

God's Prophetic Promises Make Israel Highly Favored

If I didn't know what the outcome was going to be, then this statement, made by Essam al-Aryan, Muslim Brotherhood advisor to Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, would be very disturbing.

"There will be no such thing as Israel, instead there will be Palestine which will be home to Jews."

Israeli media outlet reported that Al-Aryan made that statement Tuesday in the London-based newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat*. The statement created an obviously anticipated firestorm in the Israeli media by inferring that Israel will be

"wiped out" within a decade.

The Muslim Brotherhood official, who also serves as the Freedom and Justice Party's Deputy Chairman, explained that Jews must return to Egypt in order to make room for Palestinian refugees, and that Israel is destined to collapse.

"There will be no such thing as Israel, instead there will be Palestine which will be home to Jews, Muslims and Druze," al-Aryan said.

While this is certainly news to Israelis and those, like me, who stand with Israel, you can rest assured that al-Aryan means exactly what he says. On Thursday, he said that the return of Egyptian Jews to Israel would enable Palestinians to return to their homeland.

"Every Egyptian has a right to return especially if he is making room for a Palestinian," he said. "I want to enable the Palestinians to return to their land. I call upon the Jews; Egypt is worthier of you than Israel."

In November 2012, members of the United Nations voted to grant Palestine status as a non-member observer state against the adamant wishes of both Israel and the United States. It seems as if the entire Middle East, bar Israel, has embraced the notion of Palestine becoming a state and has shown its support for that notion.

Obviously, no one has consulted God or the Bible about this. Amos 9:15, the final verse of the book, says "I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the Lord your God."

That is a promise God made to the Jewish people, and He is a God that does not lie. It took quite a while for God to fulfill that promise to his people. The state of Israel didn't exist for 1,878 years (70 A.D. to 1948) but the state Israel still exists after 74 years and will continue to exist until the second coming of Christ.

When contemplating God's hedge of protection around Israel, another scripture in Genesis comes to mind. God was speaking to Abram, who eventually became Abraham, the Father of Many Nations:

"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12:3)

And there is Isaiah 60:12, which says, *"For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, And those nations shall be utterly ruined."*

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has vowed to destroy Israel, describing it as a "fake regime" that "must be wiped off the map." Russia and North Korea both have sold missiles to Iran capable of carrying nuclear warheads. As predominantly Muslim states, surrounding countries Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia certainly have no love for Israel, either.

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority certainly would like nothing more than to see Israel annihilated.

But know this, Israel, you are indeed protected, if only by Isaiah 62:3-4: *“You shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed ‘forsaken,’ nor shall your land any more be termed desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”*

What God is essentially saying here is that the Israel we know today will be transformed according to His will from a land and people that had been forsaken and desolate into one that is His delight. No man or armies of men, nor any demonic beings can affect this prophetic promise from the Most High God.

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IDF Protects More Than Its

Own

Through years of experience, the IDF has developed the role of the population liaison officer to best serve its purpose—managing the dialogue between the IDF's combat units and the local civilian population. Today, population liaison officers undergo the necessary training to join combat units, in order to meet the civilian population, even on the front line.

“Part of the job of the population liaison officer is to explain to the commanders the significance of dealing with civilians, and in fact after (Operation) Cast Lead it became very apparent,” said Lt. Col. Guy Shtulz, head of the Civilian Component of Warfare Branch within COGAT. “During Operation Pillar of Defense, when the option of a ground invasion was a possibility, we hoped to integrate the lessons of Cast Lead.”

The population liaison officers advocate for and protect the civilian population, locate humanitarian channels, coordinate emergency aid and evacuation of casualties, tend to international organizations, and protect the local population's facilities and sensitive sites such as schools, mosques and hospitals

“The job of the population liaison officer is first of all to assist our combat forces and to enable them to carry out their missions in the best way,” said Maj. David Yaso, the population liaison officer of the Paratroopers Brigade. “It is understood by the infantry soldiers and commanders that the work of the population liaison officers is necessary, and so they cooperate with them.”

The population liaison officer's role includes documenting what happens in the field. Lt. Col. Shtulz explained that some of the officers are equipped with cameras and part of their work includes making records.

“If there is use of the civilian population as human shields—we document it,” he said.

Maj. Yaso said that during Operation Pillar of Defense, population liaison officers were well prepared to be embedded with combat forces.

“We didn’t wait for a combat situation; the population liaison officers were already prepared beforehand. Our unit has been trained for years,” Maj. Yaso said. “The population liaison officers are combat soldiers in every respect, but they have a relative advantage which is the understanding and speaking of the Arabic language.”

Training for these officers is extensive, and they must be highly skilled to take such a position.

