arab governments, exceeded that lost by Palestinian refugees; and they never received any compensation.

UN resolutions regularly focus on the plight of the Arabs, but not one has focused on the plight of the Jews. This is remarkable, considering the reality of the Jewish people's initial circumstances. These refugees have been largely forgotten.

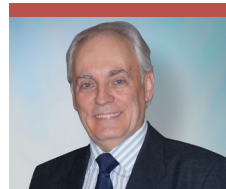
The good news is that the Jewish people did not remain refugees in Israel or in any of the other countries to which they fled. Despite the cost and challenges associated with resettlement, Israel worked to incorporate the refugees into the newly formed state. Citizens, not refugees, helped Israel build a modern nation.

Each November 30 since 2015, Israel remembers and honors the Jewish refugees who were expelled from their homes in Arab countries. Nearly half of Israel's population is descended from these people.

The UN and news media paint inaccurate pictures of what happened in 1948, as well as what is happening today. We should remember that every story, including the refugee story, has two sides; and we should not be swayed by one-sided versions. ★

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ISRAEL'S NEVER-ENDING STRUGGLE

Hamas. Hezbollah. The Palestinian Authority. Arab nations.
Little Israel is oppressed by them all.

by Chris Katulka



The Arab-Israeli conflict is often perceived as a highly intricate issue involving a multitude of historical, political, and social elements. You'll hear journalists and professors claim, "It's a complex situation," or "It's extremely complicated."

Navigating history's ever-shifting landscape can be complex, as each day brings new developments; but the overall conflict is simple to grasp. Terrorist organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, and factions of the Palestinian Authority (PA) refuse to accept the existence of a Jewish state. That is why tensions still exist between Israel and the Palestinians and many Arab nations.

Lebanon (established 1943), Syria (1946), Jordan (1946), and Israel (1948) were all formed within the same decade as a result of the dismantling of the Turkish Empire after World War I. However, Israel is the only country on that list whose right to exist is disputed. When Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan acquired independence, no neighboring countries stormed their borders or contested their sovereignty.

Why was Israel not afforded the same recognition? The answer is simple: Israel is a Jewish state.

Today, Israel's neighbors no longer strategize how to use their military force to destroy the little Jewish country; but Iranian proxies occupy Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and Gaza to plot against Israel and execute acts of terror to remind the Jewish people they are not wanted.

HAMAS

Hamas, whose name is an Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement," was founded in Gaza as an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s. Iran has funded Hamas violence against Israel since the early 1990s.

Hamas's sole purpose is to promote Islamic ideals of Palestinian nationalism through a policy of *jihad* (armed struggle). Hamas minces no words: It considers Israel to be Islamic territory. Therefore, any international policy or peace negotiations

HOWEVER, ISRAEL IS THE ONLY COUNTRY ON THAT LIST WHOSE RIGHT TO EXIST IS DISPUTED.

that promote Jewish sovereignty in the land will lead only to “carnage, displacement and terror,” according to Article 31 of the Hamas Charter of 1988.¹

The Charter blatantly calls for Israel’s annihilation and the genocide of the Jewish people. In 2017, the terrorist organization attempted to rebrand itself by tempering some of its extremist language; but its actions speak louder than its words.

Two seismic events gave rise to Hamas’s power in Gaza. First, in September 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally gave Palestinians complete autonomy and control of the Gaza Strip by expelling all 8,000 Israelis from their homes in 21 settlements there and turning the area over to the Palestinians, per the Oslo Accords. Jews had lived in Gaza for centuries. It was part of the territory apportioned to the tribe of Judah during the days of Joshua (Josh. 15:47).

Second, with Gaza and the territories in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) now in Palestinian hands, Hamas, for

the first time, ran for election in 2006 as an official political party. It won handily. The victory led to a Palestinian civil war that divided the West Bank from Gaza, giving autonomy of the West Bank to the PA and Gaza to Hamas.

The Gaza Strip is no stranger to territorial conveyance. From 1917 to 1948 it was under British rule, followed by Egyptian rule from 1949 to 1967. Israel governed the area from 1967 to 2005, after which the Palestinians took over.

A Hamas presence still remains in the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip has become a base for terrorism. True to its Charter, Hamas has launched tens of thousands of rockets into Israel; built more than 300 miles of tunnels; and murdered thousands of innocent Israelis to fulfill its mission of “carnage, displacement and terror.”

HEZBOLLAH

As Hamas remains an everyday threat to Israel in the south, Hezbollah (Arabic for “the Party of Allah”) does the same in the north. Its violence against Israel started during the Lebanon War in 1982.

After the Iranian Revolution in 1979 that deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was a friend of the West, Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power. He sought to spread his Islamic ideals across the Middle East. Lebanon was ripe to import Khomeini’s Revolutionary Guard Corps to develop an Islamic movement because its government was fractured, and the country was suffering a strenuous civil war. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) partnered with Lebanese Christians to defeat the Palestinian militants in southern Lebanon.

Yet Hezbollah’s power and influence increased in Lebanon, and its military wing is said to have grown larger than the Lebanese army. Some even call Hezbollah a state within a state. Today, Hezbollah holds power in the Lebanese government and advances its message through radio, television, and social media.

After the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Tehran consolidated Hezbollah’s power under the leadership of Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah, educated in Iran, funds and directs Hezbollah’s hostilities toward Israel on Lebanon’s southern border.

Hezbollah embraces a religiously motivated hatred toward the Jewish people, which drives its antisemitic tropes, Holocaust denial, and terrorist activities.

Today, the Tehran-backed terrorist organization possesses 150,000 rockets to target Israel, many with guided systems to hit IDF bases and civilian targets.

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Hezbollah and Hamas are both deemed terrorist organizations by many countries, but they are also political parties. Their elected representatives govern the Lebanese and Palestinian citizens.

The PA, however, is not a political party. It is the governing body of the Palestinian people in their territories. It was originally called the Palestine Liberation Organization and was headed by terrorist Yasser Arafat. The PA was established by the 1994 Oslo Accords that provided the framework for a two-state solution.

For two states to live side by side, each must have its own government. The Israelis have the Knesset in Jerusalem. So, Oslo created a limited self-governance for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On May 4, 1994, Israeli security forces started withdrawing from the newly arranged Palestinian territories, transferring authority to the PA. Today, the PA oversees the territories in the West Bank. Since no elections have been held since 2006, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has remained Arafat's successor for nearly two decades.

Abbas is now 88; and with a disapproval rating of 80%, it seems most of the Palestinians want him to resign. Then the PA would be forced to hold elections, which could lead to a Hamas victory in the West Bank and more organized terrorism in the heart of Israel.

