

Ron Cantor: Facts About Palestine Not From the Mainstream Media

Chris Cotter on Fox New's *Redeye*, confidently declared the following words:

Referring to Helen Thomas' statement that the Jews should "get the hell out of Palestine" Cotter said, "Thomas remembers (before 1948) when Palestine was a nation." Somehow, a reporter on the Fox Business Channel assumed that Israel came into being by taking over an Arab country called Palestine.

Hopefully he knows his stocks better than his history. (*UPDATE! Cotter has since moved on to ESPN where history is not a requirement.*) Sadly no one on the show corrected him. So I will...

No Mr. Cotter, Palestine was not a nation in 1947, 46 or 45, not in 1847 or 1047 or 47. In fact, Palestine has *never* been a nation. To be fair, so many, not just Cotter, simply assume these things from what they pick up in the media. So let us look at these 15 historical facts.

15 Facts About Palestine

1. Palestine was NOT an Arab nation that the Jews came in and took over after the UN vote in 1947. Great Britain, in fact, controlled that region of the Middle East until she grew tired of governing the volatile area and asked the UN to decide what to do with it. Before Great Britain won the land in WWI, the Turks had controlled it since the early 1500s. Turks are not Arabs. In fact, Palestine has never been the name of any country!

2. Where did the name come from? The Romans! In an effort to

rid Judea of its Jewishness, the Romans renamed the area Filistia (Palestine) in the mid-130s CE. They were tired of pesky Jewish uprisings and so decided to deport the Jews and change the name. The name came from the ancient Philistines (who have no connection to present day Arabs. The Philistines were wiped out in 1200 BCE). It was a region not a nation. There has never been a president of Palestine (before Arafat), or a government of Palestine! It could be compared to New England, which is a region in America and has no government.

3. The UN Vote did not merely give Israel authority to create a state, but granted to the Arabs living on the West side of the Jordan river to also create an independent country. The Arabs rejected it. They could have had their own nation in 1948, but they said no. The Jews accepted it and on May 14th, 1948 Israel was re-birthed. The Arabs became part of Jordan.

4. When the PLO was created, Jordan controlled the West Bank. The goal of the PLO was to liberate Palestine. However the West Bank was already in Arab hands. They wanted Israel. In other words, if their goal was to create an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, they should've been fighting Jordan, not Israel! Of course, their goal was Israel's demise.

5. Before Israel was re-birthed in 1948, any person who lived in that region was considered Palestinian: Arab or Jew. The Jewish newspaper was called the *Palestine Post*. Why would any Jew name his newspaper after another people group? Why would any Jew name his paper after an Arab country?

6. Jerusalem was first capital of Israel under King David. It has never been the capital of any other country—including the fictitious Palestine. It has never (until Israel controlled it) been significant to Arabs. In others words you will not find these words in the Quran, but the Hebrew Scriptures: *"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to*

the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” (Ps. 137: 5-6)

7. When Israel captured Jerusalem in 1967, it was not from Palestinians, but from Jordan. Why didn't Palestinians demand Jerusalem, when Jordan controlled it (1948-1967)? Why didn't the Jordanians create an independent Palestinian state with the West Bank? It was certainly in their power? The reason is simple. Jordanians made no distinction between Arabs that lived east of the Jordan and those who lived west of the Jordan. They were all Jordanian. According to the quote at the top of this blog, Jerusalem has always been the capital of Palestine. Did anyone tell the Jordanians?

8. Israel had no plans on attacking Jordan during the Six Day War. However, King Hussein believed the false reports from Egyptian President Nasser of Egypt that they were winning the war. King Hussein, in hopes of getting more land, attacked Israel and his troops were driven back over the Jordan River in a matter of days. That is how Israel ended up with Jerusalem in 1967.

9. There is no language known as Palestinian. They speak Arabic like Jordanians and Syrians and Egyptians.

10. There is no rich Palestinian history. You will not find history books that detail Palestinian culture going back centuries.

11. Palestinians are Arabs, indistinguishable from Jordanians (a nation created by Great Britain 1922), Syrians, Lebanese, Iraqis, etc.

12. Arabs control 99.9 percent of the Middle East lands. Israel represents one-tenth of one percent of the landmass.

13. When the Jewish people began to return to 'Palestine' in the late 1800s: The Turks, not the Arabs, controlled it. Every bit of Land was paid for by the returning Jews—nothing was

stolen! Even in 1948, the Arab were invited to join the new state. Many did, and they became the most liberated Arabs in the Middle East. However, 600,000-800,000 fled, and of course, Israel.

14. Israel was a swamp-infested wasteland that no one, including the Arabs really cared about. Until the Jews returned the land suffered neglect. It was only after the Jews came back and made the land prosperous and fruitful again and developed a nation, that the fictitious Palestinian history was developed.

