

Does Paraguay's 12-Year Prayer Marathon Indicate Revival?

For 12 years, a **prayer** marathon has brought Christians together in the South American country of Paraguay.

The 24 hours of uninterrupted prayer involves thousands of people from all Christian denominations, in 85 locations around the country.

Every Sunday at 6 a.m., a small group braves the cold of winter and mosquitoes in the summer to **pray** on the top of the hill called Lambaré.

For almost two years now, this hill overlooking Asunción has become an altar of prayer for many families in Paraguay.

"Christian groups, churches, denominations, we are understanding that the personal, spiritual **revival** movement reaching out to our neighbors and the country in general, is accomplished through prayer," church-goer Hugo Sanz said.

"Personal contact, communion, a new sense of friendship with our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sharing His Word," he continued. "I have no doubt that this will produce a national revival that will be a blessing for all."

Some individuals report miracles taking place since they have gathered to **pray**, including people healed without any medical explanation.

But above all, these believers pray for the gospel of Jesus Christ to reach the whole the country, including government authorities.

"There is a biblical mandate to **pray** for our country's

authorities and we are pleading to God that they be driven by divine wisdom to do the best for our people," Zully Yegros, another churchgoer, said.

For the first time in history, on the national holiday Aug. 15, Paraguay President Federico Franco attended an evangelical thanksgiving and **worship** service along with other government leaders.

Pastor Walter Neufeld, who chairs Jesus Responds Foundation, one of the largest Christian foundations in the country, said he believes God is using the spiritual revival to open doors for **evangelism**.

"There have been big changes because if you go back seven years ago, in the statistics, Paraguay had 2 to 3 percent evangelical Christians, similar to Cuba or Uruguay," Neufeld said.

"Never in the history of our country have we had a president who attended evangelical services, and now we have," he continued. "We could never get into state institutions. Today we can, freely, with the support from the secretary of education and culture. To me, these are all indicators of revival."

Although there are no precise statistics on the percentage of evangelical Christians in the Paraguayan population, most churches report a growth of 10 to 15 percent annually, with thousands of baptisms nationwide.

For Pastor Emilio Abreu, who leads one of the largest evangelical churches in Paraguay, spiritual revival is particularly reaching young people.

"We believe there will be a great empowering of the lives of young people because of the strength they have, the passion they have." Abreu, who leads Family Worship Center, said. "The church has never understood them. They haven't given a

platform for the youth—in the arts, culture, music, painting, theater, movies.”

“And this will be a time when we’ll have people with a vision to do all of this, to turn our young people loose, open their minds, anoint and empower them to go and conquer the nation,” he continued. “Every month almost a thousand new people come to our churches, (and) they’re converted.”

“And this is growing,” he added. “Now we are going to begin invading with the mass media and it’s going to be a tsunami!”

These opportunities also showed an important need. According to Pastor Neufeld and a survey conducted by the Bible Institute of Asunción, a large percentage of evangelical church leaders nationwide have no theological education.

The challenge now for the church is to encourage a deep Bible study among its leaders, to carry the gospel to the whole country.

California Church Stands Up for India’s Untouchables

They are called “untouchables,” or **dalits**—millions of Indian men, women and children born into a caste system that views them as impure, less than human. Despite laws to protect them, these outcasts face daily discrimination.

They are also the single largest victims of human trafficking in the world. Now, one Southern California church is on a mission to help free the Dalits of India through education, a **biblical message** of hope and a movie about their plight.

A Dalit's Destiny

Every single day, somewhere in India, a Dalit is humiliated, assaulted, raped, beaten and killed. Considered outcasts not even worthy to be in the caste system, the vast majority of them are poor, illiterate and survive on less than \$2 a day.

It was into this dark side of Indian society that Matthew Cork, lead pastor of Friends Church in Yorba Linda, Calif., stepped in and came face-to-face with the plight of India's Dalits. In 2007, on his first trip to India, he saw up close the challenges millions of them endure.

"I think God brought me to India to break me," Cork said. "When I saw they were considered untouchables, considered less than an animal, I looked at myself, I looked at my own children—how could anyone ever be treated that way?"

He returned to the United States broken by Dalits' sufferings, yet emboldened by a call from God to try to help change their destiny.

"We believe that our job is to be the catalyst church in the West to free the Dalits in our generation," he said.

His main partner in India is Dr. Joseph D'souza, founder of the Dalit Freedom Network. For some 30 years, D'souza has worked on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed in India.

"Today around the world there are more slaves than even during the time of Wilberforce. Modern slavery is a huge problem and India is the epicenter of this problem," D'souza said.