“The population liaison officer’s task is to manage the dialogue between the sides,” Deputy Head of the Operations Directorate for DCL Gaza Maj. Eyal Dror told the IDF website. “They need to deal with responses from citizens, with the Arabic and with the dilemmas that require finding a balance between the military need and the humanitarian one.”

Continue God’s Work at All Cost

When God called me to build the **house of prayer**, I knew it would come with opposition. I’ll admit, I never thought it would play out with literal Sanballats. But that’s just what has happened—and often these Sanballats come in sheep’s clothing.

Sanballat is an enemy of **revival** and brings strong opposition to what God wants to build. Sanballat is a critical persecutor who brings false accusations against the work and the people putting their hand to the plow. And Sanballat will rally others to the opposition against you, like Tobiahs and Geshems, just like he did to Nehemiah.

The spirit of Sanballat's goal is to discourage you—to get you to quit what God has called you to do. This spirit's overarching mission is to thwart God's work. It's a judgmental, mocking, insidious spirit that, again, sometimes comes in sheep's clothing. Someone flowing in this spirit may even offer to come alongside and help you, but its intentions are to tear down—not build up—the figurative wall God is calling you to build.

A Trio of Sinister Sanballats

Since I opened the doors to the house of prayer in Fort Lauderdale, I've encountered a trio of "Sanballats." All three initially presented as sold out, on fire intercessors with a passion to build the house of prayer. But, soon enough, all three manifested their true intentions: to distract the builders from God's work. These deceived Sanballats may not even realize they are on an assignment from the evil one.

The first Sanballat came in with a commitment to **pray** five days a week. That lasted about a month before the truth manifested. When impure motives came to the light leadership called him out. That's when the Sanballat spirit took its mask off and began persecuting, bringing false accusations, and calling down God's judgment. He tried to rally others to his side but God frustrated his purposes and he faded out as quickly as appeared on the scene.

The second Sanballat came in with the line "You need me! You can't do this without me!" She was actually faithful to **pray** and even help with administrative work in the beginning. But

soon enough she began criticizing the model and the leadership. The false accusations were much more subtle, laced with feigned sincerity, but they were accusations nonetheless. This Sanballat left for another **prayer** ministry she felt could bring her more recognition.

The third Sanballat was almost identical. She came in with a commitment to pray five days a week. She never did fulfill that commitment. It was a lot of talk and inconsistent action, along with a critical, presumptuous spirit. When corrected, the false accusations came flowing in against leadership. When those accusations went unanswered, this spirit influenced her to “declare war” and demand a position in the house of prayer.

Dealing With the Sanballat Spirit

Maybe you recognize this Sanballat spirit flowing in your midst. Any time you set out to build something for God, you will find enemy opposition. So how do you handle the spirit of Sanballat? Do what Nehemiah did.

When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem heard about Nehemiah’s plans to rebuild the Jerusalem wall, they were at first grieved. When they saw Nehemiah was executing his vision, they laughed him to scorn, despised the builders and accused them of rebelling against the king (see Neh. 2:19).

Nehemiah’s answer: “The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Neh. 2:18). Don’t shrink back from confronting this spirit with the truth of God’s Word. If you are confident in what God has called you to do, stand and build despite the scorners, despisers and accusers. And don’t give them the right to build alongside you—or to speak into the work.

When Sanballat heard that Nehemiah and his crew were making progress on the wall, he was furious, indignant and began mocking the Jews. Sanballat and his clan began speaking

against the work (Neh. 4:1-3) and conspiring to attack the work (Neh. 4:6-8). Even after the wall was rebuilt, Sanballat didn't give up. His demonic clan still sought to bring harm (Neh. 6:1-3).

The nonsense did not distract Nehemiah. He stayed focused on erecting the gates. As a matter of fact, he didn't even go deal with his detractors face to face. He sent a messenger to them saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?" (Neh. 6:3).

Stubborn Sanballat continued demanding a meeting with Nehemiah. The Bible says he sent the same message to Nehemiah four times and four times Nehemiah offered the same response. Sanballat then started making false accusations against Nehemiah and his motives and appointed prophets to spread lies about him (Neh. 6:6-7) in attempts to scare him away from the work. Sanballat was trying to force him out of own ministry!

Nehemiah's response: He ignored the threats and put it in God's hands: "My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid" (Neh. 6:14).

Don't Stop God's Work!

Finally, the wall was built. But it could have turned out another way if Nehemiah wasn't resolute in his mission. Again, any time you set out to build something for God, you will find enemy opposition.

Of course, it won't always be Sanballat, although this spirit is one that takes aim at builders of the wall and repairers of the breach. Many times it's religious spirits or Jezebel spirits that try to infiltrate the work God has called you to do. In my Sanballat experiences, Jezebel and religion also joined in the assault.