15. Religious Significance of Jerusalem. Jerusalem or Zion appears nearly ONE THOUSAND times in the Old and New Covenants, whereas it appears in the Koran exactly ZERO times!

The last thing that should be noted is that I wrote this to gets the facts out about Palestine. While the history may be made up, the Arabs who live among us here in Israel are real people who were made in God's image. We must pray for their salvation.

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 16th. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

Push Bad Teaching Out of Your Brain

My mother's cakes and pies were so delicious that, in her younger days, friends urged her to open her own dessert shop. Unfortunately, Mom didn't have any daughters—only four boys—but she still recruited us to roll out the dough, faces covered in flour.

She would put the dough half way up the side of the pans, pop them in the oven, and then we'd watch the cakes and breads rise as their mouthwatering aromas wafted through the house.

The yeast that made Mom's bread rise is the same yeast that Jesus had in mind when he warned the disciples to guard themselves against the teaching (*didache*) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus said, "*Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees*" (Matthew 16:6).

The Pharisees were like the legalists of today; the Sadducees like the cultural Christians of today.

Yeast, which means "bubble, boil, foam," is a fungus that, when worked into bread, converts fermentable sugars in the dough into carbon dioxide bubbles that form into gas pockets.

Here's the problem: Bad teaching is like "*a little yeast that works its way through the whole batch of dough*" (Galatians 5:9). The problem is that it gets stuck in our brains, like the gas pockets from yeast. That's why Jesus warned his disciples, then and now, that we need to guard against the yeast-like influence of any teaching, however microscopic, that distorts the gospel of Jesus.

Two Approaches, One Gospel

Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody were two of the greatest evangelists and revivalists in American history, but their approaches could not have been more different.

Finney's eyes could bore a hole through any veneer of self-sufficiency or pride. He preached sin and repentance. In his own words, "My object was to bring them to renounce themselves and their all, and give themselves and all they possess to Christ." An estimated 500,000 people were converted by his preaching, when America's total population was only 23,000,000. That would be like 6,500,000 converts today.

Finney, a stern, sobering figure, said, "It is of great importance that the sinner should be made to feel his guilt, and not left to the impression that he is unfortunate. I think this is a very prevailing fault, particularly with printed books on the subject. They are calculated to make the sinner think more of his sorrows than of his sins, and feel that his state is rather unfortunate than criminal."

Finney was all about the sin of it!

D. L. Moody, no doubt influenced by Finney, started his career with much the same approach. During his first trip to England, he met a young preacher, Henry Moorhouse, who came to Chicago and preached in Moody's church while Moody was away on business.

When he returned home, Moody asked his wife how the young Englishman got along.

"They liked him very much," she said, and then Moody wanted to know, "Well, did you like him?"

"Yes, very much, although he preaches a little differently from you."

"How is that?" asked Moody.

"Well," said his wife, "he tells the worst of sinners that God

loves them.”

“Then he is wrong,” said Moody.

At that, his wife simply said she thought Moody would approve when he heard for himself. And that he did. That night the church was packed, everyone brought their Bibles, and Moorhouse went through the Bible proving God’s love.

Moody said, “I never knew up to that time that God loved us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears. It was like news from a far country: I just drank it in... I used to preach that God was behind the sinner with a double-edged sword ready to hew him down. I have got done with that. I preach now that God is behind him with love, and he is running away from the God of love.”³

Moody’s career saw hundreds of thousands of converts, and millions more inspired in their walks with God.

So which is it? Are you a desperate sinner who needs to repent, dangling by a slender thread over the fires of hell? Or are you a much loved child running away from the love of Father who delights in you?

On a plain reading of the Bible, there is no doubt that both are true. And virtually every distortion of the “good news of the kingdom of God” is a corruption of the “both/and” of these two great ideas: sin and grace.

The Legalistic Approach

In my ministry, I regularly meet people crippled by legalistic upbringing. The “tells” are always the same. They’ve been pounded about sin, shamed for not obeying “the rules,” guilty for not performing, been made to feel they are an embarrassment to God, and convinced, “I am not worthy.”

It’s bad teaching, much like the yeast of the Pharisees—the

legalists of their day.

The error is: Sin without grace = legalism.

The Licentious Approach

I also regularly meet people crippled by licentious upbringing. The “tells” are just as revealing. They’ve been taught the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man—that man is basically good, life is a raw deal, “You’re really a good person,” and you “deserve” better.

This too is bad teaching, like the yeast of the Sadducees—the licentious of their day.

The error is: Grace without sin = license.

The Grace-Based Approach

The only really happy Christians I meet are the ones 1) convinced and “feel” that God delights in them and, 2) keenly aware that their hearts are, as Jeremiah said, “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

This is good teaching: God’s grace for man’s sin.

