

Put Some Spring in Your Step

Do you remember how excited you were to get up early in the morning, eat your breakfast, then dash out the door, just to be outside? “Don’t forget your coat.” or “Be careful crossing the street” were the last words you heard your Mom shout as you jumped the threshold of the front door to begin your journey to wherever your imagination took you.

My time spent in Ipswich, England, as a child proved you could go swimming in 70-degree temperatures and not freeze to death. For three years, I rode my bike around the neighborhood, climbed fruit trees, and waited until the thermometer broke 69 degrees to join my school friends in the local public pool. Life was great, pleasures were simple, and moving my body wasn’t a conscience effort. I moved without an agenda, had no exercise plan or pedometer (to be sure I walked long enough), and there was no trainer telling me if I was using proper form. I got up, ate, and went.

One thing that stands out—especially as I reminisce about my early years—is the fact that no matter where I lived, children were always playing... outdoors! We were like the traditional postman: “Through rain, snow, sleet, or gloom of night,” nothing prevented us from our appointed, fun. Odd, isn’t it, that today we have to prod and bribe our family members just to get them off the couch, away from the television or video games, in order to do what most of us embraced in our youth. “Ah, what a world, what a world.”

Lucky for us in the Lone Star State, temperature is seldom a factor that prevents outdoor activities. Unlucky for us, we have gotten into the habit of work, rest, eat, rest again, and work. We have embraced this pattern so much that we don’t set aside time for fun, pure simple fun. Well now is the time to get a spring back into our step, and I know exactly what we can do.

We can begin today by planning purposed fun! I suggest some ideas we can all implement with our spouse, children, and friends to make this time of year our “springboard” to fulfilled relationships and good health. Yes, good health can be the by-product of fun, I promise. Listed below are practical tips we can all embrace.

- Make a hopscotch board on your sidewalk—don’t let age deter you—and challenge family members or neighbors to a weekend competition. Winner chooses a restaurant for dinner and gets to bring a friend. (If they’re younger than 7, they can choose a television show or movie)
- Map out some locations around town that include up-hill and downhill climbing. Make walking sticks out of nearby cedar tree limbs; strip the bark down to the shiny wood. Then challenge some neighbors to a family hike. (Be sure to start out slow and simple – short distances ensure quick recovery.) Afterwards invite them to your place for a backyard Bar-B-Q and be sure to serve our Suck-the-Chip-Dry salsa (see recipe in my e-zine).
- Create a family garden. No matter the size of your property, you can build a raised-bed garden (check local lumber stores for a book or go online). Then plant vegetables you’ve never tried before. Or if you have never had a garden, plant the regulars – tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, radishes, green beans, and don’t forget, the jalapenos. Be sure to check the length of time to maturity and plan a harvest party with your neighbors or church family.

There you go, some tips to get you and your family started toward healthier living. Incorporate these fun times into your weekly routine and embrace the joy that is sure to follow.

There is one key I need to mention. To ensure your step always includes some “spring,” *you must choose to make the change, and then you must put feet to your decision and do it.* It is by taking immediate action that we see long lasting positive

results. Enjoy your family-and-friends time, eat well, and take an extra hike for me.

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For the original article, visit .

7 Characteristics of Effective Men

I enjoy reading biographies of great men. Doing so gives me insight into some of the brightest, most creative, and successful men whom have lived.

Some of these men lived long ago, yet their life story becomes a lesson applicable for today. Other men are still living and willingly giving us the secrets to their achievements. Not only do we see their genius on display, but we often learn how the traumas of their youth motivated them. These men often share their failures in business and finance, even marriage and family, and provide key insights into overcoming setbacks.

I suggest you choose mentors. Through the mentorship these biographies of great men have afforded me, I have discovered seven habits of effective men.

1. Effective men steward their time. Most effective men start their work at the same time each day. Most have a reflexive system of managing their routine. For example, Nick Saban, the very effective football coach has mastered the proficient use

of his time. Read this article to see what I mean.

2. Effective men are constant learners. The greatest habit I ever developed in my life is reading one chapter of Proverbs each day. I learned this from the very effective Zig Zigler. He valued it so much that he created an audio version for us. Available [here](#).

