

NEWS FROM ISRAEL

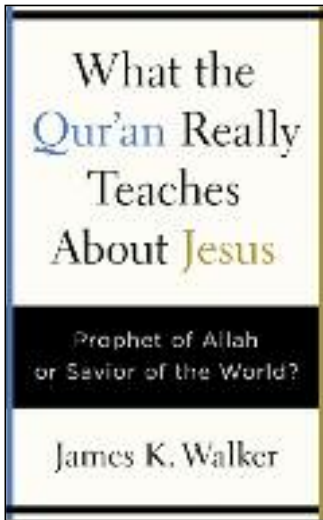
March 2021

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What It Means to Be a Muslim

Are People Losing Their Religion? P.19 • Tel Aviv Among Healthiest Cities in the World P.22



Who Is the Jesus of Islam?

James K. Walker, president of Watchman Fellowship, takes you through more than a dozen major similarities and differences between the Jesus of the Bible and the Jesus of the Qur'an. You will learn...

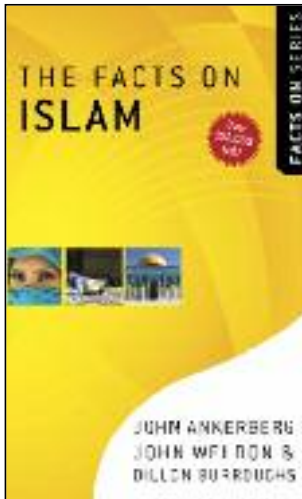
- how Islam affirms biblical concepts, even though it diverges from Scripture
- how the Qur'an promotes a deep respect of Jesus, while not identifying Him as a Savior
- how to cultivate conversational relationships with Muslims, despite your different beliefs and faith backgrounds

As Islam continues to spread rapidly across the globe and increases opportunities for personal interaction with Muslims, it's vital that you handle all matters of the Christian faith with wisdom and discernment. The more you know about what the Qur'an teaches, the better equipped you'll be to understand current events and to reach out with truth and love to your Muslim neighbors.

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influenced by the media.

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any other person, but against Satan and his angels.
It is our duty to love the Muslim people.

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Dear Friends of Israel,

BY FREDI WINKLER



This year, Easter and Passover fall into the same week, but not on the same weekend. For the determination of Easter Sunday, the date of the equinox and the new moon is the deciding point; namely, March 21st. The date for Passover also depends on the equinox and the new moon. But it is not observed on the following Sunday, rather on the 14th day of the first month Nisan (Leviticus 23:5). Because of this difference, Easter and Passover may not fall on the same weekend, and may even be celebrated a month apart.

Because the Passover depends on the moon and the equinox—which are fixed astronomical conditions—it is possible to calculate the date on which the Passover Feast took place at the time of Jesus, and thus also when Jesus most probably was crucified. Nevertheless, there are vary-

ing opinions concerning the exact point in time, ranging from the year 30 to 33. The respective opinions are usually presented with supposedly convincing arguments; however, the element of uncertainty remains. And, knowing the exact time is really not of such great importance.

The week leading up to the Crucifixion occupies the most important part in all four Gospels—from 6 to 10 chapters in each. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding a donkey is described in the greatest detail by Luke (19:28-48). This event was the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, where it is written: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (9:9).



Luke is the only one who reports in this context that when Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem, He wept for the city and said: “If thou hadst known...at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19:42).

This day—with the event of Jesus’ entry on a donkey, to the cheers of the multitude of His followers—was a decisive day for the city of Jerusalem. What should the leaders of the people have realized? That what was happening was the fulfilling of Zechariah 9:9. However, the event garnered disapproval among the Pharisees, so that they said to Jesus: “Master, rebuke thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:39-40).

Why did Jesus say this? Because what happened had to be fulfilled. God had predicted it through the prophet Zechariah; therefore, if the followers of Jesus had not cheered for Him then, so to speak, the very stones would have had to do it. But we see the prophecy miraculously

fulfilled, even if His disciples were not aware of it. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had nothing better to say than to ask Jesus to silence the people.