The Oslo Accords also produced the Palestinian National Security Forces (NSF), an internal Palestinian police force. Israel and the NSF coordinate on security issues, counterterrorism operations, and intelligence sharing, primarily against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad activities in the West Bank.

The relationship has been strained for years, leading Israel to take a more active role in counterterrorism efforts in the Palestinian territories. Abbas, however, believes, "If we give up security coordination there will be chaos here. There will be rifles, and explosions and armed militants popping up everywhere and rushing at Israel. Without the coordination, a bloody intifada would break out."²

Yet the PA shells out nearly \$3 million a month to Arab families of terrorists killed attacking Israelis. These payments only encourage more terrorism.

There is as much uncertainty about the future of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank as there is about the future of the Palestinians in Gaza. Whom will they elect in the coming years? Will they choose a leader who wants peace with Israel or one who will turn the West Bank into another launching pad for terrorism?

Meanwhile, tiny Israel remains surrounded by enemies in the north, south, and east. Today, Iran is Israel's greatest threat. In Tehran they chant, "Death to Israel!" as Iran funds and trains terrorists and supplies powerful weapons to Hezbollah and Hamas on Israel's borders.

We don't know what Hamas will look like in the future, but it's unlikely that its antisemitic, anti-Israel ideology will disappear. That is why we must turn to the God of Israel, who promises Israel will never be destroyed (Jer. 31:35-40).

God said, "I will bring them back to this place, and I will

cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul" (32:37-38, 41). To that we say amen and amen. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 Article Thirty-One, "Hamas Covenant 1988," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School <avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp>.
- 2 Barak Ravid, "Abbas: Security Coordination With Israel Preventing 'A Bloody Intifada,'" Haaretz, March 31, 2016 <tinyurl.com/Abbas-ss>.



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To hear Chris Katulka share a closer look into this article, visit foi.org/indepth.



* IDF Givati Brigade commander in a Hamas terror tunnel



Why Israel's boundaries
have yet to be sealed

BORDERING

ON NORMAL

by Elliot Jager

Israel is bordered by Lebanon and Syria in the north, Jordan in the east, the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and Egypt in the south. No map, however, conveys the unsettled nature of these borders.

The country's frontiers have been in flux since Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration and the ensuing San Remo Conference (1920) that assigned the Palestine Mandate to Britain. Both envisioned the Jewish national homeland as encompassing today's Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and Jordan. But in 1922, the British lopped off the territory east of the Jordan River to create Transjordan.

On November 9, 1947, the UN General Assembly partitioned western Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, charting the borders of each. The Arabs rejected outright a Jewish state, waging war to crush it immediately after the new state declared its independence on May 14, 1948.

Israel's position was that the war's outcome—not the Partition Plan—would define its boundaries. However, wrote historian Tom Segev in his book 1949: *The First Israelis*, U.S. President Harry Truman insisted Israel pull back on all fronts to the partition lines.

The Palestinians have persistently fought against Israel. As they claim in the 1988 Hamas Covenant (Article 11) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Charter (Article 2), the land between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan belongs solely to them and the Muslim world. The Arab states have taken a more nuanced position.

Egypt

As Arab-Israeli hostilities waned at the end of 1948, UN mediator Ralph Bunche facilitated talks on the Greek island of Rhodes, resulting in an armistice line between Egypt and Israel. The fighting ended on January 7, 1949. Truce talks began five days later.

Egyptian King Farouk's delegation agreed on an "armistice demarcation line" based on the military situation on the ground on February 24, 1949. Cairo insisted this Green Line not be construed as a political boundary, recalled Walter Eytan in his book *The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel*.

Farouk was deposed on July 23, 1952, in a coup led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Around 1955, Egypt's military decided to make Gaza (which it occupied provisionally) a base for "state-organized Fedayeen" raids, according to historian Benny Morris. Nasser declared, "There will be no peace on Israel's border. . . . We demand . . . Israel's death."

Fedayeen attacks and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) retaliations culminated in the 1956 Sinai Campaign in which Israel captured Gaza and the Sinai. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower pressured Israel to withdraw in 1957.

Israel captured Sinai and Gaza again in the 1967 Six-Day War. The 1973 Yom Kippur War did not much change the map—although, in 1974, the IDF partially pulled back in Sinai.

In November 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat ended the state of war by visiting Israel. The 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty established an internationally recognized border along the 128-mile-long Negev-Sinai line. In April 1982, Israel completed its withdrawal from Sinai. Successive Egyptian governments have honored the pact, though infiltrations are a recurring problem.

Gaza

The Israel-Gaza border has long been a powder keg, save from June 1967 when Israel recaptured Gaza until Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords in September 1993. A 1994 annex set the Israel-Gaza boundary. Gaza has a separate border with Egypt.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Gaza in July 1994. In October 2001, early in the Arafat-initiated Second Intifada, Palestinians launched rockets at Jewish settlements inside the Gaza Strip. In September 2005, as the intifada faded, Israel disengaged from Gaza, dismantling settlements and pulling out the IDF.

In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian elections and, by June 2007, had banished the PLO from the Strip. Hamas has since instigated wars and frequent rounds of lower-level fighting. While seeking to keep war material from reaching Hamas, Israel supplies Gaza and its 2 million denizens with fuel and allows produce, medicine, and manufactured goods to traverse the border.

Some 150,000 Gazans worked inside Israel prior to October 7, 2023, when Hamas overran the border in a massive attack on the Jewish state, brutally slaughtering more than 1,200 innocent Israelis, including infants and children, and kidnapping more than 240 civilians.

Jordan

King Abdullah's delegation went to Rhodes in 1949 for show. In secret, the monarch was personally negotiating with Israel in one of his palaces. After each round of talks, under darkness, the Israeli delegation crossed back into western Jerusalem. On April 3, 1949, Abdullah's delegation in Rhodes signed the deal he had reached with Israel. The monarch saw the truce as a stepping stone to a possible peace.

Jordan annexed the West Bank in December 1949, incensing the Palestinians. On July 20, 1951, while King Abdullah was heading to pray at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, the Palestinian former Mufti Amin al-Husseini had him assassinated.

In 1953, Abdullah's son Hussein became king. The Green Line of 1949 became the de facto boundary. Reneging on Jordan's commitments, Hussein prevented Israelis from reaching the Old City and Hadassah Hospital, the National Library, and Hebrew University, all on Mount Scopus. Jordan refused Christian pilgrims entry to the Old City via the Mandelbaum Gate checkpoint if their passports were stamped by Israeli border authorities.