Ultimately, the response is similar: Be led by the **Holy Spirit** as to when to confront and when to disregard the enemy's accusations. Be led by the Holy Spirit as to when to meet with your persecutors and when to send messengers to deal with them. But whatever you do, don't stop God's work! Amen.

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Don't Rush Through Major Decisions

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from Patrick Morley's book *Devotions for Couples* (Zondervan Publishers, 2008).

During the course of a year most of us only make two or three truly major decisions. These might include whether or not to change jobs, which job to take, whether or not to move to another city or across town, how many children to have, which church to attend, what kind of personal ministry to undertake, what kind of car to buy (and do I really need a new one?), how to adjust lifestyle to a reduced income, and so on. Yet, these comprise some of the most important and difficult decisions we ever make.

Most of the major decisions we make in life are not dictated by Scripture. So what do we do?

A Perspective

Here are some considerations to help make better decisions:

1. Know that many major decisions do turn out wrong. A man became restless after twenty one years with the same company. He could not isolate the source of his feelings, but decided he needed a change. Since that time he has bounced around from job to job, never keeping the same position more than three years.

A couple decided to move to a "better" neighborhood. There was nothing wrong with their present neighborhood. In fact, they loved their neighbors, the location was convenient, crime was low, the mortgage payment was a pittance, and they couldn't really find anything wrong with their existing home. Their new house required much more upkeep than they had figured. The higher payments created a great deal of tension between them. Soon they began pointing fingers at each other, blaming one another for deciding to leave the old neighborhood.

If you are not content with yourself where you are, you will not be content where you are going. It is an error to think that changing our circumstances alone will make us happy or content. Often we cling to some selfish ambition that is at odds with leading a surrendered life.

2. Count the cost of making the wrong decision. Perhaps the greatest lesson I've learned about making major decisions is the cost of making the wrong decision. When decisions turn out right, "I" am brilliant. When they turn out wrong, "you" really blew it! Think about this next statement: The greatest time waster in our lives is the time we spend undoing that which ought not to have been done in the first place. Do you agree?

Usually we can recover if we make a bad choice. Sometimes, however, we can't. Never make a decision that bets the entire ranch on being right.

3. Most decisions are obvious given enough information and time. When do we make poor decisions? When we don't have our facts straight and when we are hasty. Keep collecting data. Write it down so you don't forget it. The mind by itself may blow one small fact all out of proportion. Writing it down puts things in perspective. Talk to wise counselors; get other people's perspective. Talk to experts who have skill better to operate from fact than feeling.

Ours is an impatient world, a hasty world, an impulsive world. If my computer takes three seconds to sort 20,000,000 bytes of data instead of one second I get frustrated. Let's get real! It takes time to make a wise, major decision. The mind may know quickly what to do, but it takes time for our emotions to catch up. We have vested positions which only time can change. We must wait for that "gut feeling," which is our subconscious mind informing our conscious mind of the results of its thorough and complete analysis.

The Means of Guidance

The major decisions we make will come most easily if we abide in Christ daily, begin each dawn in humble surrender to God, seek to please Him in all our ways, and live our lives out of the overflow of our personal relationship with Jesus. To assist us God has given means of guidance. Let's briefly explore each of seven different means God has given us to help discern His will.

1. **The Bible.** The single most important question to ask is, "Has God already spoken on this matter?" The Bible is chock full of commands (which are duty) and principles (which are wise). We don't have to wonder if not reporting \$1,800 of incidental income to the IRS is God's will. We know it is. As the Bible says, "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Obedience

is the trademark of a biblical Christian. Talk over the Scriptures together.

2. **Prayer.** Jesus said, "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24). Over and over and over again we are invited to present our requests to God. Prayer is the currency of our personal relationship with Christ. Spend it liberally. Pray over major (why not all?) decisions.
3. **The Holy Spirit.** God lives in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is our counselor, convicter, comforter, converter, and encourager. Consciously depend upon Him and He will both guide you and intercede for you. "The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:27). The Holy Spirit is the one Who "clothes" us with power from on high. The Holy Spirit will never lead in contradiction to His written Word.
4. **Conscience.** In seeking God's will we must live by the pledge of a good conscience toward God and other people. "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God" (1 John 3:21). Keep in mind that while a guilty conscience provides clear evidence you are not in God's will, a clear conscience may not guarantee you have correctly discerned God's will. Conscience is more effective as a red light than a green light. To go against conscience is neither wise nor safe.
5. **Circumstances.** Some people are born short, some tall. Some black, some white. Some in America, some in Argentina. Some to poor parents, some to rich. God's will is often revealed clearly by the circumstances in which we live. "He determines the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17: 26). If you want to purchase a house which will require a \$100,000 mortgage and you can only qualify for \$75,000, then circumstances have told you God's will.