The principle is: Grace for sin = liberty

So there you have it: legalism, license, and liberty.

What Does This Mean to You?

First, you will suffer if you buy into even a microscopic change to the teachings of Jesus. Guard yourself against the “yeast-like” influence of any teaching that distorts God’s love or man’s sin. Any teaching that short-shifts God’s amazing love is a “legalistic” corruption of the gospel, and will grind people down. Any teaching that leaves out sin will lead to the “licentiousness” that turns them into the lukewarm Christians that grieve Jesus.

You may be more wired to start with sin. Your approach might be characterized as, "Sin that needs grace." I get that—we need to repent. That works, but if that's you, be careful to always make the transition from sin to the solution—God's love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Moody was right about the power of God's love to draw us in.

You may be more wired to start with grace. Your approach might be characterized as, "Grace for sin." That works too, and if that's you, be careful not to make light of sin. Finney was right. We do need to help people understand that the problem the gospel solves is not merely that they are unfortunate, but sinners who need a Savior. That goes for long time Christians too. Everyday we need to humbly repent and renew ourselves in surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.

Second, if you have been "yeasted," find a church that preaches the "whole" gospel. And if you are prone to self-deprecation, consider a church more wired to start with God's love. But if you are prone to self-aggrandizement, consider a church more wired to start with man's sin.

Third, protect yourself by knowing what keeps you in right relationship with God and right relationship with others—whether church, small groups, private meditations, or lunch with a friend.

Protect yourself from the yeast of bad teaching. Don't let it get stuck in your brain. Guard against any teaching that distorts the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

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*.

Lycopene: Prostate Cancer's Enemy

Tomatoes are the richest source of lycopene, and cooked tomato products, such as tomato paste, spaghetti sauce and pizza sauce, provide much higher amounts of the phytonutrient compared with fresh tomatoes or tomato juice.

Spaghetti sauce also contains olive oil, an added benefit that makes this particular food product an extremely good choice as a source of lycopene. That's because the oil assists in the body's absorption of the nutrient.

Many studies have shown a correlation between a high consumption of tomato products and a decreased incidence of prostate cancer. A diet rich in lycopene derived from tomato-based products can reduce the risk of prostate cancer by approximately 40 percent.

One study, the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, which tested 40,000 subjects, found that a man who would eat 10 servings or more of tomato-based foods per week could decrease his risk of prostate cancer by as much as 45 percent.

As an alternative to a diet like this, take a capsule of lycopene, 10 mg to 15 mg (milligrams), twice a day. This may be purchased at most health-food stores.

"Cruciferous" vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts and cauliflower also contain potent phytonutrients, including "indole-3-carbinol," otherwise known as I3C, which interferes with the ability of cancer cells to grow. Because of their phytonutrient content, these cruciferous vegetables significantly reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer.

A recent study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute stated that three or more servings of cruciferous vegetables per week can reduce the risk of prostate cancer by almost 50 percent. If you do not like the taste of these types of vegetables, you may want to buy I3C at the health-food store. Take a dose of approximately 200 mg three times a day.

Soy foods help prevent prostate cancer. In fact, Japanese men—who have a diet high in soy and low in fat—have a much lower risk of developing prostate cancer.

Q. I have a family history of prostate cancer. What steps can I take now to protect myself? –F.H., Doraville, Ga.

A. The most important risk factor for developing prostate cancer is a diet high in animal fat. That's because environmental chemicals tend to accumulate in the fat of the meat.

Because you have a family history of this cancer, you should decrease dramatically your intake of animal fats, especially red meat, whole milk, cheese, eggs, butter, fried foods, and cured meats such as ham, bacon, corned beef and so on.

Soy products help prevent prostate cancer, and you should add more of these to your diet. Soy foods include soymilk, soy protein, tofu, tempeh, miso soup, soy burgers and other soy meats.

Or, you may take a soy supplement that contains isoflavones, such as genistein. Studies recommend that the optimal daily dose of isoflavones is about 100 mg a day, taken in divided dosages.

In addition, there is a higher incidence of prostate cancer in men who work with heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury. Workers in chemical plants, such as petroleum plants, have a higher risk for prostate cancer as well.

I advise my patients who work with chemicals to wear gloves. I'll counsel a painter, for example, not to wash his hands with paint thinner after a job. Also, do not let gasoline or other petrol chemicals come in contact with your skin because these chemicals are easily absorbed into the body.

Finally, eat plenty of tomatoes, cooked tomato products and cruciferous vegetables.

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Time to Celebrate: It's Purim

This is by far *the* most fun and festive weekend of the year, in Israel. It's Purim!

How does one describe Purim in Israel? It's a combination of Halloween, Mardi Gras and New Year's Eve, all rolled into one.