Why did the Pharisees not recognize Jesus as the One of whom Zechariah had spoken? Because they had formed their own ideas about the Messiah and His coming: not riding on a donkey in humility, but triumphantly on a stallion. The donkey is a peaceful animal, not suitable for warfare. But the horse was seen in those times as the beast for war. Revelation speaks in chapter 19 about the coming of the Lord on a white horse. At that time, He will not appear in lowliness and peace, but in sovereignty for judgment. Only thereafter will the messianic Kingdom of Peace be established. For us as well, it is important not to form our own ideas concerning His return, but to pay close attention to what the Bible says about it.

In the knowledge that God will completely fulfill His Word, I greet you warmly with Shalom,

Trevor Winkler



What It Means to Be a Muslim

IRMÃO MEHDI

The son of a Moroccan noble family finds Jesus. Here he writes about what it was like to grow up as a Muslim who never had to worry about money, and why he would never give up the Lord to regain his former privileges.

All Muslims believe that the Bible was falsified by the Jews. In their view, the true God-written Bible was taken into heaven with Jesus when the people wanted to crucify Him. That's why Jesus didn't die on the cross. As a result, He didn't pay the high price for us, and there was no salvation from our sins. I shared this conviction during my life in Morocco. It's a belief that's hard to break free of if you're a Muslim.

In light of this, it's necessary to clarify something very important. You may be reading about Islam for the first time. Maybe you've just heard of it, or believe what you've seen in the media. First of all, there is a point that many people are misinformed on: the difference between Arabs and Muslims.

The Arabs are a people whose roots are in the Middle East and northern Africa, and whose language is Arabic.

But being an Arab doesn't mean being Muslim. For example, someone born in the Palestinian Territories may be an Arab, but belong

to a Christian family. In other words, Christian Arabs also exist.

Being a Muslim is something else entirely. When we talk about Muslims, it doesn't necessarily mean we're referring to Arabs. For example, in Brazil there are quite a few Brazilians who have converted to Islam. That means that although they're now Muslims, they're still Brazilians, not Arabs.

Unfortunately, we have a distorted view of Muslims. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word Muslim? Perhaps it's terms like "terrorist, suicide bomber, pedophile, polygamist," etc. I could list page after page of derogatory words that people in the West use to describe Muslims.

If this is what you think too, then I ask you to rethink your perspective. Because we know that our opinions are strongly influenced by the media. Remember, our struggle is not against Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics, or any other person, but against Satan and his angels. I love the Muslim people. I was once one of them and my

When a Muslim prays, he isn't speaking to God as we do. He doesn't consider Him a trusted friend or loving father.

family still belongs to them. However, I'm against the radical theology that they preach. Again, being an Arab is one thing, and being Muslim is quite another.

Twenty-five percent of the world's population is currently Muslim. Islam is based on five pillars:

The first pillar is called *shahada*. It is their creed. Anyone who wants to adopt Islam as their religion is obliged to take this first step: they must go to a mosque, see a religious leader, and speak with him about their desire to become Muslim. Then, when everyone is present, he raises his index finger in the middle of the crowd, goes forward, and loudly and clearly repeats the words of the leader in Arabic, "the language of God": "I believe that there is no god but Allah; I believe that Mohammed is the last prophet." After the new convert utters these words, those present affirm the confession with the words *Allahu Akbar, Allahu*

Akbar!, which means, "God is most great!"

The second pillar is *salat*, which means "prayer." Muslims pray toward Mecca five times a day—to the House of God, which is located in Saudi Arabia. When a Muslim prays, he isn't speaking to God as we do. He doesn't consider Him a trusted friend or loving father. His prayer consists of rituals and memorized passages from the Koran.

Jesus' followers are allowed free access to the Father. We know that He cares for the dirty, the weak, and the sick. A Muslim, however, has to cleanse himself before praying, by washing his hands, feet, eyes, and ears. All because Allah doesn't speak to impure and dirty people. We can easily picture Muslims with white robes, praying on their knees. But we who have been washed by the blood of Christ know that our spiritual clothes are whiter than snow.