6. **Counsel.** “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22). Often we need nothing more than a good listener to help us crystallize our thoughts into coherent words. Other times, we need the advice of a trusted friend. Seek out each other’s counsel.
7. **Fasting.** Fasting is a lost spiritual discipline in this age. Fasting slows down the physical functions so that the mind can be more in tune with Christ. Fasting demonstrates a seriousness about your concern to the Lord.

Employ these constituted means for finding the will of God. Do them only occasionally and it will amount to nothing more than priming a rusty pump. Do them regularly and the will of God will gush forth like deep well springs.

A Process

Here is a useful, practical process for finding the will of God. Keep in mind this is not a process for getting our own way. We must be cautious that we truly want what God wants. Otherwise we will twist things to our own way. Each step builds on itself, and you may find the answer becomes obvious at any point along the way. If it doesn’t make itself clear, keep moving through the steps until it does.

1. Write down the decision exactly. Nothing clarifies our thinking more quickly than paper and pencil. It’s said that half the solution is knowing the problem. Precisely what is the decision? What are the choices?
2. Next, write out a “purpose statement” which precisely explains why you are considering this decision. It is helpful not only to know what you are trying to decide, but why. “Why” are you trying to decide “what” you are trying to decide? What is the context? Do you have to move? Is it a need or a want? Are you unhappy?
3. Next, submit your “purpose statement” to a series of

questions. Here are some suggestions:

4. What are you trying to accomplish, and why?
5. What is your objective, or desired end result?
6. What are your expectations and why?
7. How does this decision fit in with your calling?
8. Are you considering this from a sense of calling or duty?
9. What would Jesus do if He were you? What is the “next” right step to take?
10. If your answer still hasn’t become obvious, list each option on a separate sheet of the left side list the advantages of that option; on the right side list the disadvantages. As Louis Agazziz said, “A pencil is one of the best of eyes.” Usually, one option will prove itself clearly desirable, or undesirable, at this point.
11. At all times, employ the seven steps of guidance to discern God’s will covered above.
12. If the answer still hasn’t come, wait. You can never predict what God is doing in your life. God is not a man that He would ever work for your harm. God is committed to working for your good. Commit to let God set the agenda. Never push God. If the answer isn’t obvious, trust Him to make it clear in His timing. You can rush ahead if you must, but you do so at your own peril. Better to wait upon the Lord. Give Him the time He wants to work some things into and out of your character. And remember this: God is not the author of confusion. Satan, however, is. If you are still confused, wait. Peace is the umpire.

Let me encourage you to keep this article in a handy place. Review it when you seem to get stuck on a major decision.

Click [here](#) for the original article at .

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*.

History: Return of the Bnei Menashe

A “lost tribe” has come home to Israel and the return could be part of biblical prophecy.

CBN News was at Ben Gurion Airport when more than 50 members of the Bnei Menashe tribe made history.

The group was just the first of a long-awaited migration. Nearly 2,000 tribe members live in Israel, but five years ago the government stopped their return.

“I feel like I’m home,” one tribe member said.

Another told CBN News they were, “excited, overwhelmed. And unexplainably, you know, feeling in my heart. I feel like crying. I’m emotional, total loss for words.”

A recent decision now permits all the Bnei Menashe, about 7,000, to return.

“The ten tribes may have been lost to us for many centuries, but they were never lost in terms of their identity,” Michael Freund, with Shavai Israel, told CBN News.

Freund worked for years to help bring about this moment. He said he believes the Bnei Menashe return fulfills of biblical prophecy.

“The prophet Isaiah says ‘al tera qui ka ani,’ which means ‘fear not for I am with you, God says,” Freund said. “‘Me israch avi zerecha,’” which translates ‘from the east I will bring your descendants.’”

“These are the descendants of Israel and they are coming back from the east,” he said. “It is as if the headline of today was written by Isaiah the prophet 25 or 2,600 years ago. It’s a phenomenal thing.”

The Assyrian Empire exiled the tribe of Manassah almost 3,000 years ago. Although they settled in northeast India, tribe members kept their Jewish roots for more than 2,000 years.

Several Christian organizations helped bring them home.

“In fact, the Hebrew prophets said when God gathered His Jewish people back from all the ends of the earth in the last days that there would be Gentiles helping and bringing them back,” David Parsons, with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, told CBN News.

“He said, ‘I’ll beckon to the Gentiles.’ And so we have this invitation from God Himself to be involved in this Aliya,” he said.

Another 300 tribe members are scheduled to arrive in January, with thousands more yet to come.

Click here for the original article at .