Educating the Untouchables

D'souza told Pastor Cork that education was the key to ending modern day slavery in India. In 2002, D'souza started Dalit Freedom Network with the goal of building one thousand schools for Dalit children.

Pastor Cork wanted to build schools after seeing how access to

education can change the life of a Dalit.

"Because, you see, if you can educate them and they can begin to understand why they might be in poverty, if they begin to understand their plight, if they begin to see that they are created in the image of God and that there is opportunity and an English education brings them that opportunity that they would have never been afforded to them," Cork said.

The first Good Shepherd School opened in 1998. Today there are 107 schools across India, 42 funded by Friends Church.

The children attending these schools get more than just an English education.

"Almost everyday we talk to them about Jesus. We teach them Christian songs, teach them Bible verses," teacher Rebecca Solomon said. "We want the kids to know who Jesus Christ is and to give them an opportunity to experience the love of God."

Not Today

The excitement at the opportunity to get an education for so many of these young Dalit children is evident. They can't afford to go to school so Good Shepherd doesn't charge parents a lot of money so these kids can attend.

Friends Church has committed \$20 million to build 200 Good Shepherd schools across India. To help raise more awareness and stir people to greater action, Friends Church has made a movie about the Dalits of India.

The film is called *Not Today*. It's a story about a rich young American from Orange County, Calif., who goes partying half way around the world with friends.

In the process, the young man is exposed to the seedy world of human trafficking. He winds up risking his life to help a Dalit father search for his little daughter he sold to human

traffickers.

Brent Martz is creative ministries pastor at Friends Church and producer of *Not Today*.

“Hopefully when people watch *Not Today* they’ll see this story of the Dalits in India, they’ll see the story of human slavery and human trafficking and they’ll be drawn into it, their lives will be compelled to get involved because they felt it,” Martz said.

“Maybe they finally felt what its like to be a little girl who is taken from her father or even sold by her father,” he said.

Not Today opens in theaters next April. Cork said profits from the film will help the church fund the building of the 200 Dalit schools.

An Eternal Legacy

Cork admits breaking the caste system will take lots of prayer. But Friends Church and Dalit Freedom Network are in it for the long haul, determined to be the catalyst that helps free India’s Dalits.

“We are creating an eternal legacy where I know when I get to heaven there’s going to be thousands of thousands of Dalits there,” he said. “They are going to look me in the eye and they are going to say, ‘Thank you for making a difference in their life.’”

Why Obama Is Unpopular With

Jews in Israel

While most Americans were focusing on the domestic implications of President Barack Obama's re-election, the effects of his victory are being felt around the globe in different ways.

Furthermore, Candy Crowley of CNN and most others observing the presidential foreign policy debate in October thought the president had everything under control with Middle Eastern dissidents. Gov. Mitt Romney was considered a clear loser compared with Obama.

During the election, much was made of Obama's popularity abroad. An MSN poll of more than half a million people from 36 countries showed that President Obama was favored over Romney by an astounding 81 percent. Yet Obama was not so popular in a country that was not among the 36 surveyed in the MSN research: Israel. A similar study done by Tel Aviv University reported that only 22 percent of Jewish Israelis supported Barack Obama's reelection.

Why was there such a disconnect with young Israelis? Perhaps their apprehension can be attributed to our leader's affinity with the Islamic world and the numerous perceived slights senior Israeli leaders have received from him.

In addition, Obama did not visit Israel as president, although he did travel there as a presidential candidate in 2008. After winning a large percentage of the Jewish American vote—as Democrats traditionally do—his seeming ambivalence or lukewarm treatment has given heartburn to both Jews and evangelical Christians.

Middle East analyst Aaron David Miller echoed the concerns of many when he wrote in the July edition of *Foreign Policy*, "My sense is that, if he could get away with it, the president would like to see a relationship that is not just less

exclusive, but somewhat less special as well.”

The modern state of Israel is not a stranger to defending itself against bordering countries bent on its destruction. Time and time again, the tiny country has shocked the world with its ability to stand up to its larger neighbors.

In June of 1967, Israel simultaneously defeated Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Syria-supported Palestinian guerrilla groups (and other mercenary forces) in an astounding victory known as the Six Days War.

This month, for the first time in over 40 years, terrorists fired missiles into Jerusalem and Tel Aviv from Gaza, which borders Egypt. A barrage of hundreds of rockets pounded Israel, launched from the Hamas terrorist group.