It's a time for dressing up in costumes, having parties, carnivals, street festivals, and unfortunately a time for excessive drinking.

In fact the ultra-orthodox Jews believe it is commanded in the Bible to drink so much that you get (literally) fall-down drunk.

What Is Purim?

Purim is the celebration of the survival of the Jewish people (again) as described in the biblical book of Esther.

Esther tells the story of the evil Haman who was the right-hand man to the King of Persia. He hated the Jews and, like his successor, the current President of Iran, he wanted to wipe the Jews off the map.

But God had other plans. He strategically placed a Jewish woman in the palace, as the Queen of Persia! Esther was chosen by the earthly king for her beauty. But she was chosen by the heavenly King for her character.

"And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!'" (Esth. 4:13-16)

As Haman's plot to kill all the Jews moved forward, behind the scenes Esther and her uncle Mordecai were making plans of their own. Mordecai challenged Esther to see that she was in the position of influence for just this reason—to save her people. And save them she did.

After appealing to the king, the Jews were spared, and it was Haman instead who was killed.

This weekend in Israel, the most popular Purim-related food, is a triangle-shaped cookie called a *hamantaschen*. In Hebrew it's literally called a 'Haman's ear' cookie. And as the story of Esther is read in synagogues around the world, each time Haman's name is mentioned, people shake noisemakers to drown

out the sound of his name.

Why the Parties?

"And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur" (Esth. 9:20-26).

Many Jews, especially in Israel, take this passage very, very literally. With a special emphasis on "making them days of feasting and joy." Thus the celebrations.

But for kids, it's a lot of fun. They love to dress up and have parties in school.

Messianic Jewish congregations, like Tiferet Yeshua (which is funded by Maoz) will also hold purim parties. On this blog page, you'll see photos of our team setting up at the congregation, by hanging decorations and getting ready for all the fun.

Indeed Purim should be a time to celebrate and to thank God for delivering the Jewish people once again. It takes on special importance in these days as Iran (formerly known as

Persia) is once again threatening to destroy Israel. Clearly they learned nothing from their ancestor Haman.

Let's pray that Israel will learn from our foreparents, namely Esther and Mordecai, and that we will turn our faces back towards God, and put our trust in Him and Him alone.

Chaim Goldberg is the director of media of Maoz Israel.

Patrick Morley: A Man's Highest Honor

Not long after Jim and his wife moved to Orlando, his new neighbor invited him to attend The Man in the Mirror Weekly Men's Bible Study. For six months, Jim never said a word—not one peep.

He later reminisced, "If my table leader had asked me to talk, I would've been out of there in a flash and never come back. Somehow he knew not to push me."

One day his table leader asked, "Who would like to close us in prayer today?"

Jim spoke up, "I don't have much experience, but I'd like to give it a try."

For decades Jim has closed himself off to other people. He had been hurt so badly by his own mother and father that he said, "I had no friends. I was afraid that if I cared about someone they would just end up hurting me. So I walled myself in."

As Jim prayed, God took hold of his heart and began to change him. A couple of weeks later he asked, "Is there anything I

can do to help around here?"

I said, "Well, I need someone to go around to the table leaders about five minutes before 8:00 a.m. and give them the 'cut' sign so they can start wrapping it up."

"I can do that," he said.

A few weeks later Jim asked, "Is there anything else I can do?"

I said, "Well, the man who has been bringing the orange juice can't do that anymore. Would you like to pick up the orange juice?"

"I can do that," he said.

Jim continued to ask for more assignments, and he was faithful with every one of them. After about a year I said, "Why don't you become the Bible Study Administrator? I'll be in charge of teaching and you can be in charge of everything else." He liked that idea and held that position for 17 years.

We decided to train our men how to share their personal faith stories and also how to lead a person to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jim ate it up. He aced the worksheet that showed him how to explain what his life was like before Jesus, how he came to put his faith in Jesus, and what his life has been like since. He learned how to read Campus Crusade's *Four Spiritual Laws* pamphlet to someone, and how to lead them in a sinner's prayer.

Jim had no idea that God would soon call upon him to put his new skills to use.

A few months later, Jim received a call that his estranged son was in the hospital and about to die from AIDS. He and his wife caught the next plane to Cincinnati.

When they arrived on the Hospice ward of hospital, they were

shocked to see the gaunt, fragile silhouette of their prodigal son hooked up to a menacing array of IVs and medical devices. After they regained their composure God emboldened Jim to tell his son, "Tim, I love you very much." But Tim wasn't interested—he would have none of it.

Every morning for the next two weeks, Jim and his wife came to Tim's room. Every day, the first thing Jim did was to tell his son how much he loved him. They prayed for their son, but he didn't participate. They told Tim how sorry they were, and longed for reconciliation. After many days of resistance, the wall of hostility began to crumble. Finally Tim confessed to his mother, "Mom, I'm so sorry. I never gave dad a chance."