God’s Work Knows No

Limitations

When you hear about a man several thousand years ago interpreting dreams and surviving the night in a den of hungry lions, you might be inclined to say, "Impossible. I don't believe you. I won't believe it unless I see it with my own eyes."

Or if you saw Lazarus raised from the dead, a lame man walking, or any number of other supernatural interventions into the natural order of creation.

Imagine for a moment that you lived then and saw those miracles. Suppose someone prophesied that one day people will take coal and oil from the earth, convert it into fuel and electricity to power refrigerators, lights, air-conditioners, microwaves, automobiles, trains, and airplanes. Communication will be through books, newspapers, telephones, movies, radio, television, computers, email, the Internet, iTunes, e-books, Facebook, and smart phones.

Imagine being regaled with stories about heart stents, chemotherapy, pacemakers, arthroscopic surgery, the concept of the United States, a Fortune 500 company, an Apple Computer store, Starbucks, and the New York Stock Exchange. What would you say?

You might be inclined to say, "Impossible. I don't believe you. I won't believe it unless I see it with my own eyes."

What God did sparingly then, He does routinely today. Jesus raised a man from the dead. Now defibrillators routinely raise men from the dead every day. Jesus made a lame man walk. Today thousands of people routinely receive artificial limbs that let them walk.

What will the world be like in 2,000 more years that today we think would take a miracle? Time travel, dematerializing

matter for instant transport, worm hole travel to yet undiscovered galaxies in personal pleasure vehicles?

Disbelief in miracles depends on assuming God would limit Himself to working only across time and cultures. But why would He do that? There is nothing in the Bible or the character of God to even remotely suggest He has limited Himself to dealing uniformly with different eras. When thought of this way and given the miracles we live with every day, it takes more intellectual effort to disbelieve than believe in miracles.

Click here to see the original article at .

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Men, Give Your Wife a Voice

Submission isn't silence. If you don't give your wife a voice, or if you stifle her voice for 5, 10, or more years, you will lose her, even if she doesn't divorce you.

What does not giving your wife a voice look like in practice? If your wife feels like she doesn't have an honest say in major decisions, or if she feels like her opinions are not valued, if she feels like you try to control her, if you make major decisions without her input, if you devalue her input, or if she doesn't feel comfortable speaking her mind, then she

likely feels that her voice doesn't matter. These are a few examples.

If you want to know how your wife feels about this, ask, "Do you feel like you have a voice in our marriage, or do I stifle your voice or try to control you?" Then listen, and don't give an overly quick reply. If you don't take time to hear her heart, that will cut off communication—another perfect example of not giving her a voice.

And, if you come under conviction and respond today to God's grace and repent of this sin, it will take two or more years for her to trust you again—and there will be setbacks along the way.

But from personal experience I can say, "It's worth it." So if this is you too, start today—before it's too late.

Jewish Rabbi: Jesus' Coming Foreshadowed in Old Testament

The book of Daniel describes one of the most dramatic appearances of the Son of God in the entire Old Testament. The passage in Daniel 3 tells of three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were sentenced to death for refusing to worship an idol that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon erected and commanded all his subjects to revere.

The king was enraged that they had questioned his supreme authority and ordered that they be thrown into a furnace and it be heated to seven times its normal intensity. The fire became so hot that it killed the soldiers assigned to push them into the inferno.

But when the three were in the blaze, Daniel states: “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’

“‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God’” (vv. 24-25).

What Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fire—the fourth man—was God in human form, Yeshua (Jesus). Many times I have been asked, “If Jesus is Messiah, why isn’t there anything about Him in the Tanakh (the Jewish Old Testament)?” The answer is, there are many references to Yeshua in the Old Testament—throughout the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy), the books of the prophets and the other Scriptures.

In fact, when I began to read the Bible with an open mind, I was astounded to discover that Yeshua is mentioned more than 150 times in the Old Testament. The apostle Paul even used the Tanakh to teach about Yeshua: “[The leaders of the Jews] arranged to meet Paul on a certain day. ... From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23, NIV).

Understanding the Scriptures—both the Old Testament and New Testament—is a matter of spiritual revelation. As Jesus Himself said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Mark 4:9, NKJV).

Everyone who reads the Scriptures, then, does so through either a lens of faith or a lens of doubt. If one reads the Tanakh with an open mind, he or she will see many references to Yeshua.

For example, the name *Yeshua* means “salvation” or “God saves.” His name signifies why He came into this world—to rescue us

from the penalty we deserve because of our sins. Let's take a look at a few times Yeshua's name is mentioned in the Old Testament (with emphasis added):

- "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my *salvation*" (Ex. 15:2). In other words, "He has become my *Yeshua*."
- "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation [*Yeshua*] among all nations" (Ps. 67:1-2).
- "And it will be said ... 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in His *salvation* [*Yeshua*]' " (Is. 25:9).

