

# The Surprising Question God Asks You Before He Heals You

*“Do you want to be healed?” (John 5:6).*

Jesus didn't ask the man beside the pool of Bethesda, “Do you need to be healed?” But “Do you want to be healed?” There was no preliminary introduction or social niceties or even casual conversation, just a Stranger asking a question that would seem to have had a very obvious answer. Surely, without question, anyone who was a paralytic would want to be able to walk.

But Jesus knew that it's easy for physical weakness and mental depression and a lifetime of hopelessness to rob a man of his willingness to do anything about it. It would be less demanding in many ways for the man to be carried about by others. His paralysis absolved him from taking responsibility in life.

Jesus knows one of the greatest barriers to our faith is often our unwillingness to be made whole—our unwillingness to live without excuse for our spiritual smallness and immaturity. And so the question He asked was very relevant then and still is today: “Do you want to be healed?” {eoa}

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# The Connection Between Christians and the Jewish High Holidays

With Rosh HaShanah and the beginning of the High Holidays only a few days away, I thought I would review some of my material on this from the perspective of a Christ follower.

It should be of no shock that the early believers, both Jew and Gentile, celebrated the festivals of Israel even after coming to Messiah. This included the celebration of Rosh HaShanah and fasting on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is to Judaism what Christmas is to Christianity; just as many Christians go to church on Christmas—even if they never enter a church throughout the rest of the year—so too, most Jews fast on Yom Kippur and attend synagogue services. It is a cultural and spiritual landmark. Not surprisingly then, we find a passing reference to this fast in the book of Acts:

*“Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, “Men, I perceive that this voyage will be with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives” (Acts 27:9–10, NKJV).*

“The Fast” referenced here is Yom Kippur. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra assumes that Luke would not have used the term “the Fast” as a calendaric reference unless he himself was keeping the fast and assumed that his readers were as well:

I cannot help but draw the conclusion that Luke himself and his implied readers observed Yom Kippur. Why else would Luke use a “Jewish calendaric reference for a secular problem?” He clearly presumes that his readers will understand what he is referring to.

Scholars speculate that the readers of Acts were Gentiles like Luke himself. In order for Luke's readers to understand such a passing reference, they must have been observing Yom Kippur. Indirect evidence can be found in the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is packed with allusions to the rituals and themes of the high holidays. The apocalyptic imagery—the day of judgment, the books of judgment, the blast of trumpets, the Temple scenes, and so forth—are all borrowed directly from the traditional observance of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. John addressed the book of Revelation to seven communities in Asia Minor, constituted predominantly of Gentiles.

If those communities were not celebrating the high holidays along with the Jewish community, they would have been ill-prepared to decipher the book of Revelation, just as the church is today. Records of Gentile believers celebrating Yom Kippur appear in later church literature. The late second-century Epistle to Diognetus rails against Christians who observe Jewish laws such as “the Fast.” Origen mentions Christians fasting on Yom Kippur:

Whence also we must say something now to those who think that in virtue of the commandments of the Law they must practice the fast of the Jews (Homily on Leviticus 12:2 [Barkley]).

He mentions another case, again involving Caesarean Christians, in his Homilies on Jeremiah, proving that this is not an isolated instance; there must have been at least several groups of Gentile Christians in the third century still celebrating this major feast day of Judaism. In the late fourth century, John Chrysostom is still denouncing those who “join the Jews in keeping their festivals and observing their fasts.”

Further witness to this phenomenon can be found in the fifth-century medieval church practice of the Fast of the Seventh Month. This fast formed part of the Ember Days and was one of

the most solemn days of the church's liturgical year. Scholars see this fast as the result of the Christianization of Yom Kippur.

In other words, because many Christian Gentiles were celebrating Yom Kippur, as the church began to split from Judaism, Christianity slowly transformed it into a solely Christian fast in the month of September. This is similar to the transformation of Passover into Easter.