After 10 days the doctors told Jim and his wife that the end was near. They in turn told their son he was about to die. Jim said, "Tim, God loves you and wants to forgive your sins and bring you to live with Him in heaven. If you ask Him to forgive your sins and ask Jesus to be your Savior, you can be with God when you die. Would you like to do that?"

After some discussion, Tim asked God to forgive his sins and give him eternal life. That was on a Friday. He passed away on Sunday. Tim crucified his sins on Friday, and three days later he was raised from the dead.

Jim said later, "Leading my son to Jesus is the greatest thing I've ever done. I shudder to think of what might have happened if I hadn't moved to Orlando, gotten into a Bible study, and learned how to share my faith. When I look back it's so clear that God had a plan, even though it felt pretty random at the time. Discipleship has changed my life. Praise God."

To be a disciple of Jesus is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. When Jesus called Peter, James, John, and the others, He called them to become, what? Disciples. When Jesus left earth, the marching orders He left behind are to do, what? "Go and make disciples...." (see Matt. 28:19).

The word “disciple” comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means “pupil” or “learner.” When used in conjunction with Jesus, it came to mean “an adherent to the person and teachings of Jesus.” A disciple is called to live “in” Christ, equipped to live “like” Christ, and sent to live “for” Christ. Discipleship includes both the moment of *salvation* and the lifelong process of *sanctification*.

Everything we know about becoming a disciple, we know from the Bible. Jesus said, “I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.” (Luke 6:47, NIV). Disciples are born again. They have faith in Jesus. They lead lives of continual humility and repentance. They love the God who first loved them. They love one another. They become humble servants who put others first. They become holy, obedient vessels.

They make a full, total, complete surrender of all their dreams and ambitions to the Lordship of Christ. With their whole heart, they commit to follow Jesus wherever, whenever, whatever. Disciples take hold of their new creation natures. They submissively allow the Holy Spirit to transform them into a certain kind of man in character and conduct. Their lives recommend their message. They lead powerful lives transformed by Jesus.

We all admire the hero who makes the headlines for a single act of great courage. But let’s also give a nod to the millions of men who, like Jim, are courageously living out God’s plan each and every day in the details of their lives.

Note: The preceding is an excerpt from Patrick Morley’s book, The Fellowship of the Red Bandana. The idea is to show how men are transforming their lives by applying God’s Word to their seven most deeply felt needs. For the original article, visit

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.

Iranian Terror Plots Against Israelis Exposed

Two Iranian-backed terror cells were exposed in Nigeria and Cyprus this week, shedding more light on Iran's global terrorist activities against Israel and other Western targets.

The two disrupted terror plots are the latest in a string of plots, some foiled, others not, hatched by Iranians against Israeli targets around the globe, including in India, Bulgaria, Thailand, Kenya and Azerbaijan.

Nigeria's secret police said Wednesday they broke up a terrorist group backed by "Iranian handlers" who wanted to assassinate a former military ruler and gather intelligence about locations frequented by Americans and Israelis.

The State Security Service, responsible for domestic spying in Africa's most populous nation, offered no details about who controlled and bankrolled the group. However, it said it had arrested three suspected terrorists, including the group's leader, before they could launch attacks.

The leader's "lieutenants successfully conducted surveillance and gathering relevant data ... [for] possible attacks," secret police spokeswoman Marilyn Ogar said, reading from a

statement. "He personally took photographs of the Israeli culture center in Ikoyi, Lagos, which he sent to his handlers."

The service identified the leader as Abdullahi Mustaphah Berende, a 50-year-old leader of a local Shiite sect in Ilorin. Ogar said Berende was arrested along with two other suspected members, while another remained at large.

Berende first traveled to Iran in 2006 and studied at an Islamic university, said Ogar. He later returned in 2011 and learned how to use Kalashnikov assault rifles and pistols, as well as making and detonating homemade explosives, she said.

Ogar identified high-level targets of the group as former military ruler Ibrahim Babangida and former Sultan of Sokoto Ibrahim Dasuki, an important Islamic leader in Nigeria. The group also conducted surveillance on USAID, the U.S. Peace Corps and other targets, she said.

Berende also received some \$30,000 in cash to fund the group's planned operations.

Ogar did not take questions, nor did she elaborate on the statement. It remains unclear how close the group was to actually making any attack.

Nigeria, home to more than 160 million people, is largely divided into a Christian south and a Muslim north. Nigeria's Muslims are predominantly Sunni, though there is a Shiite community in the country. Iran has backed Shiite groups in Nigeria in the past.