You see, Yeshua is much more than a name in the human sense, such as Jonathan, David or William. It is a description of His mission: to bring salvation to people everywhere.

Still I am often asked, "OK, but why didn't the writers of Scripture tell us plainly, 'The Messiah's *name* will be Yeshua'?"

My answer simply is: God does not work that way. Studying His Word is like working on a jigsaw puzzle. He gives us a piece of the complete picture here, another piece there, and so on. The evidence is all there, but we must do our part. He wants us to seek Him wholeheartedly, and when we do, we will find Him (see Deut. 4:29).

The Lord in Human Form

Finite human beings simply cannot understand the greatness or holiness of an infinite Creator. The only way we can even begin to comprehend God is to understand Him in finite terms.

This is where the concept of the Messiah comes in. Isaiah 53:1 asks, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" In the context of this chapter, it is obvious that when Isaiah says "arm of the Lord," he is referring to Messiah. They are the same.

The Hebrew Scriptures tell of a number of occasions before the birth of Jesus when God revealed Himself in human form. Theologians refer to these instances as *theophanies*.

Theophany is Greek, meaning “God” (*theo*) and “to reveal oneself” (*phaneia*). As already mentioned, Daniel 3:24-25 is one of the Old Testament’s most dramatic theophanies. But there are many others. Here are a few others among the more than 152 contained in the Old Testament:

The Son of Man. Four chapters later, the same “Son of God” figure who Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fire makes another appearance, this time to Daniel in a vision.

Daniel writes: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

“He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14, NIV).

Yeshua often used the title “Son of Man” when referring to Himself (see Matt. 20:18, 24:30, 44; Mark 10:45, 14:62; John 3:13). Obviously this Son of Man Daniel saw is divine, or He would not accept the worship of “nations and men of every language.”

The Mysterious King. The first theophany may be a bit controversial due to scholarly interpretation of the passage, but it is worth mentioning. In Genesis 14 the patriarch Abram (Abraham) has a mysterious encounter with King Melchizedek:

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and

earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Gen. 14:18-20, NIV).

Abraham *tithed* to Melchizedek, which says a great deal about his regard for this man who was both a priest *and* a king (as we’ll see). Abraham is the paramount character in Judaism—the father of the Jewish people. And yet he pays homage to Melchizedek by giving him a tithe. He clearly recognizes that Melchizedek is greater than he is.

Centuries later, the psalmist tells us that Messiah is “a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4). While this is a mysterious passage and there are differences of opinion about it, some Bible scholars believe that Melchizedek was God in human form.

In fact, the name Melchizedek comes from two Hebrew words: *melech*, which means “king,” and *Ts’dek*, which means “righteous” or “righteousness.” Hence, “king of righteousness.” I believe this is the first Old Testament reference to Yeshua.

The Judge With a Warning. The next theophany takes place in Genesis 18. The “angel of the Lord” appears to Abraham along with two other angels, who all look like men, to warn the patriarch of His plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham clearly understands that one of the men he is talking to is God Himself, for he refers to Him as “the judge of all the earth” (v. 25).

The Nameless Stranger. Another appearance of God in human form is found in Genesis 32, where Jacob, father of the 12 tribes of Israel, wrestles all night with a stranger. Jacob holds his own in the fight and then asks his foe for a blessing. The Bible tells us the stranger answered:

“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’

Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray.' And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved'" (vv. 28–30, NKJV).

Peniel means, "face of God." The meaning of this story is that Jacob believed he had been face-to-face with God.

The Angel of the Lord. Judges 6 says that "the angel of the Lord" sat down under an oak tree and had a conversation with Gideon, a man chosen to rescue the Israelites from their oppressors, the Midianites. At first Gideon does not realize who the "angel of the Lord" is. When he discovers the truth, he thinks he is going to die.

"But the Lord said to him, 'Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.' So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace" (Judg. 6:23-24).

God the Son. In the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet talks about a "Son" who will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (see v. 6).

No devout Jew, and especially not a prophet like Isaiah, would refer to a mere human being as "Mighty God" or "Everlasting Father." This language would be blasphemous if it were not true.

Theophanies occurred, then, throughout the Old Testament. Perhaps their purpose was to begin to give human beings a glimpse of God in terms we could understand. If Jesus is indeed God in human form, then it follows that these theophanies were appearances of Him.

I am convinced that Yeshua HaMaschiach was God, who came to Earth in human form so that we might better relate to Him and understand Him.

Jesus and the Ancient Rabbis

In the years since I came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, I have heard from many rabbis who insist that I am misusing Old Testament Scriptures. They tell me I am stretching the meaning of some passages and finding references to a Messiah where they do not really exist. I also have been told that belief in the Messiah was never a central tenet of Judaism. Some make it sound as if the Messiah's arrival was not really that important.