The Arabs are a people whose roots are in the Middle East and northern Africa, and whose language is Arabic. But being an Arab doesn't mean being Muslim.



When I talk about this pillar, I remember an experience that a friend once had. He was a company representative, working in Dubai. While he was presenting his project, he found that all the Muslims present left the room the moment they heard the call to prayer from the mosque. They didn't want to miss the time of prayer at any cost.

He told me with great awe of how God had spoken to his heart that day and said, "How are you going to tell these people who pray five times a day about Jesus, if you don't have a prayer life your-

self?" Dear reader, I'm not saying that you have to pray five times a day, nor that Muslims are praying in the right way and to the true God. I just want to awaken in you the desire to seek closeness to God with all your heart. We can't speak of Jesus to anyone unless we ourselves have an intimate relationship with Him.

The third pillar is *zakat*, which means "alms." The word is understood to be derogatory when it's used to refer to our leftovers. But it's different in the Muslim world. It literally means, "that which purifies my income."

Every Muslim is committed to solidarity with the poor and the weak. This pillar is very important, and is based on the donation of 2.5% of all funds and goods. This is reserved for another needy Muslim. It's worthwhile to consider this pillar. The zakat is only carried out once annually, and only Allah knows who has "leftovers" or not. So, it's an obligation that has to be adhered to with fidelity and diligence.

I remember that back in Morocco, my father locked himself in his office when it was time for zakat. Together with the accountant, he prepared accounts of everything he'd acquired that year. He then gave the portion of what God had given him during that period. A Muslim friend once told me that there would be no poor Muslims on earth if everyone who professed Islam gave zakat.

The fourth pillar is called *siyam* and means "fasting." This pillar represents the most famous month in the Muslim world. Even those who don't know much about religion have heard of Ramadan—a

meaningful month, not only in terms of giving up food for 30 days, but also in terms of the whole symbolism of faith and religion.

According to Islamic understanding, Allah revealed himself to the Prophet Mohammed through the Archangel Gabriel during this month. At the same time, God is said to have created heaven and earth. And it's during the month of Ramadan that God forgives the sins of the Muslims, who have fasted and prayed during these thirty days.

Anyone who has ever lived in a Muslim country or traveled through one during Ramadan, will understand what I mean: this is the time in which all Muslims become "holy." Thieves, unbelievers, non-practicing Muslims, children, adolescents, the elderly—all literally follow the whole fasting ritual with a singular purpose. You may ask why. Because this month, apart from having all the features I've already listed, is primarily the month of judgment. It's a month in which the demons and the devil himself are bound, so that the peo-

Every Muslim has a duty to travel to Mecca at least once in his lifetime. Then he has to circle a black square building called Al-Kaaba seven times.



ple can worship Allah on their own.

It's worth pointing out here that fasting lasts from sunrise to sunset. During these hours, it's forbidden to eat, drink, or engage in intercourse. This time is for prayer and worship only. However, as in every religion, there are also many in Islam who abstain from these things, but don't practice the spiritual side.

Once you turn fifteen, you have to start fasting. I remember well

how, when I was eight years old, my father encouraged me to fast for at least a few hours a day. This training would help me and motivate me to become a loyal follower of the Islamic faith.

As a good son (and especially as a child who was already following all of the religious practices), I fasted on some of the days of Ramadan. At sunset, there was the usual richly-laid table where the whole family would gather for dinner. And I, the eight-year-old

Today, I can say that I belong to the real royal family. I'm a child of the King of kings, and the most precious blood in the world has cleansed me—the blood that was shed on Calvary.

son, was honored with a special seat at the table. Everyone congratulated me for my piety and virtue as a child. I felt satisfied and was happy to have “done my duty.”

The last of the five pillars is *haji*, which means “pilgrimage.” This pillar symbolizes the day when Mohammed the prophet returned to his city, Mecca, a few years after he had been expelled.