3. Effective men speak positively. The science of positive attitudes and speech confirms that it has incredible results in our health, wealth, and longevity. Yet some men haven't mastered this simple trait. I struggled with a speech impediment as a child, so speaking is very important to me. Words matter and for me to be effective I must give careful consideration to what I am saying and how I say it. Interestingly, Jesus actually is a great example of this when he said, *"These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."*

4. Effective men focus on details. Small things matter and small things overlooked are often the destroyer of greater things. Focusing on the details makes all of the difference. I have known very gifted men who were sloppy in the details. Their success is constantly undermined by their lack of attention to detail. You cannot expect an excellent life with 80 percent effort.

5. Effective men pray. The greatest habit of a man is to embrace the isolation of prayer. God relates to men in the daily commute. As you're going to work, pray about the challenges that you are facing—the finances, the sales, your productivity. As you leave work, pray about your home, for your wife, and over your children. I am going to quote an unlikely source for this point, *"I'm a busy guy but I set aside quiet time every morning and every evening to keep my equilibrium centered on my own path."*— Donald Trump

6. Effective men exercise. The physical body is a machine—a

remarkable machine—that houses who we are. We must invest in it. We must care for it. It won't last forever but it is vital for now. I continue to resist the effects that travel and a busy schedule have on my body. I want to be in the best physical health I can be in my 50's. Yes, it is hard, but if I am going to accomplish my purpose in life I need to be strong for another thirty years.

7. Effective men rest. God established it, even commanded it. It is as vital for your effectiveness as breathing—it is called rest. Fatigue is the greatest threat to your future. When you are tired you let your guard down in decision-making. When you are tired you are not focused on details, you do not control your words and may say things you will regret. When you are tired you are not creative. When you are tired you are vulnerable to a spiritual attack. Never make a permanent decision when you are tired.

So how about it, men? What are some of the best lessons that you've learned? What effective habits have you noticed in other successful men? What effective habits do you need to work on?

Share a statement with us; you will encourage other men.

For the original article, visit [Fivestarman](#). Fivestarman was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. He has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying Biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry, and life consultant, Neil has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.

Making Aliyah to Israel Comes With a Price

It's easy to romanticize the idea of Jews returning to Israel—planeloads arriving from the “four corners of the earth.” It is truly awesome to see this prophecy, thousands of years in the making, now being realized before our very eyes. But making aliyah is no piece of cake!

Aliyah, the Hebrew word for “immigrating,” is actually the word for the literal act of “going up,” as in going up stairs or an elevator. The word is almost ironic, because for most new immigrants to Israel, adjusting to life in their new country is quite the opposite.

For most immigrants from economically advanced countries—or even less prosperous lands—their standard of living in Israel will probably never be the same as it was in their country of birth. Tel Aviv is now the 34th most expensive city in the world—topping by far cities such as Berlin, Washington D.C. and San Francisco.

Take for example, an Israeli believer named Irina. She is a single mom with two young girls, who immigrated from Ukraine and works in Maoz' accounting department. Despite her awards in windsailing and a pleasant life in Ukraine, Irina's parents encouraged her to make aliyah. Even though she came to Israel with a college education, after nearly 14 years in the country, life is anything but easy, as she continues to struggle with the language, the culture and just making ends meet for herself and her girls.

“In the community of Messianic Jewish believers, there are many problems, especially financial problems,” Irina says. “And that affects the children.”

Her dreams for her kids begin with them getting a good

education. But to Irina that means more than just reading, writing and arithmetic.

Today Irina's two girls, Valeria and Kristina, ages 11 and 12, are both taking part in a musical education program sponsored by Maoz and our humanitarian aid division known as . It's a program that allows kids, who otherwise couldn't afford it, to study a musical instrument and voice training.

Both of Irina's girls are taking piano lessons. The oldest one has also taken up the flute. She goes for modern music—and the classics. The younger loves “tickling the ivories” with her favorite music from the ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

“It's something special to study music,” says Irina. “To me it's higher than other forms of education; it's more cultural. And music has always been important to the Jewish people.”

Irina has seen fruit from the girls' music lessons in other areas as well. She says it gives them confidence and allows them to relax so they can study well in all their subjects. Already, they are participating in a children's choir that is a volunteer project led by Tiferet Yeshua's congregational worship leaders.

“Kids have so much free time,” Irina said, “and they can waste it in the streets or by sitting in front of computers all the time. Instead, my girls are involved in music and concerts. This causes them to dream about doing something amazing in life. It allows them to express themselves and to be an example to other kids. It connects them to the arts and musical history, and to the worship team in their congregation. They're learning about another world.