I beg to differ. And Israel's ancient rabbis felt differently from modern rabbis about the importance of the Messiah. I know this because I have studied their words in the Targums.

The Targums are ancient paraphrases of Old Testament Scriptures. The oldest of them, Targum Onkelos, was completed about 60 years before the birth of Yeshua. And the newest, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, was finished by the end of the seventh century.

The Targums were written because most Jews could no longer understand or read Hebrew. In Yeshua's time, most of them spoke and wrote in Greek or Aramaic.

Here is Micah 5:2 as recorded in Targum Jonathan, which was completed less than 100 years after Yeshua lived:

"And you, O Bethlehem Ephrath, you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands in the house of Judah, from you shall come forth before Me the Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, He whose name was mentioned from before, from the days of creation."

Consider Genesis 3:15, from Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, written in the seventh century:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between the offspring of your sons and the offspring of her sons; and it shall be that when the sons of the woman observe the

commandments of the Torah, they will direct themselves to smite you on the head, but when they forsake the commandments of the Torah, you will direct yourself to bite them on the heel. However, there is a remedy for them, but no remedy for you. They are destined to make peace in the end, in the days of the King Messiah.”

Here is Genesis 49:10 from Targum Onkelos:

“The transmission of dominion shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor the scribe from his children’s children, forever, until the Messiah comes ... whom nations shall obey.”

And the Babylonian Talmud, which was completed 500 years after Jesus, offers a commentary on Zechariah 12:10. The verse reads, “They will look on Me, the One they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”

The Targum asks, “What is the cause of the mourning?” and answers, “It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of Messiah, the son of Joseph.”

Finally, the Sanhedrin tractate of the Babylonian Talmud goes as far as to suggest that the world was created for the sake of the Messiah.

It is obvious from these examples that belief in the Messiah and expectation of His coming was an important part of the faith of many ancient rabbis and their followers.

Jesus, From the Beginning

One more fascinating reference to the Messiah from the Old Testament goes back to the very beginning—when Adam and Eve hid from God after they sinned and heard Him walking in the Garden of Eden during the cool of the day (see Gen. 3).

The Bible goes on to record a face-to-face conversation between the first humans and their Lord and even says that God

“made garments of skin for [them] and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21, NIV). (By the way, this is the first instance of blood being shed to deal with the consequences of sin.)

Targum Onkelos, which was completed within the first four centuries after Jesus lived, says that Adam and Eve heard the *Memra* of the Lord walking in the Garden. *Memra*, according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, means “The Word.”

It was only when I read the Gospel of John for the first time that I understood what this passage in Genesis is referring to.

John 1:1-3 explains, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him” (NKJV).

In verse 14 John explains further: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Word, then, is not just a random statement of some minor aspect of God’s character. It is a person who is one with God yet has His own being. This person is Messiah, who walked with God in the Garden of Eden and later came to us in human form to save His people.

It always amazes me to see how the “puzzle pieces” God has scattered in His Word, including in the Old Testament, Scriptures come together to reveal the image of His Son and our Savior, Yeshua.

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IDF Stages First Desert Race

A new tradition began last week in the Sagi Regional Brigade—the Israel Defense Forces' inaugural Desert Race—in which 400 of the brigade's soldiers participated. The race took place in two 5-kilometer stages—an open stage for soldiers from all units and a competitive stage for 10 select runners.

The elite Rimon unit of the Givati Brigade won first place, while second place was taken by the Caracal Battalion. The Sopha Battalion of the Armored Corps came in third.

“The race took place in the sector that the soldiers guard because of the symbolism that a race along the borders presents,” Brigade Operations Officer Lt. Col Kobi Barak said. “It is important for us to combine the operational sector and protecting the borders with maintaining physical fitness.”

The organizers of the race worked hard to bring as many soldiers to the race as possible.

“It was important for us that all the fighters take part,” Lt. Col. Barak said. “Despite the constant security missions and the many challenges that the fighters face, it is important for us to convey the message that it is our duty to maintain physical fitness. The better our physical fitness, the better we will be able to deal with the range of challenges.”

The desert race's winners received trophies, certificates, and various prizes including bags and training shirts.

“We have many ideas for the future, and this race has raised spirits and brought a lot of satisfaction and fun to the fighters,” Lt. Col. Barak said. “We will continue activities like these and we will work in order to have periodic races and turn it into a tradition. I must emphasize that it is not just a race; it’s the development of a culture of physical fitness.”

The race joined the framework of many projects developed by the IDF, with the goal of encouraging commanders and soldiers in the IDF to preserve their physical health. Other such projects include the preparation of healthier food in mess halls, jogging groups, Health and Fitness Month, and sporting competitions.