Every Muslim has a duty to travel there at least once in his lifetime. In a certain month, he is to leave his country and visit this city. It is located in Saudi Arabia, considered to be the cradle of Islam. As soon as he arrives, he must repeat all of the activities that the prophet practiced in that place. For example, there is a black square building called Al-Kaaba. Muslims believe that this site was built by Abraham and Ishmael and symbolizes “the house of Allah.” Therefore, a Muslim has to circle this building seven times praising Allah, worshipping

him, and glorifying his name, as Mohammed supposedly did.

I've traveled to Mecca several times with my father, but one time particularly shaped my life. I'll never forget what happened there. A year before I moved to Europe to study, we went on a pilgrimage together. We were walking around Al-Kaaba, when I suddenly felt my father's strong hand holding me and pressing me against the wall of the building. He covered me with a white veil and pled, crying, “Oh God! Show mercy on my son and all his descendants. Guard my son wherever he goes.”

Four years later, I gave my life to Jesus Christ. I firmly believe that the true God answered my father's prayer on that day.

I like to say that Muslims absorb the teachings of Islam with their mother's milk. Even if he isn't a practicing Muslim later on, he knows everything about the religion. I remember my sister's birth.

As soon as she was born, everyone wanted to celebrate her arrival and get to know her. My family had been anxiously awaiting this new child. My father was the first to take her into his arms, and spoke loudly and clearly into her tiny ears that Allah is the only true God, and Mohammed is the last prophet. He wanted to ensure that the first word my sister ever heard was the name of Allah, so that she would always walk in his ways.

When I was sixteen, a big change happened in my life. I decided to leave Morocco to continue studying computer engineering in France. It's very difficult for a Moroccan to gain a foothold in Europe, because they're two completely different worlds. I couldn't really enjoy my newly-gained freedom, especially since I was so young.

My father called me as soon as I arrived. He wanted to know if I had gotten there safely, but then asked worriedly, "Is there a mosque nearby?" At that moment, I felt like my spiritual life was more valuable than I was myself. I also displayed this attitude toward my

fellow students. I imagined how they would all burn in hell if they didn't accept Allah into their lives as the only God, and Mohammed as the last prophet. The thought made me very sad.

I remember my first day of university, when I saw all the different people. Nobody cared whether someone was black, white, Muslim, atheist, Christian, Arab, or European. I was just one of many, but deep in my heart I was convinced that I, Mehdi, was better than everyone else there, because they were all nothing but filthy sinners.

I have to emphasize that I was living as a "mama's boy" in France. I have always had exaggerated habits, but don't forget that I'd grown up in a rich and powerful family. Unfortunately, the royal Moroccan family lives in a country that belongs to them in every way. Someone who doesn't live under a monarch can hardly imagine this dimension. Most of the country, the companies...even the sand on the beach belongs to them. If you leave the country, you know that

the plane you're flying on belongs to the royal family.

This is the kind of environment I grew up in, which meant that I never had to worry about money. When I entered a grocery store, I didn't care what things cost. I just chose what I liked. That's all. We had three domestic workers at my parents' house. One of them nursed me after I was born and looked after me most of the time. I didn't have to worry about a thing.

Still used to being catered to, I was suddenly completely alone in an apartment in France. I had no idea how to cook or clean. I remember two times when I took my clothes off and threw them out when they were dirty, and then bought new ones. After all, I had no idea how to use a washing machine...

In those days, I was always eating out without worrying about the expense. And on the weekends, I returned to Morocco no matter how high the cost.

I'm not telling you this to brag, or to show off what my family

had. I'm not the slightest bit proud of it. On the contrary; I'm ashamed to have once led such a self-indulgent and wasteful lifestyle. I'm reporting all this to show that since Christ redeemed me, I wouldn't trade my life now for all of those things I once had and enjoyed. I had no value before, and now I do. Today, I can say that I belong to the real royal family. I'm a child of the King of kings, and the most precious blood in the world has cleansed me—the blood that was shed on Calvary. There isn't enough money in the world to pay the high price that Jesus paid for us with His blood on the Cross. Nobody can obtain eternal life with money. Even the royal family can't buy happiness with all their goods. Nothing that exists on this earth can give the peace that I received when Jesus Christ became my Savior—a peace that I was given by grace. I want to convey this peace to you and to all people who don't yet know Jesus—especially the Muslim people.