“We know from history that most talented people came from less-advantaged families. Studying music can raise the level of life for kids that come from difficult economic backgrounds. They are learning something very big and very beautiful.”

For the original article, visit [.](#)

Men, Stand Alongside Your Pastor in Obedience

Men, the following is a composite of what I've heard from pastors. The question I would like you to consider as you read is this: Are you approaching your relationship with your pastor for "what you want" or are you asking, "What does the Master need?"

I am a pastor. My calling and passion is to build the kingdom. I am a soul winner and a disciple maker. But something has gone terribly wrong.

What's my problem? First, I'm pulled in way too many directions. My time is not my own. I have a steady flow of people from inside and outside my church who want me to adopt their idea or program. The thought of adding "one more thing" is overwhelming to me. I'm already going as fast as I can.

Second, my problem is not that I don't work hard, but that I'm working too hard. I have so many urgent things I need to do that I rarely have time to sit quietly and ponder the direction of our church. I confess that I have difficulty distinguishing *opportunity* from *distraction*. I am too busy with second things.

Third, I haven't been able to implement my vision for the church. If I could start over, I would put men's ministry at the top of my priority list. I know this is the only long-term solution to the leadership deficit we have in our church, our families and our community.

What's my desire? I want to reach men with the truth of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want to build them in their faith so that they can take their rightful place as leaders in the home, church, workplace, community and world.

I want to stem the tide of divorce, adultery, teen pregnancy, abortion, racism and moral decay. I want to raise up men who will not divorce their wives, not neglect their kids, not shortchange the offering plate, not fail to serve God, and not fail to invite visitors to church. That's why I became a pastor and leader.

I see it everywhere. There is a battle raging for the souls of my men. I am their shepherd. God is calling me to be their leader. I must be a leader in this battle. Everything boils down to leadership. It is a battle we can win, but I must repurpose myself to fight for men's souls.

Frankly, I can't do this alone. In fact, that wouldn't be the way Jesus wants it to happen anyway. I need your help. Will you stand with me to disciple our men? Will you free me from the administration of our church so that I can lead us into discipleship at every level? With your help, we can win the battle for men's souls in our church.

Men, do you think God wants your church to disciple men? If you agree, then stand with your pastor in obedience. This is something the Master needs.

Pat Morley is the Founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

Even With Weight Gain, Quitting Smoking Helps Hearts

People who have quit smoking have a lower chance of suffering a heart attack or stroke than current smokers—even if they put on a few extra pounds in the process, according to a new study.

Although the long-term cardiovascular benefits of kicking the habit have been well-established, researchers said it's been unclear how the weight gain that often accompanies quitting fits into that picture.

“Weight gain is a real concern for smokers who want to quit and this might not only be an aesthetic one,” Dr. Carole Clair, who worked on the new study, told Reuters Health in an email.

“Overweight and obesity are risk factors for coronary heart disease. And it has been a concern that especially among people already at risk for (cardiovascular disease) weight gain following smoking cessation might cancel or at least decrease the benefits of smoking cessation,” said Clair, from the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Smokers' heart rate and other body functions are revved up by nicotine, which may cause them to burn slightly more calories than nonsmokers—so when they quit, their metabolisms slow down. And recent quitters tend to compensate for nicotine withdrawal by snacking, according to Clair, hence the weight gain.

She and her colleagues analyzed data from a long-term study of

3,251 people who took health surveys every four years between 1984 and 2011. At the onset, just under one-third of those participants were smokers.

Over an average of 25 years, 631 of all participants suffered a heart attack or stroke or developed heart failure or another type of cardiovascular disease.

Both people who said they'd quit smoking since their last check-in and longer-term quitters were about half as likely to have heart problems as those who were still using cigarettes.

Quitters gained an average of six to eight pounds after kicking the habit, consistent with past research. But quit-related weight gain had no clear effect on cardiovascular health, the research team wrote Tuesday in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"It's an understandable concern – might that weight gain offset the benefits that are known for quitting smoking?" said Dr. Michael Fiore from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Madison, who co-wrote a commentary published with the study.

"This is a good news story," he said. "You can be assured that if you quit smoking, even with a little bit of weight gain, you're going to achieve important health benefits."