The fifth-century theologian and pope Leo the Great wrote: *"We proclaim the holy Fast of the Seventh Month, dearly-beloved, for the exercise of common devotions, confidently inciting you with fatherly exhortations to make Christian by your observance that which was formerly Jewish"* (Sermon 90:1).

In this we once again see that many Gentile believers celebrated Yom Kippur, so much so that it remained even after the parting of the ways began to take place between Judaism and Christianity. {eoa}

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## 6 Lies the Devil Uses to Condemn You

I have a friend who is a gifted worship leader, a loving husband and an affectionate father. He's funny, smart, passionate about his faith and wholeheartedly committed to his church. People who know him say he's a model Christian.

But underneath this joyful exterior is a lot of pain. He struggles with depression, and then he condemns himself because Christians are supposed to be happy. When emotional heaviness drags him to a low point, he knows how to put on his convincing “church face.” Nobody knows the dark thoughts that torment him.

My friend is not unique in this struggle. Countless Christians I know engage in a daily battle with the enemy of their souls. And Satan is relentless in his attacks. He is described in Scripture as “the father of lies” (John 8:44), and the “accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10). He wags his bony finger of condemnation and tries to deny us access to the Lord’s love and mercy.

You will never find victory in the Christian life if you don’t expose, confront and renounce Satan’s groundless accusations. If the devil has been replaying his lies in your head, you must hit the “EJECT” button now! The spirit of condemnation always makes these outrageous statements listed below:

**1. Jesus can’t use you if you have a weakness.** The devil is always ready to remind you that you are fat, unattractive, prone to depression or addiction, sexually broken, traumatized or fearful. But guess what? The people God used in the Bible were far from perfect. Every Christian has flaws. God made us weak so we would find our strength in Him. If you were perfect, you wouldn’t need a Savior.

**2. You should give up if you constantly struggle with sin.** Many Christian men I know feel spiritually disqualified because they haven’t totally overcome their addiction to porn. They feel bad for being tempted, and then if they stumble, they feel defeated for weeks. This can lead to discouragement and despair—and then they lose all hope of overcoming the habit. The secret to victory is not sweating and straining to resist; instead we must meditate on the love of God and allow His Spirit to rise up inside of us to override sin’s power. If

you are struggling, do not give up! The Spirit will help you!

**3. God's promises are for other people, not you.** Do you feel God's goodness always bypasses you? You may have an orphan spirit. Many Christians don't believe the heavenly Father loves and accepts them. They may have been rejected by their parents, or lacked parental affirmation. Life's pain can block our ability to see God as He is. But if you have given your life to Christ, the Father has adopted you, He delights in you, and He has given you full inheritance rights. His promises are yours to claim!

**4. God is always mad at you.** Many believers base their relationship with God on performance. If they read their Bibles and pray every day, they feel they are on God's "good side"; if they miss their morning devotions they assume He is upset. The devil loves this legalistic mindset because it prevents us from experiencing God's grace. You must come to understand that the Father does not love you for what you do; He loves you because you are His child. He is slow to anger and full of lovingkindness. When you allow this truth to soak your soul, you will enjoy true intimacy with Jesus.

**5. Your past mistakes disqualified you.** I met a Christian man recently who loves God with all His heart, yet he sits in the back of his church every week feeling inferior because he committed adultery 35 years ago. His wife forgave him, and he repented for his sin, but he assumes he wears a scarlet letter around his neck and that he has been banished to a spiritual wasteland. That's a lie! If you have repented for your sin, God has forgiven and forgotten it! Nothing can separate you from God's love—not abortion, divorce, sexual sin or any other unspeakable mistake you regret.

**6. You have committed the unpardonable sin.** I've counseled several troubled Christians who read Matthew 12:31-32 and decided that they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit and therefore could not be saved. This is a ridiculous notion, because a

person who committed the unpardonable sin mentioned in this passage wouldn't care if they had blasphemed. If you are worried that you did this, then you haven't! Your heart is turned toward God and you want to please Him. That alone is evidence of His grace working in you.