Jordan lost the West Bank and Jerusalem to Israel in 1967. Bowing to pressure in 1988, Hussein turned over responsibility for the West Bank to the PLO. And in October 1994, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Hussein signed a peace treaty giving Israel an internationally recognized border with Jordan. A treaty annex asserted that Amman does not recognize Israel's control of the West Bank.

West Bank

This is biblical Judea and Samaria. Israel has tried to erase the Green Line here since taking the area in 1967. As part of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the IDF withdrew from Palestinian cities, handing them to the Palestinian Authority.

Some 3 million Arabs live in the territory. In 1997, Israel pulled out of Hebron save for enclaves near the Cave of the Patriarchs.

In 2002, during the Second Intifada, Israeli official Ariel Sharon ordered the construction of a security fence along parts of the Green Line to deter terrorists.

Jerusalem

The UN Partition Plan called for the city's internationalization. But after the 1948–49 war, eastern Jerusalem

and its Old City fell to Jordan.

Israel declared western Jerusalem its capital in December 1949. After the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel extended its sovereignty over the unified city and incorporated Arab neighborhoods, enfolding them into the municipality's boundaries. During the Second Intifada, construction (still unfinished) began on a barrier sealing off greater Jerusalem from the West Bank.

On July 30, 1980, Israel's Knesset declared united Jerusalem as Israel's capital. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017. Israel never annexed Jerusalem; its Arab residents (40 percent of the population) are not Israeli citizens.

Lebanon

In 1949, neither Lebanese President Bechara al-Khoury nor Prime Minister Riad Bey el Solh seemed interested in prolonging the conflict with Israel. Christians were then a plurality of Lebanon's population (at least on paper).

Armistice talks were held at Rosh Hanikra and signed on March 23, 1949. Israel returned to the international border, which remained quiet until PLO forces moved from Jordan to southern Lebanon in 1970. Israel ousted them in the 1982 War. Iran's infiltration of Lebanon's Shi'ite Arabs compelled Israel to retain a buffer zone until May 2000. A "blue line" drawn by the UN separates the countries.

Hezbollah, Iran's proxy, has instigated repeated rounds of fighting. It claims territory for Lebanon on the formerly Syrian, now Israeli, Golan Heights. In October 2022, under Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, Jerusalem and Beirut agreed (with Hezbollah's nod) on a maritime border, enabling oil exploration by both countries.

Syria

In 1949, Syrian General Husni Zaim took charge of the country after a bloodless coup. Syria had captured territory on the Israeli side of the international boundary. Notwithstanding public bellicosity, Zaim sent word to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion that he sought a clandestine meeting to discuss peace and resettling 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria in return for border adjustments.

Ben-Gurion would not meet Zaim until he first agreed that the armistice lines run along the international border. After contentious talks in a stifling tent at the foot of the Golan Heights, a deal was reached on March



**For the
Palestinians,
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borders; it's
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existence.**

23, 1949. On August 14, 1949, Zaim was killed in a coup. Damascus insisted that Israeli territory along its border with Syria's Golan Heights be demilitarized and undeveloped. Syria's army periodically shot at Israelis draining the Huleh Valley and developing the National Water Carrier.

In 1967, Israel captured the Heights. During its surprise 1973 attack, Syria retook parts of the Golan. In May 1974, an area of separation patrolled by the UN was created, with Israel ceding the town of Kuneitra. On December 14, 1981, the Knesset annexed the Golan; in 2019, the Trump Administration recognized the annexation.

Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon (before Hezbollah's ascendancy) took a real-politik approach to Israel's existence and were willing to talk about boundaries. For the Palestinians, the issue isn't borders; it's Israel's very existence. Syria takes its cue from them and Iran. So, Israel will not enjoy recognized borders until the Palestinians have a change of heart. ★



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CAN A CHRISTIAN'S NAME BE ERASED FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE?

In Revelation 3:5, the apostle John wrote, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life."

The Book of Life is the divine register of souls whose names are recorded in heaven. Jesus Christ acknowledges that those individuals are saved from eternal condemnation and redeemed by grace through faith in Him.

The word *overcomes* does not mean believers are redeemed by works. Rather, those who are born again by faith in Jesus are overcomers (1 Jn. 5:4-5). Anyone who has been born of God overcomes this evil world through faith in Christ.

Jesus makes three promises to each overcomer:

1. He or she "shall be clothed in white garments" (Rev. 3:5), a symbol of purity, righteousness, and salvation.
2. Christ will "confess his name before [His] Father and before His angels" (v. 5). The Lord grants believers heavenly citizenship in the eternal state. Jesus is their Advocate before God the Father (1 Jn. 2:1) and will acknowledge their names before Him (Mt. 10:32).
3. The Lord "will not blot out his name from the Book of Life" (Rev. 3:5). This verse does not mean those who have received Jesus as Savior can lose their salvation and have their names erased from the Book of Life, as some interpret the text. In fact, the opposite is true. The word *not* (Greek, *ou me*) forms a double negative with "blot out," meaning under no circumstances can true believers in Christ have their names blotted out of the Book of Life.

Theologian Robert Thomas wrote,

Another understanding is to take the "blotting out" as an example of litotes, a figure of speech in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of a contrary statement. Coming by way of a denial of the opposite, this is an understatement to express emphatically the assurance that the overcomer's name will be retained in the book of life. The purpose of the promise is to provide certainty and assurance to those who are "worthy" (cf. v. 4), not to indicate anything about the fate of those who do not overcome.¹