Iran has previously been involved in police actions in Nigeria. In 2010, authorities at Lagos' Apapa Port found a hidden shipment of 107 mm artillery rockets, rifle rounds and other weapons from Iran. The shipment was supposedly bound for Gambia. A Nigerian and an Iranian with alleged ties to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps face criminal charges over the

shipment.

Meanwhile, a man being tried on allegations that he planned attacks on Israeli tourists in Cyprus has admitted to being a member of Hezbollah and staking out locations frequented by Israelis, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Lawyer Antonis Georgiades said that Hossam Taleb Yaacoub, a dual Swedish-Lebanese citizen traveling on a Swedish passport, told a court in Cyprus that he had come to the country on business with no plan to harm anyone. But Yaacoub, 24, also admitted that an unidentified man in Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based, gave him the "mission" of recording flight arrivals and bus routes of Israeli tourists and checking out a hospital parking lot.

Yaacoub's admissions follow accusations that Hezbollah was behind the July 2012 bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria, that killed five Israeli tourists and a local driver. Authorities in Cyprus have been reluctant to link the Cyprus case to the attack in Bulgaria, but both have fed concerns about terror activity in Europe. According to reports, the Hezbollah terror cell in Burgas used Australian and Canadian passports to travel into and out of Europe.

Georgiades said Yaacoub acted alone in Cyprus and that instructions had been given to him "in complete secrecy" by a man whose face he had not seen. The lawyer said that while his client's actions might raise suspicions, there was no hard proof that Yaacoub had been planning an attack.

Cyprus police arrested Yaacoub last July, several days before the Bulgarian bombing.

Yaacoub pleaded not guilty to eight charges, including conspiracy and consent to commit a criminal offense and participation in a criminal organization. According to police, Yaacoub initially faced 17 terrorism and terrorism-related charges, but prosecutors dropped any reference to terrorism in

the new charges without explanation.

According to notes explaining the charges, prosecutors say Yaacoub knowingly conspired with others to “abduct a person for the purpose of subjecting him to harm or attacking him to cause grievous bodily harm” and was prepared to carry out missions around the world on the orders of others against Israeli citizens.

Yaacoub is alleged to have carried out his surveillance and recording of movements between November 2011 and January 2012, and in the first week of July 2012.

The European Union, of which Cyprus is a member, has not formally designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and has resisted pressure from the U.S. and Israel to do so, arguing that such a move could destabilize the fragile government in Lebanon and contribute to instability in the Middle East.

The support of Hezbollah, a powerful political and guerrilla Shiite Muslim movement that is armed and funded by Iran, is vital to the authority of Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

Meanwhile, the Persian Gulf kingdom of Bahrain has accused Iran’s Revolutionary Guard of setting up a militant cell to assassinate public figures in Bahrain and attack its airport and government buildings.

Bahraini authorities said on Sunday they had arrested eight Bahrainis in the group, with links to Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

The kingdom, base for the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet, has been in political turmoil since protests erupted there in 2011, led by majority Shiite Muslims demanding an end to the Sunni monarchy’s political domination, and full powers for parliament.

Bahrain has accused Shiite Iran of fueling the unrest, an accusation Tehran has consistently denied.

For the original article, visit .

Stress and Anxiety Linked to Sperm Quantity

A man's ability to produce sperm may depend on his ability to handle stress, according to a new study from Italy.

Researchers found that men with higher levels of both short- and long-term stress and anxiety ejaculated less semen and had lower sperm concentration and counts. Men with the highest anxiety levels were also more likely to have sperm that were deformed or less mobile.

But one fertility researcher not involved in the new work said it's hard to know how the results apply to the general population because the research included men who were already seeking treatment at a fertility clinic.

"Do you become stressed from becoming infertile or is stress causing infertility?" asked Tina Jensen from Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, who has studied the effects of environmental factors on sperm quality.

Previous research has found that men going through fertility treatment or evaluation have higher stress levels than the average person, and some studies have also shown links between stress and sperm quality, according to the Italian researchers, led by Elisa Vellani of the European Hospital in Rome.

But no one had looked at whether short increases in a man's stress and long-term anxiety had differing effects, Vellani and her colleagues write in the journal *Fertility and Sterility*.

For the new study, the team recruited 94 men who were visiting the hospital's fertility clinic for the first time, and 85 other men who were not seeking fertility treatments as a comparison group.

Each man provided a semen sample for analysis. The men then answered two surveys that measured their current stress and long-term anxiety on scales ranging from 20 to 80 points, with higher scores indicating greater stress or anxiety.

On average, men in both groups scored between 37 and 40 on the tests, which is not considered "pathological," the researchers note.

When Vellani's group compared the 28 men with the lowest stress and anxiety levels to the 40 men with the highest levels, however, they found the stressed men were more likely to have lower sperm concentration and counts. The most stressed men's sperm were also more likely to be immobile and slightly more prone to DNA breaks.