Only the providence of God and Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system has miraculously prevented major casualties. It is little wonder that Israel is preparing for a ground invasion of Gaza. A year ago last spring, during my first trip to Israel, I was shocked at how close Gaza is to Israel.

The American public remains largely unaware of the magnitude of the conflict due to the general failure of the mainstream media to report accurately concerning the wrongs suffered by Israel. Instead, any measure Israel takes to defend itself is decried as brutal and over the top.

In the meantime, Israel’s enemies have boasted about its impending destruction. Most vocal today are the threats we hear from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is known to be supplying Hamas with their weapons.

On President Obama’s watch, the United States has gone from being a staunch ally to the only democracy in the Middle East to something like a silent peer. But Israel will not wait for our approval to defend itself, nor should it.

As Dr. Josef Olmert observed in *The Huffington Post* in June: “When pushed to the wall, with a deep, genuine fear of extinction, the Israelis act, even against the odds.”

At the time of this writing, the *New York Daily News* showed a picture of the half naked, tortured body of an alleged traitor that was being dragged through the region to the cheers of Palestinian men, women and children. This man was executed along with five others. The *Daily News* article carried a huge heading which read: “SAVAGE.”

Meanwhile, the United Nations, which says little about the attacks on Israeli civilians, is publicly urging Israel to exercise “maximum self-restraint.”

The current conflict is complicated by the fact that the United Nations is scheduled to vote on Nov. 29 to elevate the Palestinian Authority to the level of an “observer” nation, formally recognizing Palestine as a legitimate country. Ironically, and no doubt intentionally, this will be 65 years to the day since the United Nations first recognized the modern state of Israel.

With Hillary Clinton leaving the State Department, the president’s very own vision, philosophy, wisdom and willpower are going to be tested in the Middle East.

Like the Nazis, Islam Carries Deadly Agenda

A short time ago, few ever heard the word *Hamas*. Today, that name is part of the daily vocabulary of populations across the Earth. The term is synonymous with another Islamic term,

jihad, which is “holy war” in Arabic.

Here in Israel, we are facing the ongoing and relentless hatred of the Arab Islamic world, and recently fought a war of missiles sent from Gaza, the ancient homeland of the Philistines, from which the term *Palestinian* is derived.

Since vacating that area some years ago in an experiment of “Land for Peace,” the Palestinians under the rule of their elected Hamas leadership has chosen, instead of using that now Jew-free territory to create a viable economy and a peaceful life, to smuggle in and launch thousands of rockets into Israeli civilian towns and cities.

One can only wonder what armaments would be in use had there not been some control over their ports. This is a situation that no country would tolerate.

The biblical word *hamas* has as its meaning not only violence, but corruption, deceit and lies. The modern Hamas movement has declared as its sole *raison d’etre* the destruction of Israel. Unfortunately, they are in accord with others of their Islamic faith to the north of Israel’s border in Lebanon, Hezbollah (the Party of Allah), who are now well-armed with many thousands of missiles.

Iran, the powerful center of the Islamic revolution, is the supplier of these deadly weapons, and has for years officially declared its intention of wiping Israel from the map. At the same time, Syria is in the upheaval of a civil war in which more than 30,000 have thus far been killed by their own people.

From Afghanistan to Iraq to Sudan, the Islamic world is filled with violence. And the revolution in Egypt has now replaced a secular government with the radical Muslim Brotherhood, which supports Islamic world domination, as its leader. And all these events seem to comply with prophecies found in the Bible.

The Islamic world is not a happy one. The constant fomenting of its unhappiness from North Africa across the Arabian peninsula of the Middle East to the Persian Gulf arises from the very worldview of Islam itself. But, as is so often the case, unhappiness seeks to find blame in another rather than itself for its unfortunate predicament.

In the Islamic world, the favorite and perennial scapegoat is very tiny Israel, for which they find justification in their holy books, especially the Islamic hadith, or commentary of the Quran. And that blame is also aimed at the entire western world.

At the same time Islam states as its purpose the spreading of their religion and its worldview to the western world, and thus share its perennial unhappiness with others. Their efforts are succeeding brilliantly in Europe by the use of Jihad in all its subtle forms, the most effective being the Cultural Jihad. The other form is fear of the Violent Jihad.

Islam is the very antithesis of the Judeo-Christian message, which is based on the foundation stone of one commandment in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, which is one word in the original Hebrew: v'ahavta ("you shall love"). Love is not at all the central message of the Quran, but its motivating force is the diametrical opposite: fear.