In their commentary, he and colleague Timothy Baker point out that the new study couldn't zero in on the small proportion of people who gain more than 20 pounds during a quit attempt. It's possible those former smokers might still be at risk for health problems tied to weight gain.

Even if adding a few pounds seems to be okay heart-wise, Fiore said there are steps quitters can take to try to keep off any extra weight.

"We know that nicotine is an appetite suppressant, and when

people quit smoking they often have an urge to eat more food. What we need to do is ensure that the foods we're eating are low-fat, low-calorie foods," he told Reuters Health.

In addition, "If you just build a little more exercise into your daily routine, you can blunt the weight gain." Nicotine gums or lozenges may also help keep overeating under control, he added.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 19 percent of American adults are smokers. In 2010, just over half of those smokers tried to kick the habit. Many people try quitting a number of times before they're successful.

Fathers Can Excel, Even in Tough Situations

A while back, I was talking about *Championship Fathering* on a radio program. I told my stories about the importance of loving, coaching and modeling for your kids; encouraging other kids; and enlisting more dads to join the team.

After the program, a dad wrote to me and said, "How can someone be a 'Championship Father' when the system and the mother won't let him?"

For a growing number of dads today, this dad's question is the only one that matters, because they don't have access to their kids; they don't have opportunities to be the dads they want to be.

I don't fully understand how dads feel when they're shut out

from the lives of their children, but I do hurt for them.

In today's culture, it's easy to lump all non-custodial dads together. We talk about custody battles and child support, and we forget that these are individual dads who love their children and are fighting for the chance to be involved fathers. That's real, and it's a tragic consequence of the divorce culture that we live in. The impact on children is even more tragic.

These dads already know there are no easy solutions, but they don't give up calling attention to their challenges and the injustice they feel.

If you can relate to this situation, I hope you'll keep reading, because I want to offer three pieces of encouragement that can apply to whatever fathering challenges you may be facing.

First, focus on your long-term commitment to your child. That will help to see you through daily ups and downs, or even major roadblocks to your fathering.

One dad we know was separated from his three school-aged kids by a very bitter divorce. Barred from direct contact with his kids, and faced with parental alienation, he remained steadfast in his attempts to connect with his children. His oldest daughter eventually sought contact and moved in with him when she was able to do so independently. Just a few months ago, after seven years of separation, his son expressed a desire to connect and re-establish a relationship.

No one wants to go through something like that, but some dads do, and an unwavering, steadfast commitment will be a huge factor in making the best of it.

Second, find ways to keep practicing the fundamentals of *Championship Fathering*. I do believe in the validity of the research behind loving, coaching and modeling, and I know they

can make a difference for you. Every dad needs to soak these in, practice them, and make them part of his skill set. These fundamentals can be creatively applied to just about any situation.

Years ago, one dad worked on a submarine for 90 days at a time, and he had to cut off all communication. That was a huge fathering challenge. So ahead of time, he wrote postcards to his children for every day of his trip, then had a friend drop them in the mail every day. So his kids had messages just about every day from their dad, and they felt special that he thought enough to do that. He adjusted his fathering for his situation, and found ways to be effective despite his challenges.

So what about the dad who doesn't have access to his children because of divorce and his custody agreement? That dad will have to live out loving, coaching and modeling in different ways from other dads.

For example, if loving the child's mother isn't part of the equation, that dad can at least work on respecting her, cooperating with her and giving his children access to other people who are modeling healthy relationships. Maybe the best coaching you do is through email and texts.

If you aren't able to be an *everyday* role model for your kids, keep doing what's right in your work and other areas of your life, and do all you can to stay positive with your kids. Trust that your high character and poise will make a difference in the long run, and that through the months and years your children will notice and appreciate how you carried yourself despite horrible circumstances.

Those are just a few examples. You may face a challenge of different a kind, and you can find ways to make the principles work. That goes for active duty dads, stepdads, dads who travel a lot, dads in prison, and so on. Loving an infant is

much different from loving a 12-year-old. Coaching a daughter will likely require a different approach than involvement and insight with a son.

If you want more specific tips for applying loving, coaching and modeling, you'll find some on our website.

Finally, I encourage you to get together with other dads in your situation.