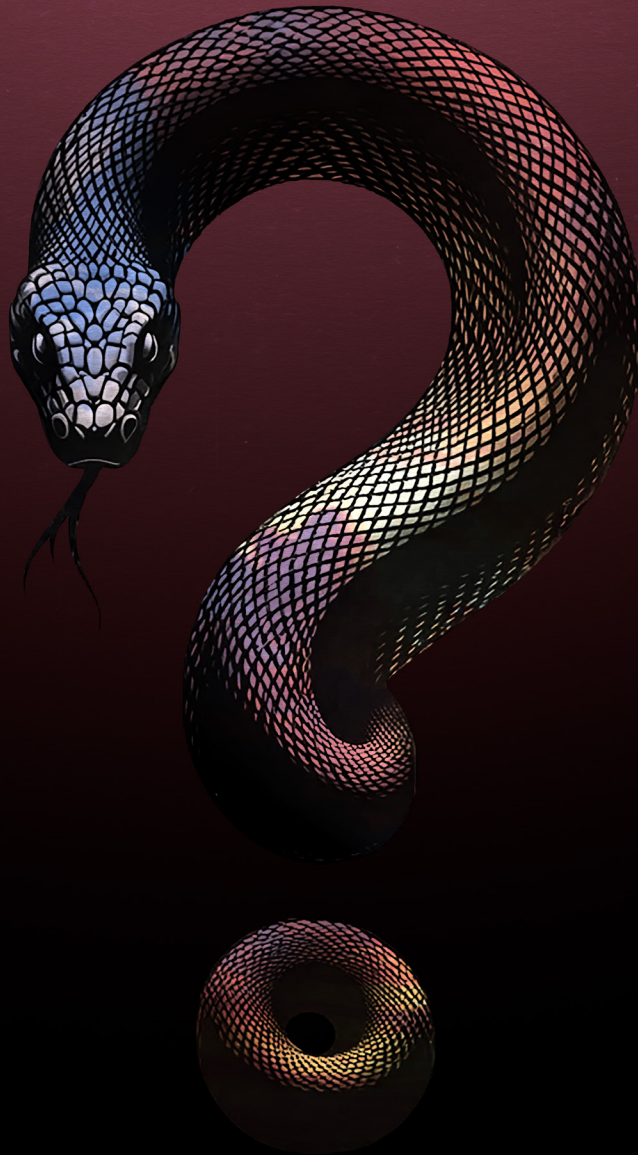
Thus, God promises He will never blot out a believer's name from the Book of Life. True believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). Those whom God the Father gives the Son will never be lost and have "passed from death into life" (Jn. 5:24; cf. 6:37, 39; 10:27-30).

ENDNOTE

¹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 261.

by David M. Levy

The Million-Dollar Question



For millennia, the Jewish people have struggled to survive; and many people wonder why.

by Meno Kalisher

Israel is always at the center of conflict. Will there ever be true peace—*shalom*—in the Middle East?

This is the million-dollar question, and answering it demands returning to the first pages of the book of Genesis and understanding the first conflict revealed in God's Word.

In Genesis 3, we meet Satan, who succeeded in causing Eve and Adam to fall into sin. Who is this Evil One? Where did he come from? And what is his agenda?

SATAN'S SCHEME

According to the Jewish prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, Satan was created as a perfect archangel and was named *Hailen Ben-Shahar*, meaning "Day star, son of Dawn" (Hebrew, הילל בן שחר; Isa. 14:12).¹ However, he was not satisfied with God's task for him and desired to be like God (v. 14).

Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against their contemporary, prideful, Gentile kings (king of Babel and king of Tyre), who, like Satan, were discontented with what God orchestrated for their lives. Both prophets described Satan (Isa. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:13–15) as an example of how futile it is to attempt to stand against God and aspire to get what He did not design for you. Satan's end (like that of the kings of Babel and Tyre) is what awaits everyone who follows and adopts Satan's pride.²

What did Satan do to accomplish his wicked plan? As Andrew Woods wrote, "Satan's success in inciting Adam and Eve's rebellion effectively removed the office of Theocratic Administration from the earth, as Satan at that point became the ruler of the world (Luke 4:5–8; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:14–15; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19)."³

God's response to this event is detailed in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

From the moment Satan understood that his defeat would be executed by the Seed of the woman, his primary goal was to annihilate every

single human link from which this promised Seed would come. Since the Seed was to come through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and the family of David—who are the people of Israel—Satan did and still does his utmost to destroy the promised line and the nation of Israel in its entirety.

Throughout history, the Evil One has utilized a devastatingly repetitive pattern:

- Egypt's Pharaoh commanded that all males born of the Hebrews be killed (Ex. 1).
- The Edomites tried to annihilate the Israelites and possess their Promised Land (Ezek. 35:1–10; Obad. 1).
- Haman offered Persian King Ahasuerus an attractive sum of money to murder all the Jewish people in the Persian kingdom (Est. 3:5–11).
- Antiochus Epiphanes (171–164 BC) tried to destroy the Jews (see 1 and 2 Maccabees).
- Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany tried to do likewise.
- Today, many nations religiously believe erasing Israel and the Jewish people from the world is their God-given command. Satan continues to pursue his evil plan.

SATAN'S FIXATION

Shimon Peres, Israel's late prime minister, president, and Nobel Peace Prize winner (1994), declared in a speech that the foundation for true and lasting peace in the Middle East lies in advancing education and developing a prosperous economy that offers equal opportunities for Jews and Arabs. Most, if not all, world leaders agreed with him.

Though these factors produce many advantages, none is able to change the sinful nature of human beings and heal the broken relationship between us and a holy God. Therefore, any peace without God is a launching pad for the next war (see Joshua 9:14). A sobering proof is described in Ezekiel 38.

The prophet described Israel's land and people in the future, when they will enjoy a peaceful era with open borders and no fear. However, we've already established that Satan is fixed on destroying everything that is good and that is

of God, which is why he will use Israel's enemies as his pawns to overcome Israel and satisfy their (and his) evil intent.

Gog, with his nefarious partners, will mobilize a coalition to conquer and loot Israel. Daniel 9:27 foretells that Antichrist, Satan's henchman, will confirm a covenant with many at the beginning of a seven-year period of tribulation. This false peace (1 Th. 5:3) will mark the start of an unprecedented worldwide disaster that will end with the annihilation of almost two-thirds of the world's population.⁴

No matter what angle you take to look at these events, they still all point again and again to Israel and Jerusalem. Why? Because from the moment God declared

great things will take place:

- All God's enemies will perish (Isa. 63:1–6; Zech. 14:1–11; Rev. 19).
- The remnant of Israel will be saved and call on Yeshua's name (Zech. 12:10; Mt. 23:39; Rom. 11:26).
- Christ Jesus will establish His holy, righteous Kingdom on Earth (Ps. 2:6–9; Isa. 11; Dan. 12:12; Rev. 20–22). This will be a wonderful time of true, lasting peace for Israel—and for the world.

Should we wait for the future to enjoy God's peace? The Lord Jesus told people who have trusted Him for salvation, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27).



No matter what angle you take to look at these events, they still all point again and again to Israel and Jerusalem. Why? Because from the moment God declared Jerusalem to be His, Satan's fixation has been to destroy God's Chosen People and rule the world from Jerusalem.

Jerusalem to be His ("The city of the great King," Ps. 48:2),⁵ Satan's fixation has been to destroy God's Chosen People and rule the world from Jerusalem. Furthermore, in his attempt to present himself as God, Satan will create a pseudo trinity with himself as the father, the Antichrist (false messiah) as the son of God, and the false prophet as the Holy Spirit (Rev. 13; 16:13).