As Judeo-Christianity cools to a dying ember in the western world, extinguished by both corruptions in the churches and the ongoing efforts of the radical left to erase the Biblical worldview from its populations, that vacuum created will quickly be filled with its antithesis.

One might just take a look at the modus operandi of both the unhappy Communist takeover, of the unhappy Nazi takeover, as well as the Islamic takeover, which is to erase the existence of Judeo-Christianity. In the case of the Nazis, it was to exterminate the Jews carrying their old ideas of the one God,

as well as to destroy the church and its message of love.

It is only to be hoped that educated people will consider these facts, and will take intelligent action to prevent such an outcome and downfall of the West in our time.

Historic Jewish Cemetery in Caribbean Fades Away

Headstones are pockmarked, their inscriptions faded. Stone slabs that have covered tombs for centuries are crumbling. White marble has turned grey, likely from the acrid smoke that spews from a nearby oil refinery.

One of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the Western Hemisphere, Beth Haim on the island of Curacao, is slowly fading in the Caribbean sun.

Beth Haim was established in the 17th century and is considered an important landmark even on an island so rich in history that its downtown has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The sparsely populated island of nearly 150,000 people just north of Venezuela is known today mostly as a diving destination or for its namesake blue liqueur made from citrus fruit.

With its lavish monuments and multilingual epitaphs, Curacao's cemetery helps tell the little-known history of Jews in the Caribbean who fled Spain and Portugal to escape the Inquisition aimed at ridding the Christian nations of Jews, Muslims and others people deemed heretics. Many of the exiles first found refuge in the Netherlands, with their descendants later settling in this former Dutch colony, now a highly

diverse society and a semi-autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

But the landmark is in danger. The steady erosion, likely intensified by the proximity of the antiquated refinery, is now considered unstoppable, said Rene Maduro, president of the Mikve Israel-Emanuel Synagogue, which owns and maintains the cemetery.

“Believe me, I wish there was something we could do to protect the cemetery,” said Maduro, whose family came to Curacao in the 1600s and has 75 to 100 ancestors buried in Beth Haim. “It is beyond the point of repair.”

The Curacao cemetery is among several at-risk burial sites that “preserve the cultural, ethnic, biographical and religious history” of Jews in the Caribbean, said Rachel Frankel, a New York architect who has studied and documented historic Jewish sites throughout the Americas, including burial grounds in Jamaica and Suriname.

The Curacao congregation is considering preserving the cemetery electronically by setting up a website with records and photos, Maduro said. The plan for a digital memorial is still in development, but a lower-tech effort has put replicas of 10 of the most ornate headstones on display at the Jewish Historical Museum in the capital of Willemstad.

Besides being sacred sites, Frankel said, the cemeteries help document the Caribbean migration of Sephardic Jews whose forefathers fled or were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula during the Inquisition, and Ashkenazic Jews who later left central and eastern Europe to seek their fortunes in the New World. Along with Curacao and Jamaica, large populations of Jews were once found on the smaller Dutch island of St. Eustatius, as well as in St. Thomas and Barbados.

On some islands, colonial Jews numbered in the hundreds, and other locations in the thousands, said Frankel. By the

mid-20th century, most of the congregations had declined, but the cemeteries that in some cases had accepted burials for more than two centuries remained.

The Jewish community in Curacao dates back to the 1650s, with the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Amsterdam who had previously fled Spain and Portugal. At its peak, in the late 1700s, the Jewish community on the island numbered about 2,000.

They established the Mikve Israel-Emanuel Synagogue, which is billed as the oldest continually operating synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, as well as Beth Haim cemetery. The synagogue today has about 350 members, of which only about 200 actually live on Curacao. An orthodox synagogue in another part of Willemstad has a membership of about 60 families.

The cemetery occupies what was once plantation land on about 10 acres on the outskirts of Willemstad. The oldest confirmed inscription is from 1668 on a stone made of potter's clay, according to records maintained by the synagogue. Congregation members have determined more than 5,000 people are buried there, but only a third of the inscriptions are legible in a mix of languages that includes Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and Hebrew. Also vanishing are some of the engravings known as sepulchral illustrations, some of which are considered artworks.

Ivan Becher, president of the Shaarek Tsedek synagogue in Willemstad, said his grandfather was among the last to be buried in Beth Haim nearly 60 years ago.

"My grandfather's grave is pretty well kept, but with the rest of the graves, there is a lot of erosion," he said. "It's too bad."

Experts who have studied the headstones say the deterioration is caused by a combination of factors, including wind, salt air and humidity, said Michael A. Newton, an architect who

works with the Curacao Monuments Foundation, a preservation group.