You may be a divorced dad, a single dad, an adoptive dad, stepdad or traveling dad. You may be very busy. I know there are dads out there, like me, who struggle in this area at times, trying to find a balance. Find a dad who's a step or two further along, and ask him, "What's working for you?" "What have you learned?" "What's the best way you show consistency for your children?"

Dad, no matter what, don't let frustration get the best of you. Other dads in your situation have found ways to stay connected with their kids. You can do it too.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Write a letter to your child and share about a significant memory from your life and an important lesson you learned from it.
- Whatever situation you're in, communicate unconditional love and blessing to your child—through letters, emails or texts, or verbally. Say, "I love you for who you are, no matter what happens or how often we get to catch up with each other." Tell him often that he's special to you.
- When you are with your kids, make as many deposits into their "emotional bank accounts" as you can, since time apart gradually drains that account. Read more on this.
- Are you denied access to your children? It may be that you could see them more by getting involved at their school. (Check out our WATCH . program for one great way

to do this.)

- Does your child use social networking websites and apps? Join in and learn about those, and use them as a way to connect, especially when you're apart.
- If you're in a challenging fathering situation, try to maintain healthy routines with your kids—but also allow some flexibility. Be very understanding when they don't handle the challenges in the same way you do.

Help other dads by sharing. What adjustments have you made or creative solutions have you used to connect with your kids despite a challenging situation? Please join the discussion below or on 's Facebook page.

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment. NCF believes that every child needs a dad they can count on, and uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. Subscribe to his weekly email tip by clicking [here](#).

For the original article, visit [here](#).

Israeli Calendar Can Boggle the Western Mind

What day is it? This is how I spend most Sundays in Israel—wondering what day it is.

For 38 years, it was engrained in my head that school starts on Monday. Work starts on Monday. It was a big culture shock

for me after moving to Israel 10 years ago to begin the week on Sunday (and to be clear, I am making a *cultural* statement, not a *religious* one).

Saturday morning started off feeling like Saturday. But by the time sundown came, we were making lunch for our kids, telling them to get their books ready, homework squared away (or yelling at them, "You didn't do your homework?") and in bed so they would be ready for school *Sunday* morning.

Suddenly my brain would begin to tell me it was Sunday night. I would think, "Oh good, NFL starts at 8 p.m. (1 p.m. EST)," only to turn on the TV and realize it was Saturday night.

The next morning would be even more confusing. I would wake up, Elana and I would get the kids up and off to school, and then I would go to Ulpan (Hebrew language school) or work, or work at home, and all day I would think it was Monday.

The worst part was that I would sometimes miss my most exciting cultural connection to the USA: the NFL. I would get home and assume it was Monday and I would forget that games were on.

Each day—even until today—I think is the day after. Or sometimes, I get so confused I think it is the day before. For instance, my most important meeting of the week is our pastors' meeting on Tuesday. And thinking that Tuesday was Monday, I filled it up with media work this week. I have a meeting with a group from the USA tomorrow; I was sure it was Tuesday. Ahhh!

Since you can't see my face, I am smiling, not frustrated. A little day confusion is fine in order to live and minister in the re-birthed nation of Israel (see Ezek. 36:24—I had to get at least one Scripture in here).

There are those in the Knesset, our parliament, who are

fighting to make Sunday a day off. It is not so much to be like the other nations, as much as it is to have one day of rest. In fact, some economists say it will even help out the economy because there will be so much shopping on that day.

For most, Saturday is the only day to get stuff done, so instead of resting, they are working around the house, shopping, etc. They want Saturday to be a real day of rest and Sunday, a day to get stuff done.

While it would cut down on my day confusion, I am happy with the way things are. Plus, with my children grown, I no longer feel like Saturday night is Sunday night. Now, if I could just figure out the rest of the week.

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic Ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Ron also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, Identity Theft, will be released on April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

UN: Palestinian Rocket Likely Killed BBC Reporter's Child

An errant Palestinian rocket, not an Israeli air strike, likely killed the baby of a BBC reporter during fighting in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip last November, a U.N. report has indicated, challenging the widely believed story behind an image that became a symbol of what Palestinians said was Israeli aggression.

Omar al-Masharawi, 11 months, was killed on Nov. 14, the first day of Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense. An Associated Press photograph showed his anguished father, Jihad Masharawi, clutching his slain child, who was wrapped in a shroud. Palestinians blamed Israel, and the image was broadcast around the world and widely shared on social media.