"Taken together, our observations strongly suggest that (stress and anxiety) may represent a significant factor involved in male fertility," wrote the researchers, who did not respond to requests for comment.

They note in their report, however, that the association between stress and sperm quality was weaker in men who were not seeking fertility treatment, and who also seemed to have better sperm quality anyway.

For example, men seeking fertility treatment produced about 29 million sperm per milliliter of semen, compared to approximately 52 million sperm per milliliter produced by the

men in the comparison group.

By the World Health Organization's standards, anything above 15 million sperm per milliliter is considered normal.

Vellani and colleagues conclude that "social and psychological factors" should be considered when assessing possible causes of infertility and addressed as part of infertility treatment.

Jensen said that it's hard to tell how different the most and least stressed men were based on the study report, but agreed that the results are probably most relevant to men who are going through fertility treatment, which she said is itself very stressful.

"Generally, for normal men it's not important," Jensen said.

Os Hillman: Tearing Down Generational Strongholds

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4, NIV)

One of the great discoveries I made in later years in my walk with God has to do with living in victory over generational strongholds. The Bible speaks of punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generations (see Exodus 20:5).

The only way out of living under the curses of generational strongholds is to acknowledge them before the Father and repent of their reign in our lives. This breaks the curse's future effects.

A stronghold is a fortress of thoughts that controls and influences our attitudes. They color how we view certain situations, circumstances or people. When these thoughts and activities become habitual, we allow a spiritual fortress to be built around us. We become so used to responding to the "voice" of that spirit, that its abode in us is secure. All of this happens on a subconscious level.

As a businessman, I discovered that I had been influenced by a generational stronghold of insecurity and fear that manifested itself as control. This subconscious fear motivated me to become a workaholic, to seek recognition through activities, to control others' behavior, to avoid failure, and to have a relationship with God that was activity-based instead of relationally based.

One day God brought about a number of catastrophic events that forced me to look at what was behind these events. I found that the influence of these strongholds was at the core of these symptoms. The Bible speaks of this war on our souls.

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does ... We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete" (2 Cor. 10:3,5-6).

The steps to freedom for me came when someone shared that these were sins that I was harboring, and in order to walk free of their influence, I needed to repent of them. It was through the power of the cross that I no longer needed to be subjugated by their presence. Once I took this step, I began to walk free of their influences. Besides salvation, this became the most important discovery in my entire Christian walk.

My relationship to Christ changed immediately. I began to hear

God's voice. I began to trust Christ in areas I never thought possible. I could truly experience the love of Christ for the first time.

This knowledge helped me in business as well. One day I was in the middle of a contract negotiation with another Christian businessman. A lawyer had jumped in the middle of the negotiation. My friend began to surface many old feelings that were a source of pain from his past. When I perceived that a stronghold of insecurity and fear was at the core of his response, I interrupted his argumentative discussion with me and said with a very forceful tone, "I am no longer going to listen to the spirit of insecurity that is speaking through you right now! If you don't refrain from this, I am going to leave!"

My friend was taken aback. He looked at me quite startled. After a few moments, he agreed with my diagnosis. We talked through what he was feeling and completed our negotiation without further incident.

What are the true motivations of your heart? Have you ever looked deeply at these motivations? You might find that these subconscious motivations may be preventing you from experiencing the fullness of Christ in your life. Ask Him to reveal these and then repent of their influences.

Os Hillman is the author of the book *Change Agent*. His daily devotionals can be found at [. TGIF Devotional](#) is a daily email devotional written by Hillman designed to encourage and inspire you to bring the presence of God into your work life.

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

Jews Celebrate Purim With Esther Fast

Ta'anit Ester, or the Esther Fast, is a Jewish fast from dawn until dusk on Purim eve, commemorating the three-day fast observed by the Jewish people in the story of Purim.

Purim is celebrated by giving mutual gifts of food and drink, giving charity to the poor, a celebratory meal, and a public recitation of the Scroll of Esther in addition to many prayers.

In preparing for the Esther Fast, this question arose in my heart: "Could it happen again?" Could similar events as in the book of Esther happen again?

1. An international federation of 127 nations
2. An evil man gaining influence by lies and deception
3. A law passed to kill all the Jews in the world (and by inference, all Christians who support Israel)
4. Iran (Persia) playing a key role in the plan to annihilate the Jews
5. (Seeing Esther as a figure of the church): The worldwide church enjoying a royal, bridal-type intimacy, grace and beauty in worship
6. The church challenged to recognize her own Jewish roots
7. The church interceding and fasting for the salvation of the Jewish people
8. At the very last moment of seeming total disaster, there is a sudden and supernatural turnaround
9. The people of God fight with authority and gain the victory
10. The kingdom is transferred into the hands of godly people, resulting in joy for all nations

Well, it could happen again, couldn't it?