Many on the island also blame the oil refinery that towers over the cemetery and on many days spews sooty clouds that burn the eyes of visitors to Beth Haim as well as those of residents in the poor neighborhoods of the area.

A spokesman for the refinery, which is owned by the Curacao government and operated under contract by Venezuela's state-owned oil company, did not return calls seeking comment.

The refinery's operators have occasionally helped with the cemetery's maintenance, which has otherwise cost the congregation "many, many thousands" of dollars over the years, Maduro said.

Congregation members have consulted with experts from the Netherlands and the United States on possible solutions to halt erosion, but the options were too expensive and considered long-shots at best.

Jewish law forbids disturbing remains so moving the cemetery to another part of Curacao that would be less threatened by refinery smoke is out of the question, Maduro said.

Frankel, the New York architect, said that preservation has also proved difficult for other historic cemeteries in the Caribbean that no longer receive burials and have dwindling populations of Jewish heirs to care for them.

"In places where pollutants are not a problem, there are other challenges," she said. "Vegetation grows fast and furious in the subtropical climate. Goat herds – which exist even in urban centers – make their way through open cemetery gates. And as Caribbean cities become more densely populated, cemeteries sometimes become garbage dumps where public sanitation is lacking."

But appreciation of the cemeteries as historic sites has grown over the past two decades, Frankel said, with local governments, academics and congregants are working together to document, study, and preserve them while also making them accessible to the public.

The Curacao cemetery is occasionally visited by tourists from the cruise ships stopping at downtown Willemstad.

Maduro hopes future visitors will also be able to view the cemetery virtually, on the hoped-for website.

“Not that we can preserve it, but we are trying to make it easier for people to know what’s there and who is buried there,” he said.

Associated Press writer Anita Snow contributed to this report from Mexico City.

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Not Enough Dead Jews

In the aftermath of Israel’s latest conflict with Hamas terrorists, it seems that the Jewish state’s greatest failing was that it did not suffer enough casualties to satisfy its critics. And so, once again, the world is railing against “Israeli aggression” and casting its sympathies with those who seek to slaughter its civilians—and this despite the outrageous statements of the Islamic radicals hell-bent on destroying Israel.

On Thursday, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said, “Israel

screamed with pain from what the resistance did to it. I thank everyone who provided us with arms and money, especially Iran.” Yes, to make Israel scream with pain is something virtuous.

Shortly after the bomb blast in Tel Aviv that wounded 22 Israelis, Hamas-run Al-Aqsa TV aired a report showing footage of the bloody scene and commenting: “These are scenes of the casualties. God willing, we will soon see black body bags. I pray to God the exalted we will see body bags in a short while. ... Right now in these moments, the mosques in the Gaza Strip, their minarets are loudly sounding cries of ‘Allahu Akbar’ and cries of joy, and the residents of the Gaza Strip are bowing down to Allah for this offering [or, gift]. The morale of the Gaza residents is in the sky right now, and is rising just as the rockets of the resistance.”

This is in keeping with Articles 6 and 8 of the Hamas charter, which read (in part): “Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it ... The Islamic Resistance Movement ... strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine ... Allah is our goal, the Prophet our model, the Qur’an our Constitution, Jihad our path and death for the cause of Allah our most sublime belief.” (The last sentence is the motto of Hamas.)

Danny Ayalon, Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister, noted that, “Hamas’ charter includes the aspiration that ‘The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews).’” In contrast, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pointed out that, “For us, every time there are civilian casualties, that’s an operational failure. For them, every time there are civilian casualties, that’s an operational success.”

In fact, an Israeli soldier cannot leave base without having in his or her possession the Israel Defense Forces Code of Ethics, including values like these: “The IDF serviceman will,

above all, preserve human life, in the recognition of its supreme value and will place himself or others at risk solely to the extent required to carry out his mission.

“The sanctity of life in the eyes of the IDF servicemen will find expression in all of their actions, in deliberate and meticulous planning, in safe and intelligent training and in proper execution of their mission. In evaluating the risk to self and others, they will use the appropriate standards and will exercise constant care to limit injury to life to the extent required to accomplish the mission.”

Yet so much of the world still sees Israel as the evil aggressor, and when a caller to Geraldo Rivera’s KABC radio show observed, “There’s absolutely no moral equivalency between a free democratic nation trying to protect its citizens and a terrorist organization that’s trying to sow conflict by firing rockets at innocent civilians from amongst highly populated residential, civilian areas,” Rivera replied, “No moral equivalency? Yeah, yeah, I get that too, I get that too, except that’s not the way the world sees it. You know, that’s just not the way the world sees it. And there is, you got 116 dead Palestinians and three dead Israelis. I mean, that’s a, where’s the equivalence there either?”