Now a report from the U.N. office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights says the baby was "killed by what appeared to be a Palestinian rocket that fell short of Israel."

Hamas, whose fighters fired most of the rockets into Israel during the conflict, had no response Monday.

According to the BBC, Masharawi dismissed the findings as "rubbish" and said no U.N. official had contacted him over the findings. He also claimed that the responsible Palestinian group would have apologized to the family in such an event, the BBC reported.

An Israel Defense Forces spokesman said the Israeli military could not confirm or deny whether the Israelis had hit the Masharawi house.

Matthias Behnke, head of the OHCHR office for the Palestinian territories, cautioned he could not "unequivocally conclude" that the death was caused by an errantly fired Palestinian rocket. He said information gathered from eyewitnesses led them to report that "it appeared to be attributable to a Palestinian rocket."

He said Palestinian terrorists were firing rockets at Israel not far from the Masharawi home. Behnke said the area was targeted by Israeli air strikes, but the salvo that hit the Masharawi home was "markedly different."

He said there was no significant damage to the house, unusual for an Israeli strike. He said witnesses reported that a fireball struck the roof of the house, suggesting it was a

part of a homemade rocket. Behnke said the type of injuries sustained by Masharawi family members were consistent with rocket shrapnel.

The Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights said it still held Israel responsible for Omar's death. The PCHR has condemned Hamas fighters and other terrorists in the past for errantly fired rockets that have killed Palestinians, including during the November clash.

A researcher said the group interviewed family members, neighbors and security officials before concluding that an Israeli strike killed the baby.

The baby was killed hours after fighting erupted following Israel's killing of a top Hamas leader in an air strike, in response to incessant rocket fire from Gaza.

Israel carried out hundreds of air strikes against terrorist centers in Gaza. Palestinian terrorists indiscriminately fired hundreds of rockets and mortar shells toward Israel.

During the eight-day conflict, about 160 Palestinians and six Israelis were killed.

The U.N. report did not name the Masharawi family in its one-sentence statement about the incident. Behnke, the U.N. official, said the report referred to the incident.

The report discussed the incident in the context of Palestinian terrorists disregarding civilians, both by firing rockets from crowded Palestinian areas and by aiming them indiscriminately into Israel.

In the same report, the authors also criticized Israel for appearing to disregard civilians while pursuing terrorists and military targets, and for targeting civilian sites, like hospitals, bridges and media offices.

Among many cases, they noted that an 84-year-old man and his

14-year-old granddaughter had been killed by an Israeli military strike on Nov. 21 while they were in their olive orchard on Gaza's eastern border. They also cited an Israeli air strike on a crowded Gaza City neighborhood that killed 12 people, including five children and four women.

For the original article, visit .

Obama's Visit: What Is the Real Purpose?

When Barack Obama became president of the United States in 2008, his first foreign trip was to Cairo, Egypt where he proclaimed the wonders of Islam and its glorious history and religious tolerance, and related his own close personal heritage with Islam. He was there, he said, to start a new chapter between Islam and America.

But, alas, his olive branch to Islam has not been reciprocated. In fact, since his visit to the Middle East, the Islamic countries of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia have discarded their secular dictators in exchange for Islamic governments and jihadist militias.

According to Israeli pundits, Obama in his 2009 trip to Cairo reflected a worldview that focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the core issue causing the violence and turbulence in the entire Middle East. Obama felt that he needed closure to the Palestinian issue in order to forge a strong anti-Iran Arab coalition. "Israel was perceived as a secondary ally, at best, and a burden at worst."

Furthermore, as part of his display of placation toward the

Islamic world—in the belief that addressing this part of the world would be a catalyst for a process of democratization—he turned a cold shoulder to Israel.

So the purpose of this upcoming trip to Israel is seen optimistically by some—a reformed Obama, who this time is making his first foreign trip of his new term to Israel.

“The answer is simple,” says Israel’s media. “Obama decided to visit Israel to fix what he spoiled during his first term in office, primarily during the first half of his term. He recognizes his rookie mistakes, typical of someone with a disproportionate sense of self-confidence. Now as a more seasoned statesman, he has come to understand the world and has perhaps adopted a more humble approach.”