Romans 8:1 is one of the most liberating verses in the Bible. It declares: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." This promise is for you! Jesus took your punishment and removed all guilt from your record. And His blood is more powerful than any lie Satan can throw at you.

You are now qualified. Your past is irrelevant. You don't have to work to win God's love. When the Father looks at you, He doesn't see your past sins or present struggles; He sees a robe of righteousness. Renounce the devil's lies and believe God's promise. He loves you with an indescribable, unfathomable, unconditional love. {eoa}

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## **The Moral Choices of the 2016 Election**

The choices of this year's election season pose some significant moral challenges. I have heard that Christians are struggling with the values of the Democrat party: the so-called "pro-choice" position, which means, in virtually 100 percent of cases, pro-abortion; limiting religious freedoms; more government control over citizens' lives; and more. And I have also heard Christians who are struggling with the morality of voting for a brash, twice-divorced, casino-owning presidential candidate.

These are real struggles, and I don't intend to minimize the pressure under which some sincere and concerned Christian voters are struggling. Let me ask you to consider the morality of a third option I'm hearing, and that is voting for a third party candidate or not voting at all. I have lumped these last two together because the reality is that the action of taking no action by Christians would certainly guarantee a U.S. president whose party platform will not protect life in the womb, will not support religious freedom, and will force you to forsake your traditional Christian values or face legal punishment if you resist caving in to the anti-God atmosphere across the nation. Those will be only a part of the negative results. I can guarantee it.

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) is known for his now-famous saying: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." You will be faced with a moral decision on November 8, 2016, our national Election Day. You may vote for liberal values, vote for an unknown candidate who has, to many conservatives, questionable qualifications, or vote for a third-party candidate who cannot win and will thus, by default, add to the pro-liberal victory. By staying home, you will help liberal values to prevail.

However, without telling anyone whom to vote for, I do have a suggestion for overcoming this dilemma: Focus on the political parties' platforms. Delegates of both major parties worked hard through discussion and debate to construct their respective platforms with the solid planks that outline and support their party's core values. These platforms were approved at each convention. And the platforms are not secret documents. My suggestion for every Christian potential voter: Read both platforms and consider them plank by plank, value by value. Then consider supporting with your vote the one that best reflects your own values. Here is a link to our helpful [2016 Presidential Election Voters Guide](#) that outlines the Republican and Democrat party platforms along with suggestions

for prayer.

We cannot change the fundamental strengths or flaws in any candidate, but we can identify with the platform principles that will guide the elected officials' governance—from Congress to the U.S. President.

Yes, it may be a tough decision. I hope my suggestion offers some clarity.

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## **Breaking the Enemy's Many Expressions of Witchcraft**

October has rolled around once again and spiritual warriors everywhere are standing strong against spiritual witchcraft. Every season—through every battle with this demonic power—I learn more about how to battle back.

I've long known idol worship—including Mary worship—can release witchcraft into a spiritual climate. I've understood that Wiccan activity can release witchcraft. I've recognized Voodoo and Santeria and other false religions can release witchcraft.

To sum it up, there are many different expressions of witchcraft just as there are many different flavors of ice cream. (I prefer the ice cream!)

The witchcraft that Jezebel releases often carries intimidation, imaginations and infirmities. Witch doctors in Africa have been blamed for hurricanes coming up the East Coast. Witchcraft in Voodoo rituals release spells and

incantations that make people sick and even die.

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### **The Witchcraft We Battle**

Witchcraft can be in the spiritual atmosphere due to demonic activity from those practicing its various expressions—but witchcraft can also be released directly at you as a spiritual attack. Because of the constant drip of persecution from unbelievers—and even believers in the church who don't believe in the full gospel—I break word curses, hexes, vexes, incantations, spells and every form of witchcraft that I discern coming against me.

What is witchcraft? *Merriam-Webster* defines witchcraft as the use of magical powers obtained especially from evil spirits; the use of sorcery or magic; communication with the devil or the familiar. You might think of the Voodoo priests or the witch doctors, but as I've said before even [Christians can release witchcraft](#) at you with their [thoughts](#) and words.