If only there were more dead Jews!

In keeping with this perverse mentality, on Nov. 20, in an interview with Gil Hoffman of *The Jerusalem Post*, BBC World News presenter Mishal Hussein asked, “OK, you say that Israelis have been running for their lives ... erm ... from rockets from Gaza, so tell me then; until this current confrontation, how many Israelis have been killed by these rockets from Gaza this year?”

Similarly, BBC correspondent Kevin Connolly claimed that on the Israeli side, “There is anxiety ... there is fear,” whereas he claimed that the people of Gaza (in the words of one

woman), are “surrounded by death.” Connolly also noted that, “I think we have to be clear about this, that there is an asymmetry in the casualty figures ... and there is a colossal asymmetry in military hardware deployed here as well.”

How dare Israel defend itself so forcefully. And how dare its new Iron Dome defense system work so well in intercepting more than 400 Hamas rockets, including new long-range missiles supplied by Iran. If only more Jews had been killed!

Even before Israel began its attack on Hamas last week, the student senate at the University of California Irvine passed a resolution by a vote of 16-0, accusing Israel of “human rights abuse and institutionalized structural violence against the Palestinian people.” But terrorist groups like Hamas are apparently guilty of no such thing.

If only their rockets and missiles were more accurate. If only more Israelis died. Then Israel wouldn’t be quite so evil in the eyes of the world.

Michael Brown *is the author of The Real Kosher Jesus and the host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience.*

Christian Stores Capitalize on Cyber Monday

Christian stores and suppliers are offering deals for Cyber Monday to capitalize on what are expected to be record sales for the official start of the online Christmas shopping

season.

Spending for Cyber Monday (Nov. 26) is expected to exceed the \$ billion reached in 2011 for an increase of 20 percent—with sales approaching \$1.5 billion or even higher, according to data from ComScore. Spending on Cyber Monday has more than doubled in the past five years.

With a limit of three per item per order, LifeWay Christian Stores is running a Cyber Monday sale, including offering \$5 for *Not a Fan* by Kyle Idleman (Zondervan); *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan (David C Cook); and *Heaven Changes Everything* by Todd and Sonja Burpo (Thomas Nelson). The chain's other online specials include \$10 for *NIV Adventure Bible* (Zonderkidz); *The Action Bible* (David C Cook) and *The Gaither Homecoming Bible* (Thomas Nelson).

Blessings Christian Marketplace, a chain of four stores based in Chilliwack, British Columbia, is running a Cyber Monday sale, including offering free shipping and 10 percent discount on all purchases.

Among suppliers, Christian Audio is offering direct-to-consumer Cyber Monday deals, including a free *A Happy Trails Christmas* audiobook by Roy Rogers and Dale Evans (Revell/Baker Publishing Group) with the purchase of any audiobook.

Marcher Lord Press is offering a pre-order Cyber Monday deal—\$5 discount on the \$ retail price—on its first hardcover book for *A Throne of Bones* by Vox Day. Chalice Press is touting its biggest Cyber Monday Sale ever, offering free shipping and 30 percent discount on purchases up to \$5,000.

Cyber Monday arrives on the heels of data showing a record number of shoppers hit the stores on the Thanksgiving weekend. ComScore's data showed that online sales for Black Friday, Nov. 23—the day after Thanksgiving and the official start of the Christmas shopping season—surpassed \$1 billion for the first time. Sales rose 26 percent to \$ billion from \$816

million seen on Black Friday in 2011.

The National Retail Federation estimates that overall sales in November and December will rise 4.1 percent this year to \$586.1 billion, below last year's 5.6 percent growth. The online part of that is expected to rise 15 percent to \$68.4 billion, according to Forrester Research.

"This Black Friday was by far the biggest ever," said Britt Beemer, founder and chairman of America's Research Group who is known for his Christian retail channel studies. "We've never seen 60 percent of consumers shop in a 12-14-hour window like we've seen this year."

In Shocker, Israel's Barak Quits Politics

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak on Monday abruptly announced he was quitting politics, injecting new turmoil into the Israeli political system weeks ahead of general elections.

Barak, Israel's most-decorated soldier and one-time prime minister, said he would stay on in his current post until a new government is formed following the Jan. 22 balloting.