Israelis hope that “today he is well aware his policy was an utter failure; that his policy of appeasement radicalized Islamic and Arab fanaticism and its hate for the U.S. and the West. He knows that turning his back on Israel exacerbated Arab and Palestinian extremism.” (*Israel Hayom*, 2013)

Iran Tops the Agenda

Others think Obama is coming to again pressure Israel, but on another front—Iran.

According to Obama’s officials, Iran will be at the top of the list for discussion. Israel’s Army Radio reported that the president was coming to Israel in order to personally tell Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a clear manner not to order an independent Israeli strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

According to these officials, the urgency of the trip is because in Netanyahu’s speech to the United Nations in September, he had flagged the spring of 2013 as a significant time in the context of the Iranian nuclear threat.

And the latest news is Netanyahu has intel revealing that with

new Iranian centrifuges, Iran is shortening by one-third the time it will take to make enough uranium for nuclear weapons. Besides, the West is now deeply concerned that Iran and North Korea are in cahoots as they develop not only nuclear weapons, but the missiles to fly them anywhere.

There is no doubt that D-Day is nearing. Even this week in our suburb of Tel Aviv, the authorities have twice checked out the sirens that would announce incoming destruction of some kind.

Syria Continues to Crumble

Secondly, Syria is crumbling. While the West focuses on the chemical stockpiles, Israel is no less focused on the regime's abundance of other strategic weapons, including radars, ground-to-ground missiles and rockets, and sophisticated ground-to-air and ground-to-sea rockets.

When Assad falls, the security situation will no doubt deteriorate on Syria's border with Israel. In fact, the most likely post-Assad scenario is the emergence of a fragmented, decentralized and dysfunctional Syria. As this present civil war decimates Syria and the West does nothing, al-Qaida and other jihadists are pouring into the country. Iran and Hezbollah are establishing their own jihadist militias so they can actively keep the pot boiling after Assad's fall. In fact, some Israeli officials fear Syria could turn into another Afghanistan.

The Washington Post reported that Iranian-backed militias are fighting alongside Syrian government forces to keep Assad in power. But officials think Iran's long-term goal is to have reliable operatives throughout Syria in case the country fractures into ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

Most important to Tehran will be to keep control of an airport or seaport so Hezbollah will have a supply route to bring in Iranian weapons to Lebanon.

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

As far as the Palestinians are concerned, most Israelis have grown skeptical of the possibility of peace. Whenever a poll is taken, a majority of Israelis will answer "yes" to paying a high price for peace with the Palestinians. In the same poll a majority will reply that they do not believe peace is possible. In fact, the Palestinian conflict was barely mentioned by any party platform in the last election. Israelis have just given up hope.

The main sticking points are the same as they have been for decades:

- No Palestinian leader will recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist.
- Palestinian leaders demand the "eternal right" for five million Muslim "refugees" to "return" to all the areas where the State of Israel now exists.
- Jerusalem will be the capital of a Muslim Palestinian state.
- Israel must return to the 1949 cease-fire lines (euphemistically called the 1967 borders).
- All of the 600,000 Jews in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) including Jerusalem must leave.

None of these demands are acceptable to Israelis. Besides there are constant attempts between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza to reunite as one government. It is likely that in the next few months there will be Palestinian elections, and Hamas could certainly take over the West Bank by a free election or by force, just as it did in Gaza.

This would mean that Hamas would make the West Bank the next launching pad for rockets into Tel Aviv. Hamas clearly, continually and publically says it will never accept the existence of Israel, and will continue its war against the

Jewish state until it is destroyed.

The Past Cannot Be Repeated

Israelis remember what happened when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) pulled out of Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah took over and became a state within a state, and now has more weapons than most countries do! Its aim is to destroy Israel.

When Israel pulled out of Gaza, it became "Hamastan," a launching pad to send 8,000 rockets into Israel. Its aim is to destroy Israel.

Israel gave Egypt the Sinai Desert in return for a peace agreement. It is now a wild and woolly lawless land with jihadists running wild, killing and kidnapping—and looking for more sophisticated ways to terrorize Israel.

Just this week it has been reported in the Iraqi *Azzaman* newspaper that al-Qaida has three training camps in Sinai. The Israeli government has just spent \$270 million building a border fence to keep terrorists from crossing over the Israel-Sinai border. Indeed, what will come of the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty with Muslim Brotherhood leaders at the head of an Egypt in chaos?