HUMANITY'S HOPE

In light of such events, is there any hope for Israel and humanity? Let's return to the beginning, where Adam and Eve enjoyed peace with God. Due to their sin, that peace disappeared. The consequences of sin are death and separation from God; but in His righteousness and grace, God made a way for us to reconcile with Him in true, eternal peace (Isa. 53:6; Jn 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The path to world peace (and the hope for humanity) must start with the individual restoration of peace with God through Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1–17; 10:8–9). And what about Israel?

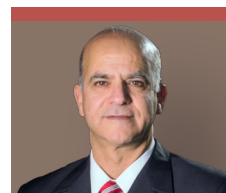
The Bible teaches that the world will enjoy peace only after Jesus (Hebrew, *Yeshua*) returns to Earth at the end of the seven years of tribulation. Then, many

Paul the apostle wrote, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

God's peace is available to us right now. But we must come to Him; confess our sinfulness; and place our faith in the Lord Jesus, who willingly endured the punishment for our sin so that we could have eternal life with God. ★

ENDNOTES

- 1 The KJV and NKJV translate *Hailel* as "Lucifer."
- 2 Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 6:105, 882.
- 3 Andrew M. Woods, *The Coming Kingdom* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2016), 7–8.
- 4 The fourth seal judgment will kill one-quarter of the world's population (Rev. 6:8). The sixth trumpet judgment will kill one-third of the world's population (9:18), and the seven bowls (chap. 16) will increase the death toll.
- 5 See also Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 2:1–4; Daniel 11:45; Micah 4:1–5.



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IS THE BOOK OF JUDGES REALLY HISTORY? (CONCLUSION)

* Five Amarna Letters

➔ The book of Judges' historicity is crucial in determining the validity of Israel's residence in the Holy Land and, therefore, the Bible's trustworthiness. Previously, we considered why we must defend biblical history and examined the archaeological evidence that supports the historicity of Judges' account of Gideon. As we conclude our series, we'll study additional evidence demonstrating that the only logical conclusion is that the biblical account is true.

Judges begins with the Israelites' continued conquest of Canaanite cities, including Jerusalem (Judg. 1:8). However, the Israelites failed to completely drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem (v. 21).

The Amarna Letters, a collection of diplomatic correspondence between the Canaanite city-states and the Egyptian Pharaohs Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, corroborate this conquest.¹ In the letters, the Canaanites requested the pharaohs' help against an attacking force called the *habiru*, or *apiru*, a term describing "marauding nomads," including the Israelites, particularly those from the central highlands where they initially settled.² These calls for military assistance indicate the Israelites were taking over Canaanite highlands.

In Letter EA271, the king of Gezer appealed to save his land from the powerful *apiru*. Other letters state, "The land of the king [of Jerusalem] is lost" (EA 288) and "deserted to the *Hapiru*" (EA 290).³ These ancient documents fit the conflict of the conquest period.

Around 1209 BC, Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah, 13th son of Ramses II, quelled a revolt involving the Libyans, the Aegean Sea peoples, and displaced nomads from other Middle Eastern lands. To commemorate his victory, he set up four large stone *stelae* (monuments). On one *stela*, Merneptah listed Israel, along with the city-states of Ashkelon, Yenoam, and Gezer, as an entity that revolted in Canaan. Israel's inclusion with major Canaanite city-states indicates it was recognized as an established power.

However, its entry on the *stela* contains a hieroglyphic symbol denoting it not as a national entity but as an ethnic social group lacking fixed boundaries. This fact harmonizes with

the biblical data: Though the Israelites during the Judges period possessed their inheritance in the Land (2:6), they did not acquire political status until the time of the united kingdom.

Judges also records the spiritual decline of the second generation of Israelites living among the Canaanites (vv. 10–13). Joshua's failure to eliminate the Canaanites and their pagan worship (1:28) contaminated the Israelites. Surrounded by a more advanced and established civilization and never having experienced the miracles their forefathers witnessed, many Israelites adopted Canaanite gods. This spiritual decline resulted from envy for Canaanite fertility, attributed to their deities; less stringent

laws and rituals; and open, sensuous religious practices.

When Israel's judge Gideon destroyed his community's false idols (Ba'al and Asherah) and built a proper altar to the God of Israel, his people wanted to kill him (6:28–32). This fact fits with archaeological excavation of the conquest period. At Hazor, the Israelites cut off the heads and hands of Canaanite idols; but in the settlement period, Israelite residences featured cultic installations and foreign idols. It also agrees with the archaeological witness of a gradual change in the Promised Land from a more advanced building and pottery culture (Canaanite) to a less advanced style (Israelite).⁴ Israel did not immediately bring a distinctive material culture into Canaan but, as Scripture shows, introduced gradual changes in the native style.

As excavations in Israel unearth new evidence for the book of Judges' historical accuracy, archaeology continues to support the truth of the Bible.

ENDNOTES

- 1 William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), XXVI.
- 2 S. Douglas Waterhouse, "Who are the Habiru of the Amarna Letters?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 12/1 (2001): 31.
- 3 Bryant G. Wood, "From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus-Judges Period," *Associates for Biblical Research* (April 2, 2008) <tinyurl.com/AmarnaApiru>.
- 4 John Bimson and David Livingstone, "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeological Review* (September-October 1987), 52–53.



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PAUL'S TESTIMONY

PHILIPPIANS 3:4–11

Contending for the faith is not easy. It's an unpopular, perilous, thankless job. It is more pleasant to be an appeaser than an opposer.

The apostle Paul was no appeaser. He strongly opposed those who tried to subvert the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ and stood steadfast against people who tried to undermine freedom in Christ by adding practices taught by heretical Judaizers. Paul could show the price he paid for his faith by the physical scars he received from stoning, scourging, and other struggles he faced preaching the gospel.

Paul strongly denounced the Judaizers, who taught that Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved, calling them “dogs” and “evil workers” whose faith relied on a “mutilation” of the flesh (Phil. 3:2).

Believers should not put confidence in the flesh as proof of their salvation (v. 3). Salvation comes by grace, a gift of God, not of any human work (Eph. 2:8–9).

Paul exposed the futility of the Judaizers' teaching by giving his own transforming testimony.

TESTIMONY BEFORE SALVATION

If anyone could have boasted of his or her Jewish heritage as evidence of salvation, it was Paul. He said, “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so” (Phil. 3:4).

Paul then presented his exceptional, unrivaled testimony of being an Orthodox Jew before receiving Christ. It is probably the most thorough testimony in Scripture. If Jewish heritage could save a person, Paul would have deserved salvation more than most people for many reasons:

1. By ritual. Paul was “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock

of Israel” (v. 5), which the Law commanded of every newborn Jewish boy.