His resignation could mean the departure of the most moderating influence on hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who holds a wide lead in polls and is expected to easily win re-election. Barak, who heads a small centrist faction in parliament, often served as Netanyahu's unofficial envoy to Washington to smooth over differences with the Obama White House.

His impending departure comes at a key time for Israel, as the nation struggles to find its way in a region where the old order of Arab autocrats has been swept aside by the Arab Spring and the rise of Islamist political parties. Israel also faces a looming decision on whether to attack Iran's nuclear program, which the Jewish state fears is designed to develop atomic weapons—a charge Tehran denies.

Less than a week ago, Barak led an eight-day military offensive against the Hamas militant group that rules the Gaza Strip. The fighting, aimed at ending rocket fire from the Palestinian territory, ended in a fragile truce.

"I didn't make this decision (to leave politics) without hesitating, but I made it wholeheartedly," he told a hastily arranged news conference, saying he had been wrestling with the decision for weeks.

He evaded repeated questions about whether he might agree to serve as a Cabinet minister in an upcoming government, leaving open the possibility that he might still retain an impact on Israeli politics. While most Cabinet ministers also hold parliamentary seats, they do not have to be elected lawmakers, and such appointments have been made in the past.

Barak, 70, made the surprise announcement even after polls showed his breakaway Independence Party gaining momentum after the Gaza campaign.

Despite the bump in the polls, Barak still could have found himself fighting for his political survival once election day rolls around. Surveys before the Gaza operation were unkind to his party, at times showing it polling too weakly to even send a single representative to parliament.

"I feel I have exhausted my political activity, which had never been an object of desire for me. There are many ways for me to serve the country, not just through politics," he said, adding that his decision was spurred in part by his desire to

spend more time with his family.

Possible replacements include Vice Premier Moshe Yaalon, a former military chief, and Shaul Mofaz, a former military chief and defense minister, who now serves as chairman of the opposition Kadima Party.

Barak's political career was as turbulent as his 36-year military career was dazzling.

The former war hero and military chief of staff blazed into politics on the coattails of his mentor, Yitzhak Rabin, and had been viewed by many as his heir apparent. With a resume that includes commanding some of Israel's most daring hostage rescue operations and raids, Barak was elected prime minister from the centrist Labor Party in 1999 – just four years after retiring from the military. Many Israelis hoped he would parlay what was seen as his sharp strategic mind and unorthodox methods on the battlefield into long-elusive accords with the Palestinians and Syria.

But the consensus-building so important in the political arena did not mesh well with the go-it-alone style that served him in the military. Political allies and foes alike considered Barak aloof and imperious, and others questioned whether he possessed the interpersonal skills necessary to negotiate elusive accords with Israel's enemies.

Disappointed with his performance, Israeli voters booted Barak out of the premier's office in record time – less than two years – after his government unraveled with the outbreak of a Palestinian uprising and the collapse of peace talks.

Hard-liner Ariel Sharon trounced him in a 2001 election. Barak left behind a legacy of failed peacemaking with the Palestinians and Syria, despite unprecedented offers of sweeping territorial concessions, and a contentious decision to end Israel's 18-year military occupation of south Lebanon overnight, which created a vacuum quickly filled by the anti-

Israel Hezbollah guerrilla group.

For six years, the onetime Labor leader kept himself busy with lucrative speaking engagements and business consulting, reportedly amassing millions and cementing his image as a politician out of touch with his constituents.

But Barak returned to politics in 2007, handily recapturing the Labor leadership and replacing civilian Defense Minister Amir Peretz, who led a much-criticized war in Lebanon the previous summer.

But while Israelis liked Barak as defense minister, they didn't want him as their prime minister, and his party, which had led Israel to independence and governed the nation for its first three decades, lost its public appeal. In the 2009 election that brought Netanyahu to power, Labor won an all-time low of 13 of parliament's 120 seats.

Barak's dovish base turned on him after he led Labor into Netanyahu's conservative government, accusing Barak of betraying the party's ideals by joining forces with a man who at the time did not even recognize the principle of a Palestinian state.

In January 2011, he bolted Labor to form a new party, Independence, which has largely failed to resonate with the public.

Israeli hard-liners disliked him, too, accusing him of undermining the West Bank settlement movement by holding up building approvals, clearing squatters from West Bank homes and encouraging Netanyahu to support a temporary settlement construction slowdown.

But if Barak was unpopular with the public, he retained his clout with Netanyahu, whom he commanded in an elite special operations unit. As the prime minister's point man with the United States, Barak was welcomed in Washington as a

moderating influence on Netanyahu's hard line policies toward the Arab world and Iran's nuclear program.