Israel has made many serious offers of peace to the Palestinian Authority—to create "two countries for two peoples who live side by side in peace."

When Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat a deal he could not refuse, he refused—and started the second intifada, which murdered more than 1,000 Israelis and 64 foreigners.

When Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Mahmoud Abbas an even better deal, including half of Jerusalem, Abbas refused.

So when President Obama, in his 2009 Cairo speech, demanded

that Israel stop all settlement building, but asked nothing of the Palestinians, it was his biggest blunder in the Middle East so far. It simply hardened both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

He did not ask the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

He did not ask Hamas to give up its goal to destroy Israel.

He asked Israel to stop building homes for Jews in Judea and Samaria, period. And yes, Netanyahu did bow to Obama's demand and ordered a building freeze of new buildings for 10 months in the West Bank—but not in Jerusalem. For Israelis, Jerusalem is Israel's eternal capital.

Nothing came of the freeze, as Mahmoud Abbas said Israel had not done enough to restart peace negotiations.

Why does Israel insist on continuing to build in the West Bank? Because Israel's leadership does not see a peace agreement on the horizon. I'm guessing that 80 percent of Israelis believe that Palestinian leaders do not want a state; they want to destroy Israel.

If American pressure demands negotiations with the Palestinians, Israel will do its best to go through the motions. But the Israeli government is not expecting a breakthrough—fully aware of the Quran's decrees to “destroy the Jew.”

Israel is in survival mode. If the Arabs will not make peace, then the best thing Israel can do is to strengthen her hold in the West Bank, especially in the larger Jewish built-up areas.

It must be noted that there are around 15 percent of Jewish Israelis (according to the number of votes given to leftist parties) who feel that Israel will ultimately be destroyed if it does not make peace, and so they continue to look for ways

to coax the Palestinians towards the negotiation table. Their main fear is the isolation the Palestinians have been able to impose on Israel through the United Nations, which is dominated by Muslim countries and their allies.

Israelis yearn for peace, but most have given up and are just trying to get on with their lives.

What does President Barack Obama want from Israel? Israelis await apprehensively. But one thing we know for certain. It is time for all who love Israel to pray that this president will continue to defend and help Israel, a nation that would not exist if it were not for the God of Israel.

For the original article, visit [.](#)

5 of the Best Things in Life Money Can't Buy

In a culture dominated by materialism, the desire for fine possessions and the belief that these possessions will bring you happiness hits close to home. We know people who believe this.

Every day we are confronted with the common opinion that money can solve your problems, make your dreams come true, and change your life for the better. But some of life's greatest treasures cannot be purchased. They are rare and precious gifts.

Here are five of the best things in life that truly represent the aphorism, "Money can't buy happiness."

God's Love

Although we may not always see it, God's love is there. It is given in unexpected and special ways. What's even better? Nothing can separate us from the gift of God's love. No amount of money could buy Him. The thought that material possessions could buy the gladness God's love has to offer is completely backwards. Thankfully, this love can be seen and truly appreciated daily.

Savoring the Great Outdoors

The outside world is open and free to everyone. The sky, trees, oceans, lakes, rivers, caves, deserts, and more are only some of the inspiring and beautiful traits of nature. Don't neglect to appreciate these things, whether big or small. Look up, breathe deep into your lungs, and appreciate the beauty of the clouds or the night sky. This is for everyone. It is our planet, our playground, and our gift.

Your Child's Laugh

Hearing your child's happiness expressed in laughter is a precious and unforgettable moment. When you trigger that laughter, it's like nothing else in the world matters. Their giggles are like medicine; they can treat a bad day. Whether it's from a funny face, a tickle, or a silly joke, the pure delight and delirium you give your children is certainly one of the best things in life.

Conversation with Good Friends

No matter where it may be, talking with your friends can be therapeutic. Cost-free and no-strings-attached, these special moments in life when you can share your deepest and most important thoughts or silly and insignificant ideas with a friend are a true treasure. Don't fail to acknowledge the power and peace-of-mind these relationships possess.

Your Wife's Smile

Like a glowing flash of light is your wife's smile. This reassuring expression warms your heart and reminds you of falling in love. Money can't buy this expression. But, the simplest things will bring her to beaming gladness. The children, a surprise, a sweet favor, or a kind whisper are only a few of the little things that make her smile; a charm that money can never buy.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.