*Webster's Dictionary* defines witchcraft as an irresistible influence or fascination—and the Bible warns us not to be bewitched: “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified” (Gal. 3:1).

Obviously, there is a spiritual force the Bible is warning us about. It causes us to take leave of the truth that sets us free. Hence, we come into a measure of bondage, whether it manifests as strong confusion in your mind, sickness in your body, unreasonable fatigue, wild imaginations, feeling like giving up and so on. We have a responsibility to know about this spiritual wickedness and guard ourselves against it. I speak more about these realities in my book, [Satan's Deadly Trio](#).

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If you discern a witchcraft attack against you, you must stand against it as quickly as possible. The longer you let the witchcraft's residue settle on you, the harder it is to break free. Here are five practical ways to resist a witchcraft attack.

**1. Be careful what you're thinking about.** First Peter 1:13 says, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The battle really is in the mind—or at least it starts there. Witchcraft works in imaginations and illusions many times. Although a curse or vex can cause your body to manifest with symptoms, for example, it's up to you whether you want to receive the attack or refuse to submit to the devil's power. Don't reason out in your mind where the physical symptoms are coming from. Ask the Holy Spirit what is going on and He will show you. Sickness is not the will of God, in any case.

**2. Guard your heart from old temptations.** The Amplified version of 1 Peter 1:13 says, "brace up your minds; be sober (circumspect, morally alert)." **Jezebel** and her witchcrafts work to draw you into sin. When you are under heavy attack, your soul gets weary. Jesus can offer rest to your soul, but Jezebel wants to provide you a different way of escape through sin. Jezebel works to seduce you into idolatry or immorality (see Rev. 2:20). When you feel like you are getting hit from every side, guard your heart. Don't run into temptation when you are under attack, run for cover—run to Jesus.

**3. Cast down vain, fearful imaginations.** Imaginations don't always work to push sickness on you or tempt you to sin. Sometimes the devil just wants to overwhelm you with witchcraft imaginations so you'll give up and go hide in a

cave with a bag of potato chips, a bowl of ice cream, a big pillow and the TV remote control. If the **Holy Spirit** dwells in you, then so does the fruit of self-control. You can choose by your will to “cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, KJV).

**4. Cast your cares on the Lord. Witchcraft imaginations** totally skew your perspective—making monumental issues out of something God could fix with a wink. Cast your care on the Lord. Keep your eyes on Him. Pray for what you think you need—then believe He’s got your back. When you do, He promises to care for you and give you perfect peace (see Is. 26:3).

**5. Speak the Word, use the Name and invoke the Blood.** You have three powerful weapons at your disposal—spiritual weapons that are mighty through God to pull down strongholds. It’s hard to effectively wield those weapons when you are wallowing in condemnation, self-pity, fear or some other harmful emotion. Choose to snap out of it. Plead the blood against it. Declare the truth over your life, in the name of Jesus!

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## What Your Attitude Toward Money Reveals About Your Heart

“... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21, MEV).

Throughout the centuries, the church has watched as the

pendulum swung between two thoughts: vows of poverty and the “prosperity gospel.” In times past, Christians equated oaths of poverty with deep spiritual maturity; whereas the prosperity gospel echoes the opposite, that wealth is a sign of God’s favor.

Both extremes offer a false sense of spirituality and a wrong view of God. Poverty does not necessarily enhance spirituality, and the prosperity gospel is not the real gospel. God may prosper us but that is secondary—a relationship with Christ is primary.

America needs a reality check. Thousands of children die quietly in some of the poorest villages on Earth every day. Research shows that for the 1.9 billion children in third world countries, almost two in three lack access to clean water and must survive on less than \$2 a day. This is extremely disheartening.

The average low-income family in America is wealthier than millions across our globe. We often fail to realize just how blessed we are. Rather than using our resources to serve, they have become our master. We must recognize God again as the true source of blessing and abundance.

On March 30, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued a historic proclamation appointing a National Fast Day. He said, “We have forgotten God, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.”