2. By race. Paul was not a proselyte to Judaism, like the Gentile Judaizers, but was born into “the stock of Israel” (v. 5; cf. Rom. 3:1–2; 9:4–5).

3. From a renowned tribe. Paul was “of the tribe of Benjamin” (Phil. 3:5). Benjamin was the younger of Jacob's two sons with Rachel. (God renamed Jacob “Israel,” Gen. 32:28.) Benjamin was the smallest of the 12 tribes of Israel. The two southern tribes, Benjamin and Judah, remained faithful to the Davidic dynasty when the 10 northern tribes separated from them after King Solomon's death. Saul, Israel's first king, was from Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:1), as were Mordecai and Esther (Est. 2:5).

4. By relationship. Paul was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5), tracing his pure Hebrew ancestry back to Abraham through Jacob and Isaac. He held to the Hebrew language and culture in contrast to the Hellenistic Jews who adopted the Greek language and culture in the Diaspora (Acts 6:1). Paul had remained dedicated to the Orthodox teachings of Judaism and studied under the great Rabbi Gamaliel (22:3; 26:4).

5. By religion. Paul identified himself as “concerning the law, a Pharisee” (Phil. 3:5; cf. Acts 23:6; 26:5). Pharisees strictly observed both the written Law and the minutiae of the oral law. Paul advanced in Judaism far beyond his contemporaries (Gal. 1:14).

6. By reputation. “Concerning zeal, [Paul persecuted] the church” (Phil. 3:6). As a Pharisee, he served God zealously but also persecuted Christians zealously and worked to destroy the early church (Acts 26:9–11). He even consented to stoning Stephen, a Jewish man who was martyred for his faith in Christ (22:20).

7. By righteousness. “Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, [Paul was] blameless” (Phil. 3:6). He did not live a sinless, Jewish life; but he kept all the Law's outward rules so completely that no one could accuse him of breaking the Mosaic Law or oral traditions required of a Pharisee.

Formerly known by the Hebrew name Saul, Paul had

BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT PUT CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH AS PROOF OF THEIR SALVATION. SALVATION COMES BY GRACE, A GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF ANY HUMAN WORK.

impeccable Jewish credentials that elevated him in the eyes of the Pharisees but did nothing to elevate him in the eyes of God. Saul was a sinful, sanctimonious, proud, and spiritually lost legalist in God's eyes (cf. Lk. 18:9–14); and before he could please God, he needed to stop trusting in his self-righteousness and trust in Jesus the Messiah alone for salvation.

TESTIMONY AFTER SALVATION

Saul met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. There, he learned he could not please God or acquire salvation merely by being born a Jew. He needed to receive Jesus as his Messiah (cf. Jn. 1:12–13). Through his interaction with the Lord, Saul repented of his sin and became born again, receiving new life in Christ (Acts 9:3–22). His name was changed to Paul, and his testimony changed in three major ways:

1. His priority. “What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3:7). The words *gain* and *loss* are accounting terms. Used here, they describe how Paul evaluated his life to that point. He called his Jewish qualifications

the “fellowship of His sufferings” (v. 10). Because of Jesus' perfect righteousness, He was hated, persecuted, and crucified. The more Paul partnered with Jesus' suffering, the more he experienced a deeper intimacy with Him and a greater compassion and love for the Lord and others.

After Paul's conversion, God instructed Ananias to tell him how much he would suffer for Jesus' sake (Acts 9:16). Yet, Paul never drew back from suffering for Christ.

His final desire was to be “conformed to His [Jesus'] death” (Phil. 3:10). The word *conformed* means to become like something or someone. Christ died to pay the price necessary to redeem sinners, which Paul could not do. But Paul could give his life to reach sinners with the gospel of Christ. As the apostle learned more about Jesus' life, resurrection power, and suffering for righteousness, he became conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, or made like Him (Rom. 8:29).

Putting off his old self, Paul wanted a new life of humility and self-denial through Christ's resurrection power. In so doing, Jesus' life would be lived out through Paul for all to see and imitate.

THE STRENGTH AND MIRACULOUS NATURE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION WERE EQUALED IN HUMAN HISTORY ONLY BY HIS INCARNATION. PAUL LONGED TO EXPERIENCE THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST'S INEXHAUSTIVE POWER.

“rubbish” (the Greek word means “dung” or “excrement”), something worthless and detestable compared to what he received in Christ (v. 8).

2. His passion. “[To] be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ” (v. 9). Paul valued God's gift of righteousness through saving faith in Christ alone above any pseudo righteousness he could acquire by keeping the Jewish Law (cf. Rom. 3:21–26).

3. His purpose. “That I may know Him” (Phil. 3:10). The word *know* (Greek, *ginosko*) indicates Paul knew Christ not only intellectually but also experientially as he yielded his life to Him. Paul desired deeper knowledge and spiritual intimacy with Christ.

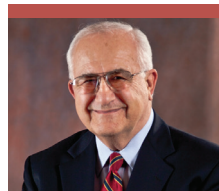
He wanted to experience many things concerning Christ and to know the “power of His resurrection” (v. 10). The strength and miraculous nature of Jesus' resurrection were equaled in human history only by His incarnation. Paul longed to experience the fullness of Christ's inexhaustive power.

The Jewish apostle also desired to become a joint heir in

The apostle completed his thought by saying, “If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:11). Paul did not doubt he would be resurrected. He used the word *if* with assurance that he would join the resurrection of believers. This was Paul's desire, assurance, and goal.

Paul's desire to know Christ fully is wrapped up in his testimony, one filled with zeal, passion, and commitment. This Jewish man underwent an amazing transformation. He maintained unrivaled adherence to Orthodox Jewish teaching before meeting the risen Messiah on the Damascus road. Then he thoroughly submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

May Paul's testimony become our testimony as we live our Christian lives for all to see.



by David M. Levy,

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

WHEN THE WALK BECOMES A CRAWL

BY LINDA CRAFT

Who among us hasn't experienced both the mountaintops and gullies of life? Sometimes we know unspeakable joy, and other times we walk through dark valleys. At the moment, I write from a deep, dark valley, one such as I have never known before, as my life has been a wonderful one, characterized more accurately by King David when he wrote, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places" (Ps. 16:6).

As a friend, relative, spouse, and Bible-study leader, I have sincerely but ignorantly offered oft-used Christian clichés to people undergoing great trials. The phrases sounded pious and are easy to repeat. But when someone is enduring the empty despair of a valley, these words can fall on deaf ears.

I have told people, "Everything will work out for your good and God's glory." I know this to be true because it's based in Scripture: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

However, what we consider our "good" sometimes looks much different than what God knows is good for us.