Knowledge of God’s Word Means Spiritual Power

Bill, a member of our Board of Directors, said, “When I first became a Christian I would feel so confident at work because I knew what I was doing—like a doctor with a scalpel.

“But when I would walk into church I would feel like putty. I didn’t know where things were, or how the Bible was put together. I didn’t know the major events and periods of the Bible, so I felt queasy and didn’t really like going to church on Sunday.”

One way to increase your Bible confidence is to have a good overview of the story and structure of God’s Word. There’s no “one right way” to organize the Bible. Well, there probably is—the way it’s already organized! If we take the Bible at face value, it already says exactly what God wanted to say

exactly the way He wanted to say it.

Still, the Scriptures leave the average human mind nagging for a way to “organize” and “structure” the book for greater comprehension.

The Bible is structured mostly as stories, and written mostly in chronological order. However, besides the obvious division into two Testaments, something else is going on. Not unlike personal transitions from, say, single to married, or from childless to children, there are monumental transitions, or shifts, that take place in the Bible.

As a result, God’s message of love has been communicated differently in different seasons (or periods, ages, epochs). Most Bible scholars are comfortable with some kind of “scheme,” “structure,” or “list” that organizes the major periods, so I’ve put together one for you—11 ages in three stages.

The Story of the Bible

Stage 1: *The People of God*

The first three ages, from Adam to Joseph, covered about 2,250 years—more than half of the Bible’s timeline—yet all three are compacted into just the single book of Genesis! The first age began with the *Creation* and ended with the Fall. That was followed by the second age, the *Flood*, which ended with a covenant from God to Noah. The third period was the *Patriarchs* with Abraham (who became the father of our faith through the covenant, Isaac, Jacob), and ended with Joseph as the number two man in Egypt. (Genesis)

The next two ages rounded out the five books of Moses. After Joseph, the Hebrews groaned under *slavery* for 430 years in Egypt, which all ended when Moses theatrically led the Exodus

through the Red Sea. However, a rebellious saga turned what should have been a stroll over to the Promised Land, into a *wilderness* exile—where God gave Moses the Law, including the Ten Commandments—that concluded 40 years later at the border of Canaan. (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

Then Joshua led the *conquest* of the Promised Land, which ended with the land firmly under the control of the Jews. Once in the land, a series of *judges* led the people of God (whose king was God), but that age ended badly when “the people of God” sinned by asking to become “the nation of Israel” with a human king. (Joshua, Judges, Ruth)

Stage 2: *The Nation of Israel*

Next came the age of *Kings*. Kings they wanted, and kings they got—some good like David (good enough for an updated covenant), and some bad like Ahab, but increasingly bad, so that God split up and finally abandoned the nation to its enemies. (1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles)

The Jews were unceremoniously banished in *exile* to Babylon for 70 years, where Daniel became the number two man of the land. That dark moment ended when the king of Persia sent a remnant of people back to rebuild the temple. The *return* to Jerusalem, God’s city, was fraught with problems and ended with Nehemiah rebuilding the wall around the city. And then, *silence*. There began a famine of the word of God, which lasted for four agonizingly long centuries, until, finally, Jesus ended the drought. (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)

Stage 3: *The Church of Christ*

The *Gospels* era was bookended by the Incarnation and the Resurrection, when Jesus appeared “in the fullness of time,” and ushered in a “new covenant” through His blood shed for the sins of His children, which inaugurated the kingdom of God. (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

After His Resurrection, the *early church* formed rapidly in Jerusalem with Peter and the Disciples as central figures. It lasted several decades, and came to a close with their deaths—many by martyrdom. (Acts)

Soon after the church formed, the *missions* era took flight with Peter's vision for the inclusion of the Gentiles, and the conversion of Paul, who spread the gospel throughout the Roman empire during three missionary trips and ended with the Disciples—mostly Paul—writing the letters that would complete the Scriptures. (Acts through Revelation)

After that, under the direction of the Church Fathers—the disciples of the original Disciples—the canon (Bible) was closed.

The books of Wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), Poetry (Job, Psalms, Song of Solomon) and Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi) are for the most part written to augment the major periods of Kings, Exile, and Return.

The Structure of the Bible

Having a good overview of the story and structure of God's Word will bolster your Bible confidence—so you don't have to walk into church feeling queasy. Knowledge is power.

NOTE: *If you're a leader, consider taking one week from your regular study, distribute copies of this article to your me; then discuss the questions below.*

GO FURTHER: Take your group through the "A Man's to the Bible" Video Bible Study series at

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What makes the Bible so completely different from any other book? What makes it similar to any other book?
2. What amazes you most about the Bible, and why?

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