Lincoln recognized that most Americans credit themselves with their success rather than God. We either worship the god of this world, or the true and living God: *“No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money”* (Matt. 6:24).

Consider the following:

**1. Money is a heart issue.** God does not need our money—but money can be a gauge that measures spiritual health. This is no doubt why Jesus taught on stewardship more than any other topic, saying, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). First Timothy 6:6-10 says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with these things. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evil. While coveting after money, some have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” It all starts here—the love of money is a snare that leads us further and further from God.

**2. Wisdom in stewardship is foundational.** One definition of stewardship notes that people who have yielded control of their finances to Christ habitually honor Him in their financial decisions and steward resources that He has provided. Budgeting resources and controlled spending is wise stewardship. Do you “need” something or do you simply “want” it? This question is at the heart of good stewardship. Budgeting (good stewardship) is the control valve to spending and to money worship. Budgeting allows you to control your desires rather than allowing your desires to control you. Money loses its power when you give it away and budget its influence.

**3. Determine how much to give on a regular basis.** “Let every man give according to the purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Sadly, many use this Scripture to support minimal giving when it actually promotes the opposite. From my perspective, the New Testament believer isn’t “required” to tithe, but they should be a very generous person. Ten percent is a good number ... it offers a starting number to budget in.

David said, "I will not offer up to the Lord burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24).

Giving to the Lord must cost something—that is true, sacrificial giving. Routine, collective giving—through the church, for example—is a spiritual principle intended to help one another and further God's kingdom. It's a sad reality that the church, in general, does not give as God intended, and has, in fact, given its responsibility to the government.

**4. Motive is the key.** The Bible refers to a "rich fool" who said, "I shall say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take rest. Eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your life will be required of you. Then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19-21).

Having a savings account wasn't the issue; his heart was corrupt. He was a selfish, self-centered man. God judged him for it. Had the man said, "God, I have many goods laid up for many years. What would you like me to do with these resources?" he would have been in the center of God's will. This man's attitude about his money revealed his heart.

In the same way, our attitude reveals the condition of our heart: "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matt. 6:21).

Money can be a wonderful servant but a terrible master! "*For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36). {eoa}

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For the original article, visit [westsidechristianfellowship.org](http://westsidechristianfellowship.org).

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# Many Christians Miss Out on This Glorious Aspect of God's Inheritance

In a recent encounter, I saw someone who had not experienced "a song of joy" in a long time. I karate chopped them in the back to help deliver them from this oppression then started playing joyful songs.

Joy is heavenly substance, energy and strength to us. Joy is not something that can be obtained apart from the Holy Spirit.

*"... for the kingdom of God does not mean eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17, MEV).*

People can be happy about things, stuff and events, but joy is from God's world. When we pursue the Lord, desiring Him above all things, He gives us songs of joy. The psalmist David knew this realm of joy that was accessible through a life of worship and praise to God.

*"You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is **fullness of joy**; At Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11, MEV).*

**The new wine that Jesus spoke about was a wine of joy in the presence of God.** A few years ago I had dream where I was standing in a very long driveway where there had been stacked cases and cases of wine. I grabbed a bottle and looked at the

label. In this dream I read the label on the bottle saying, "Vintage New Wine!!" with great joy. This was the new wine of the Ancient of Days!

Isn't this what Paul talked about? Joy unspeakable and full of glory? When we realize that we have only had a "taste" of the reality of heaven's substance, we can see that there is so much more! More love, more power and more joy!

**God does not call us to be sad, but to be glad.** Anyone can be sad, but it takes God to be glad. God takes us up, not down. He makes us the head, not the tail. He only knows how to give increase. Decrease is not in His vocabulary. It is the heart of God for us to grow, expand, increase and awake to His goodness.

The devil is bad. God is good. God comes to give joy while the devil tries to steal it. It is important for us to live as sons of God. We are part of the family. Our Father is good. Some think God is holding a gavel, like the Great Judge, over their head ready to strike at the slightest mistake. That is an old-wineskin mindset that cannot hold the new wine of His presence.