COUNTING THE COST OF FAITH

Many Christians believe that if they walk in fellowship with the Lord, their trials will be minimal and short-lived. But God has not made us this promise, regardless of how much faith we have.

True faith is costly. Concerning men and women who walked by faith, the author of Hebrews wrote,

Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was

not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground (11:36–38, NIV).

Living for Jesus does not assure a trouble-free "happily ever after" in this earthly life. But Jesus assures us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5), and, "In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

The people who experienced the brutal fates described in Hebrews 11 are the ones Scripture lists as the greatest examples of true faith.

Nevertheless, well-meant optimism is not always comforting for those who are suffering. I remember several times in my women's Bible studies when someone requested prayer for physical health. There always seemed to be at least one member of our group who responded, "Don't worry; I know God is going to heal you." I'm not sure what prompts such a response, but that statement isn't always true; and I don't believe it constitutes faith.

In the furnace of affliction, we cannot look only for pleasant outcomes. We need the kind of conviction that the three young Hebrews had in Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace (Dan. 3).

While the Jewish people suffered under Babylonian captivity, Nebuchadnezzar condemned three God-fearing Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (in Hebrew, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah)—to be thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down and worship a gold image he had set up. Although they believed the God of Israel was able to deliver them from the flames (v. 17), they also told the king that even if God didn't rescue them, they would not serve any other gods (v. 18).

The young men wanted a good outcome. They believed God

could preserve them. But they displayed true, deep trust in the Lord when they placed their lives unconditionally in His hands. They weren't like the woman in my Bible study who guaranteed God would heal the sick. Instead, they said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us" (v. 17).

That's the type of faith Abraham had when he prepared to offer up his own son Isaac in obedience to God (Gen. 22). That's the type of faith the apostle Paul had when he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). That's the type of faith Jesus had in the Garden of Gethsemane when, anticipating His death, He told God the Father, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42).

FINDING FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

I've been searching for a good outcome in my struggles with illness and grief. Sometimes I think I see a light at the end of this dark tunnel. But before my spirit lifts, the tunnel collapses; and I fall back into despondency.

Then I'm reminded that so many of those who were commended for their faith never saw the earthly fulfillment of the things they were promised. Instead, they "waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), looking for their eternal rewards.

Sometimes our anguish is so great that tears can't even form, and our emotion-numbing disheartenment makes it difficult to breathe. I think of people who have lost spouses or whose children died young. Where can we turn when life is at its toughest, when our walk with the Lord becomes a crawl?

In the midst of my circumstances, I remind myself that my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is my everything. My faith is rooted in Him. My hope and joy are found in Him. He orders my life, meets my needs, gives me strength, forgives my sins, and promises to stay with me forever.

He knows my thoughts, feels my pain, and guides my path. He shelters me from my storms and anchors me to Himself. He renews my mind, touches my heart, and secures my soul eternally. The whole world is at His command, and my allegiance is due to Him alone—now and forever.

PURSUING THE PERFECT LIGHT

Even when we can't feel His presence, God is with us. David wrote, "The darkness and the light are both alike" to the Lord (Ps. 139:12), and "even the night shall be light" around Him (v. 11). He acknowledged before God that, even at the ends of the earth, "Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (v. 10).

God sees His beloved children crawl across the rocky ground with skinned knees, raw palms, and broken hearts. Even when we can't see the Light, we can be sure He's there (Jn. 8:12).

Dark times can render us helpless and weak, tempting us

In the midst of my circumstances, I remind myself that my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is my everything.

to think our faith is worthless because things are not turning out the way we want. But it's at those times we should be running—or crawling—to God. When we do, our relationship with Him becomes more intimate because we've trusted in Him rather than in ourselves. We can hold onto this faith for our entire lives.

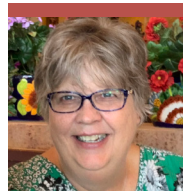
Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:16–18).

I pray that God will help me endure my hardships. I pray He will help me regain my footing and lift my head heavenward once again, walking with joy and purpose. I pray I can again bound across spiritual mountaintops, feasting on His goodness and grace instead of crawling through the valley of sorrow, scraping and struggling for a glimpse of victory.

I'd like to push a "help-I've-fallen-and-I-can't-get-up" button and receive instant aid. Graciously, God has given me such a device in the form of praying friends—friends who don't give false assurances or offer unfounded hope or cheap promises. They pray for me when I struggle to pray for myself. Perhaps you have such friends too.

If you are struggling today with burdens that feel too great to bear, find those truly godly friends who can bear them with you; and pray to God with trust and humility. Then, you can repeat David's words, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4).

Through the study of God's Word, train yourself to focus your eyes on the Lord whom, one day, we shall behold face to face.



Linda Craft

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

TIME TO DISMANTLE UNRWA?

BY ISRAEL KASNETT

(JNS)—The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has come under intense scrutiny following the revelation that approximately 10% of its 12,000 workers in Gaza are linked to Hamas, and at least 12 participated directly in the terrorist group’s October 7, 2023, massacre in Israel.

According to Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, an organization that monitors educational curricula in the Middle East, UNRWA is actually radicalizing Gaza. “UNRWA failed in its duty of care,” he said, and is “complicit in the radicalization of all its students in its schools.” According to IMPACT-se, there are 183 UNRWA-run schools across the Gaza Strip, educating more than 286,000 students.

UNRWA also has perpetuated the Palestinian refugee problem, granting Palestinians the unique right to inherit their refugee status—a prerogative no other refugee group in the world is given. This policy has allowed the number of refugees, initially around 700,000 after 1948, to surge to nearly 6 million today.

U.S. President Donald Trump ended U.S. funding to UNRWA in 2018. However, the Biden administration restored funding and in July 2022 announced it had given more money to UNRWA than any other entity in the world had. The United States usually gives UNRWA between \$300 million and \$400 million annually.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said he was “horried” that UNRWA staff participated in the October 7 massacre and vowed to hold to account “any UN employee involved in acts of terror.” However, he condemned calls to dismantle the agency, saying that while the “abhorrent alleged acts of these staff members must have consequences,” the tens of thousands of other UNRWA employees “should not be penalized.”

After the allegations against the UN agency were made public, the United States and a number of other major donor countries suspended aid to UNRWA.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said he was “shocked such decisions are taken based on alleged behavior of a few individuals.” Others decried what they perceive as “collective punishment” of UNRWA based on the actions of a few bad people.

However, testifying before Congress, Sheff said, “These



* U.S. Secretary Antony J. Blinken (left) with UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini (right)

extremist views go way beyond a handful of individuals. They are endemic to the institution.” Elsewhere in the Middle East, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, and Israel, peace is promoted in school curriculum and textbooks.