That alliance saw some rocky times recently with reports the prime minister objected to Barak's newly moderate tone that Israel should defer to the U.S. in deciding whether to attack Iranian nuclear facilities.

But the two seemed to have patched up things, appearing to work harmoniously on the recent Gaza campaign.

In a statement Monday, Netanyahu said he "respected" Barak's decision.

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Revival Hits LA With Azusa Street Daughter Verna Linzey

A daughter of the Azusa Street Revival and Mission, 93-year-old evangelist Verna Linzey, preached on the baptism with the Holy Spirit at another revival and mission in Los Angeles called Global Covenant Church, where a new move of the Holy Spirit erupted.

An awakening occurred and five Filipinos and Americans burst into speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit moved and gave them utterance while Linzey was ministering on the stage. The mission is pastored by the Rev. Alice Tanaka.

This was the third time the mission invited Linzey to speak. The services are characterized by a lack of structure and an earnest quest for an encounter with the Holy Spirit as those

who arrive at any hour seek the Holy Spirit. The services go on for up to three hours as they wait on the Spirit.

Linzey did not characterize Pentecostal poverty of 100 years ago. Instead the evangelist epitomized the glitz and glamour of well-to-do modern Pentecostals. Linzey came from notoriety out of Coffeyville, Kan., the state giving rise to the Pentecostal Movement. Her uncle William Hall was a prominent doctor and businessman laying the foundation of the future of Coffeyville.

The revival Sunday night was sparsely attended by about 30 people with a thirst for an intimate spiritual encounter with God.

Historically, these are the kinds of spiritual climates where spiritual sparks are ignited by a combination of humility, openness to the Holy Spirit, and leaving time constraints outside the church door upon entering.

“This is a new beginning,” Tanaka said.

Luis Palau Reaches 30,000 Young People at Australian Festival

More than 30 years after his first campaign in Newcastle, evangelist Luis Palau returned to help more than 100 local churches reach new generations with the love and Good News of Jesus.

An estimated 30,000 people flocked to Newcastle’s Foreshore Park Nov. 17-18 for CityFest—two days of live music, kid-

friendly shows and activities, and the gospel message presented nightly by Palau. "I have seldom felt the presence of God in a crowd like I felt tonight," he said after speaking on Saturday.

CityFest included performances by *Australian Idol* winner Stan Walker, New Zealand rockers Evermore, and praise powerhouses Darlene Zschech and Hillsong. Stunt demonstrations and personal testimonies by extreme sports athletes highlighted the festival's youthful bent.

Palau's son and co-evangelist, Andrew Palau, also shared the stage. By the end of the weekend, several hundred people had made the decision to follow Jesus Christ according to response cards.

Several individuals who came to faith during one of Palau's previous events in Newcastle—then called "crusades"—helped cast the vision for today's model. Jenny Allen, dean of students at the University of Newcastle and chair of counselor training for CityFest, said her role had everything to do with the decision she made at a crusade in 1979.

"My hope and dream for this festival is that in 33 years, someone could be sitting here filming somebody else who remembers the 17th of November the same way we remember '79," Allen said in a video interview. "That they sit here because of the moment in time when they were confronted with the reality of Jesus."

Andrew Cole, pastor at New Vine Baptist Church, oversaw the festival's Kids Zone. Cole accepted Christ as a teenager during a Palau crusade in 1982. "I was a messy, 18 year-old, beer-swilling, rugby-playing young person. When I heard Luis speak, that got my attention," he said. "It's been such a wonderful thing for me to contribute into this festival, knowing that 30 years ago a whole bunch of people gave me the opportunity to hear."

For months leading up to CityFest, more than 1,000 volunteers from churches across the Hunter Region of Australia performed 60 community service projects through an initiative called CityServe. "When the church is serving, it's shining," Festival Coordinator Rick Prosser said of the outreach.

"Our hope is that CityServe becomes a culture for the body of Christ to serve our community. It really established tremendous bridges in the community—into the schools, into the business sector, into the civic arena ... we were tremendously embraced by the city."

The two-day festival was the culmination of an entire season of ministry, including 16 evangelistic events for students, military personnel, civic leaders and business professionals. The campaign also included a unique time of training and mentorship for more than 50 Australian evangelists.

"This campaign built on a foundation laid 30 years ago and set the tone for the future. Whatever God's doing in Newcastle, CityFest was not the end but the beginning," Festival Director Colin James said.

The Palau team is currently working with local churches to follow up with each new believer and connect them with a church in their area.