*"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the new wine will burst the wineskins, and it will be spilled, and the wineskins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new. For he says, 'The old is better' "* (Luke 5:37-39).

We must realize that we are part of His family, that He loves us and has good in store for us so we can walk in the inheritance that Christ died for us to obtain. The joy of God is part of our inheritance. We have a good inheritance from God that is ready to be manifest in our lives right now.

In the story of the prodigal son, the elder brother was jealous because of all the blessings the Father gave to the

younger son when he came home. The father gave a feast, killing the fattened calf, then embraced his returned son and gave him a robe and ring of authority. The elder brother was enraged at the goodness that was shown to his brother. The father turns to the elder son saying, "Everything I have is yours ..."

The issue was the elder brother had an orphaned impoverished mindset. He began to complain to his father about all the "works" that he had done but was never rewarded.

*"Look! These many years have I served you. Nor have I ever transgressed your commands, yet never have you given me a goat, so that I might be merry with my friends. ...' He said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours'" (Luke 15:29-31, MEV).*

Because of his ignorance, living by works instead of grace, not really knowing what his father was like, he never was able to partake of the inheritance that was there for him the entire time.

*"... giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Col. 1:12, MEV).*

God wants us to know that the blood of His Son has made us worthy. God sees the sacrifice of Jesus and is ready to reward His Son by making us part of the family, giving us His eternal inheritance which encompasses every spectrum of life. Isn't that what Jesus promised? Abundant life?

*"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd" (John 10:10-11).*

God's desire is for us to live in a higher place. Live where you belong—at the Father's right hand with Jesus. He is good,

having seated us with Him in the heavenly places where all else remains under our feet

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3, MEV).*

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For the original article, visit [overflowglobal.com](http://overflowglobal.com).

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## **Archaeologists: King Hezekiah Really Did Destroy Idols**

Israeli archaeologists believe they have evidence that the biblical King Hezekiah did indeed destroy the high places and idols in the land of Israel as described in the Bible, evidence officials say highlights Israel’s past connection to the land and helps draw the country’s boundaries today.

Calling it “an important and unusual discovery,” the Israel Antiquities Authority said excavations in the Tel Lachish National Park in central Israel revealed a “gate-shrine” from

the First Temple period, about the 8th century B.C. It's the largest known gate from the First Temple period in the country.

The Bible says King Hezekiah "removed the high places, broke down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles." (2 Kings 18:4).

"The size of the gate is consistent with the historical and archaeological knowledge we possess, whereby Lachish was a major city and the most important one after Jerusalem," excavation director Sa'ar Ganor said.

According to the biblical narrative, everything took place at the city gates where the elders, judges, governors, kings and officials sat on benches.

"These benches were found in our excavation," Ganor said.

The IAA conducted the excavation from January through March at the initiative of the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage in cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority. The excavation completely exposed the gate, which was partially uncovered in a joint Tel Aviv University, British excavation decades ago. The plan is to develop the Tel Lachish National Park.

The 80-by-80-foot Lachish city gate is preserved to a height of 16 feet. It consists of six chambers—three on each side, with the city's main street passing between them.

### **Artifacts Reveal Details**

Artifacts discovered in its rooms give clues as to how they were used 2,800 years ago. Benches with armrests were in the first chamber. At the foot of the benches were many finds, including jars, scoops for loading grain and jar handles bearing the name of the official or a seal impression indicating they belonged to the king.

The IAA said the jars seem to relate to the kingdom of Judah's military and administrative preparations for the war against Assyrian King Sennacherib in the late 8th century B.C.

According to Ganor, "A staircase ascended to a large room where there was a bench upon which offerings were placed. An opening was exposed in the corner of the room that led to the holy of holies."

Ganor said they were excited to find two four-horned altars and scores of ceramic finds, including lamps, bowls and stands in the room. He said the horns on the altar had been "intentionally truncated."