“We look at the region, and extremist UNRWA schools stand increasingly alone,” he said. “The majority of terrorists who breached the border and murdered, raped, and abducted [Israeli civilians] on October 7 were graduates of these UNRWA schools. They were taught jihad and martyrdom, and . . . they were educated to commit these terrible acts of violence in these schools supported by the international community.

“If we want to prevent the next massacre, if we want to dream of peace, then UNRWA can play no further part in Palestinian education,” he added.

UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer asked Congress to “take the lead in dissolving this agency,” saying, “For the past nine years . . . we’ve been uncovering, publishing, and submitting to the United Nations, to UNRWA, evidence of widespread and systematic incitement to jihadi terrorism, the praise of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, [and] calls to slaughter Jews on the part of UNRWA teachers, school principals, and other employees.”

Blaise Misztal, vice president of policy at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, said, “The days of UNRWA should be over, in much the same way that the days of Hamas ruling Gaza should be over. We can’t go back to the status quo.”

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*
Zvi and his wife, Naomi

PHOTO: THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL ARCHIVES

“ I am only reading what is in the Holy Bible, and the Bible is truth.

by Zvi Kalisher

My Arab neighbors often come to my home to speak about spiritual matters. When they cannot answer my questions, they tell me they will come back next week to continue our important conversation; but they never do. So I was surprised when they came to my home a few weeks ago to continue a previous discussion.

“We spoke with our sheikhs about what you said, that you received the land of Israel from the Lord your God,” one said. “But this is a dirty lie you and your rabbis believe. Our priests teach us the truth, yet you still believe your God gave you this land.”

“This God is not only my God but the mighty God of the whole earth,” I said.

The men were upset. One said, “Show me where it is written in your Bible that the Lord has given this land to you, His ‘Chosen People,’ and where it is named Israel.”

“I am glad you asked me this question!” I replied. “If I show you where this is written in the Holy Bible, will you believe?”

“Yes, we will believe,” one answered, “if we can read it in our own language.”

I opened my Arabic Bible to Genesis 13 and showed them where the Lord said to Abraham, “All the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever” (v. 15).

They were surprised by this passage. One argued, “This cannot be right. You have taken our land and claimed that God has given it to you, and you have given it the name ‘Israel.’ Show us if it is written in other passages of the Bible that God has given you this land.”

“Why did the Lord give His Chosen People Israel this land?” I asked. “The Lord said to Abraham in Genesis 17:8, ‘I give to you and your descendants after

you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

“How long will you keep lying?” one of them asked me.

“I am only reading what is in the Holy Bible, and the Bible is truth,” I said. “What the Lord has said lasts forever.”

“So you believe everything written here is the truth?”

“Yes, it is,” I said. “It is clearly written that the Word of the Lord is eternal.”

“Of course you say these things so that we will believe you, but it is just a well-told lie. If this is written in the Bible as you say it is, show us where it is written.”

I opened to Psalm 119:89 and read to them, “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” They grew more interested and asked more questions. After much conversation, one of them asked, “Can you give us your Bible so we can study it?”

I gave it to them, and they opened to the New Testament. They were puzzled.

“How can you say you only believe in the Bible when you have the New Testament here?” one asked. “We have spent so much time with you to learn more about the Bible, and now you tell us you read the New Testament? How did you come to read this? Do you consider this to be the Word of God also?”

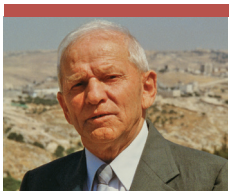
“Yes, I do,” I replied. I directed them to Isaiah 53:5–6, where it is written, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (v. 5). Then I asked, “Do you know who is the One who was pierced for our transgressions?”

They could not answer; but one of them asked, “Do you know in whom you believe?”

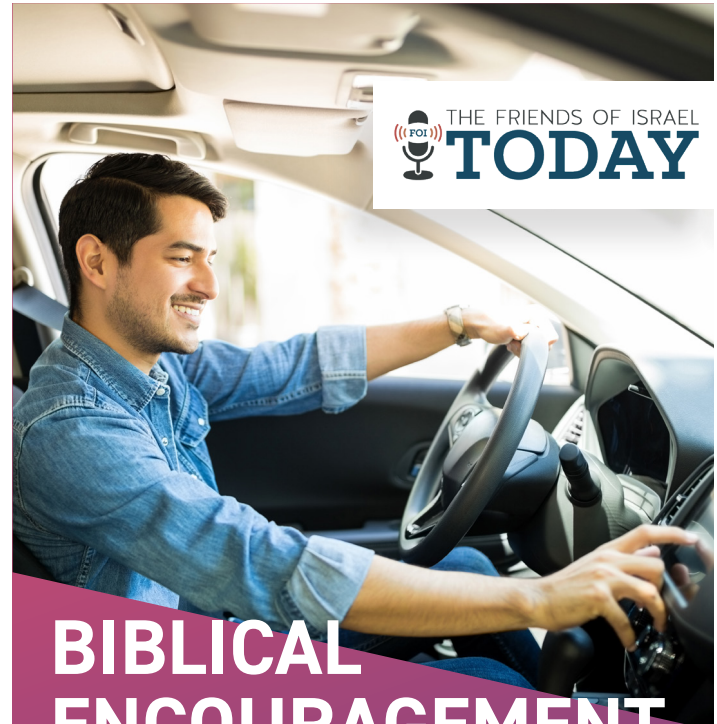
“I believe in the living God, and this passage is written about Him,” I said.

They wanted to know how I learned this, so I showed them the entire chapter of Isaiah 53 and told them to read it so they would know to whom the passage refers. They studied the chapter for a long time before asking me more questions for several hours. But I was happy to listen to them and answer their questions so they would come to know my Savior, Jesus, in whom I have believed.

From The Friends of Israel archives



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



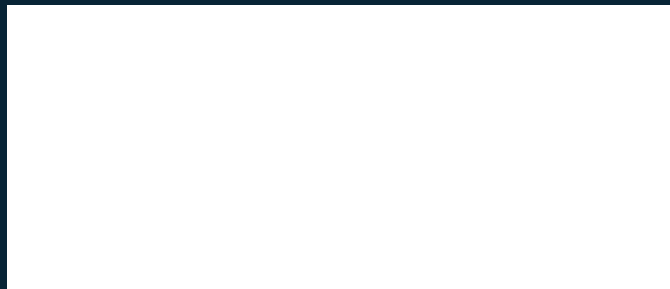
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