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (Esth. 4:16)

Preparing Jerusalem for The King

To be a congregation in Jerusalem is an extraordinary privilege. There is simply no other city on earth that compares to Jerusalem.

The Lord spoke through the prophet in Ezekiel 5:5, “This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations” ... Jerusalem, the center of the nations? Yes, because Jerusalem is uniquely chosen by God to be His eternal home. Psalm 132:13-14 declares, “For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying ‘This is My resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it’” (NIV).

Several years ago I attended a conference in which Teddy Kollek, then serving as mayor of Jerusalem, addressed the gathering. To my surprise, I was called to the platform to pray for the mayor. Immediately I felt my heart pumping and the blood rushing to my cheeks.

How do you pray for the mayor of Jerusalem? Yet, as I stood before the people I sensed the Spirit of God pray through me. I uttered, “Lord, you set up kings and governors to rule your people, and I know that includes mayors. Give Mayor Teddy Kollek the wisdom to know how to prepare the city of Jerusalem

for the return of the King of Kings. In Jesus' name, Amen."

God is looking for people to prepare Jerusalem for the King. I believe the day of the Messiah's return is not far away. The world is experiencing excruciating labor pains—and the time between contractions is lessening. No one knows the day or the hour but we can feel something in our bones; His return is soon.

How can we prepare Jerusalem for the King's return? A look at Psalm 48 provides us with the answer.

Witness

Knowing the time is short, we in Jerusalem need to witness while we can. In Psalm 48:12-13 we read, "Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them..." Yeshua communicated the good news using physical things in this city as tangible illustrations; whether it was a pool of water, an upper room, an olive garden or a sepulchre. The city of Jerusalem continues to be a treasure house full of illustrations for the gospel. Everywhere we walk in this city we find conversation pieces that naturally lead to spiritual things.

In Jerusalem we need to increase our witness in ways that reflect a deep understanding and love for this city. It means learning her language, knowing her history, understanding her customs and identifying with her inhabitants. When Yeshua came to live in this land, he became so much a part of this specific human context that many never even recognized that he had come from somewhere else. His enemies accused him of many things, but never of being a foreigner.

The very existence of Jerusalem today—after a sordid history of rebellion, idolatry and judgment—conveys the marvelous message of salvation by God's grace. We need to frequently remind Jerusalemites of God's eternal plan of salvation for this city. Isaiah 12:4-6 encourages to witness in the

following way: "... make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Authentic Praise and Worship

Psalm 48:1 says, "Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God ..." If there's any place in the world where the praises of God should be lifted high, it is in Jerusalem. Our aim is to have worship that springs from the heart, yet is sensitive to the unique character and culture of Jerusalem. While some of our songs of praise are the same as those sung in the nations, we also sing fresh new songs composed by local believers.

A Call to Israel as well as the Nations

Psalm 48:2 speaks of Jerusalem as the joy of the whole earth. Jerusalem is not just a city for Jews, but a meeting place for people of all peoples and tongues. In 2 Chron. 2:17, it says Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were in Israel, after the census his father had taken; and they were found to be 153,600. Thousands of aliens lived and worked in Jerusalem 3,000 years ago. Solomon didn't seem to regard foreigners as a nuisance; in fact it says in the following verse, He assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working (see also 1 Kin. 5:15).

In those days, foreigners enjoyed certain civic rights and privileges. They could also take part in the three great annual feasts. Israelites were warned not to oppress foreigners, since they themselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Foreigners were to be loved and treated like native Israelites, for God loves them and watches over them. Needy foreigners were to be given assistance.

Jerusalem will one day become the joy of the whole earth.

Already more Christians come to Israel as visitors than Jews (ironically, even more so in times of crisis). King of Kings Community desires to serve Israelis, but also visitors, volunteers and foreign workers.

Aliens are not intruders, but welcome additions. Our congregation is called to express the tangible reality of the one new man as taught in Ephesians 2, where the wall of partition between Jews and non-Jews is abolished once and for all. In the Kingdom of God, there are simply no second-class citizens.

Passionate Prayer

The only hope of survival for Jerusalem is God's intervention. Jerusalem's security is not her walls and citadels, but her God. Psalm 48:3 says, "...he (God) has shown himself to be her fortress." Verse 8 says, "God makes her secure forever."

We have a vital part to play in the peace and prosperity of this city. Psalm 122:6 tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. It is the prayers of God's people that will keep Jerusalem in these precarious days.

Paul tells us that our battle is not merely flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Yet, as one person said, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

We are committed to pray regularly for the peace and salvation of Jerusalem. The Lord speaks to us in Isaiah 62:6-7, "I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."