"That is probably evidence of the religious reform attributed to King Hezekiah, whereby religious worship was centralized in Jerusalem and the cultic high places that were built outside the capital were destroyed," Ganor said.

Besides cutting off the horns of the altar, apparently Hezekiah had a toilet installed in the "holy of holies" to further signify the abolition of worship and as the "ultimate desecration" of the place.

The "toilet" was a chair-shaped stone with a hole in the middle found in the corner of the room. It was apparently symbolic, as tests showed it had never been used.

According to the IAA, archaeological research has identified stones like this as toilets. The idea of using a toilet to defile cultic locations is even mentioned in the Bible, as in the case of Jehu when he destroyed the cult of Ba'al ([2 Kings 10:27](#)). It's the first time the phenomenon has been confirmed archaeologically.

Israeli officials were excited about the discovery. Minister of Jerusalem and Heritage Ze'ev Elkin said the discovery is an example of how excavations "show us time and time again how biblical tales that are known to us become historical and

archaeological stories.”

Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev said the discovery deepened Israel’s “connection to our ancestors who walked this land.”

“The uncovering of these finds joins a long list of discoveries that enlighten us about our historic past, a past that is manifested in our country’s soil and in the writings of the Book of Books,” Regev said.

“The Bible—the founding book of the Jewish people—draws the country’s boundaries and the heritage of the Jewish people that was exiled from its country and returned to its homeland. It boldly commemorates the way of our forefathers, the prophets, the kings and the judges,” she said.

Shaul Goldstein, director general of the Nature and Parks Authority, said Tel Lachish is one of the most “quintessential places” that offers “proof of Israel’s hold on the its land.”

The gate is currently undergoing a conservation process in preparation to open it to visitors. {eoa}

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## **Police Capture Teen Attacker Who Shot 2 Kids, 1 Teacher**

A teenager shot and wounded two children and a teacher at an elementary school in South Carolina, before being taken into custody on Wednesday, police said at a news conference.

The shooting happened early in the afternoon at Townville Elementary School in Anderson County, located near the Georgia state line about 100 miles (160 km) northeast of Atlanta.

The circumstances of the shooting are not known but a dead body was found on a dirt road near the school, the local coroner told CBS News.

The two injured students were airlifted to the hospital and the teacher was driven by ambulance, police said. Other students were loaded onto busses and evacuated to a nearby church, local media said.

One child was flown to Greenville Memorial Hospital's emergency trauma center, health system spokeswoman Sandy Dees said. Further details were not immediately available.

Reuters could not immediately reach the Anderson County Sheriff's Office for comment.

About 280 students attend the school and 64 percent receive subsidized lunches, according to online real estate database company Zillow.

The United States has long been plagued by shootings at schools and colleges, some of which have claimed dozens of lives. In 2012, a gunman shot dead 20 children and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The deadliest mass school shooting was in 2007, when a gunman killed 32 people at Virginia Tech University.

Earlier this month, a 14-year-old girl shot and wounded a fellow student at a rural Texas high school and then died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

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# House Follows Suit, Overrides Obama Veto

After the Senate voted 97-1 Wednesday morning, the House of Representatives followed suit, overriding President Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act by a 348-77 vote.

The bill will now become law, allowing the families of victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to sue the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over its alleged ties. Prior to the House taking up the measure, the White House issued the following response through Press Secretary Josh Earnest:

"This is the single most embarrassing thing the United States Senate has done possibly since 1983. To have members of the United States Senate only recently informed of the negative impact of this bill on our servicemembers and our diplomats is in itself embarrassing."

JASTA's authors, U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and John Cornyn (R-Texas) both spoke in favor of the legislation during a press conference Wednesday:

"The families have already suffered too much," Cornyn said. "They've already suffered untold tragedy, of course, and they deserve to find a path to closure that only justice can provide."

"But it was important in this case that the families of the victims of 9/11 be allowed to pursue justice," Schumer added. "Even if that pursuit causes some diplomatic discomforts."

The override is the first for President Obama during his two

terms in office. The last president to have served without having a veto overridden was Lyndon Johnson.