(MR0620/1085)



On the Horizon



ISRAEL

The Coming Big 5G Change

5G Internet networks, which were launched in Israel in September and should be widespread here within two to four years, will accelerate the digital transformations that are shaping the global economy, according to Alon Berman, general manager of Ericsson Israel.



Workers install 5G telecommunications equipment on a T-Mobile tower in Seabrook, Texas. (photo credit: REUTERS/ADREES LATIF)



There are now some 200 million 5G users in 50 countries, Berman said. The United States, China and South Korea are the most advanced, with adoption growing in Europe too. Some 300 mobile devices, most notably the iPhone 12, are currently capable of connecting to a 5G network, he said.

In hospitals, 5G will allow patient data to be shared throughout devices without the security concerns of Wi-Fi networks. Consumer devices will communicate with each other through an Internet of Things that could eventually see

NEWS IN BRIEF



BIBLICAL SITE DAMAGED

Palestinian Authority roadwork destroyed portions of a 3,200-year-old wall that belonged to the biblical site of Joshua's altar on Mount Ebal, according to the right-wing NGO Shomrim al Hanetzach.

The area near the Palestinian city of Nablus, also known by the biblical name of Shechem, is located in Area B of the West Bank, and therefore the site falls under the auspices of the PA, and as such the Civil Administration has no oversight, its representative explained.

Shomrim al Hanetzach reported that Palestinian workers had ground ancient stone from the site's exterior wall into gravel to pave the road as well as made use of stones from within the site itself.

-jpost.com
10 February 2021



a million devices per square kilometer connected.

Israel actually has the cheapest mobile Internet service in the world, thanks to reforms implemented a decade ago to increase competition in the field. However, the high competition is now one of the factors holding back the county's development.

While Cellcom was allowed to acquire Golan Telecom last summer, a merger offer between Hot and Partner was rejected for fear of harming competition in the field.

"It would be wise for the Communications Ministry to allow another merger," Berman said. "The more Internet infrastructure is developed in a country, the more it develops the economy as a whole."

"COVID has made it even more clear that the Internet is a necessity for everyone, and that speed is really important," he said. "5G will provide a giant leap for consumers and businesses in all industries, allowing huge improvements in data delivery that will change the way business is done."

-www.jpost.com, 4 February 2021

Commentary: Communications is a major industry that is at the forefront as never before. We must remember that, a little over five decades ago,

communication from one continent to another was difficult, not to mention very expensive. During our tours to Israel in the 70s, it was most difficult to make a long-distance phone call without bribing the front desk in the hotel lobby. Today, Israel "has the cheapest mobile Internet service in the world." Doubtless, communications is a major benefit contributing to the amazing development of Israel.

Top countries with 5G: Key Takeaways

1. China has one of the largest 5G networks
2. South Korea was the first country to have 5G networks
3. Vodafone UK and O2 are sharing infrastructure in the UK
4. Vodafone and Deutsche Telekom are the 5G frontrunners in Germany
5. T-Mobile in the US is the first provider in the world to have a standalone 5G network with a 5G core

Our forefathers had difficulty understanding what is meant by Revelation 11:9-10: "And they of the people and kindreds and



tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Notice the repetition: "that dwell upon the earth." Today, the internet makes it possible.

But this technology will be utilized by the coming global world government, under the dominance of the Antichrist and his false prophet. Finally, there will be someone who can speak to the entire world. And, based on prophetic Scripture, we know the success — almost mind-boggling, albeit temporary.



7433

(See *The Non-Prophet's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, Item #2368, \$17.99.)



ISRAEL

Record Investment for Startups

Following a record-breaking year that saw some \$10 billion of investment flowing to Israeli companies, the reported amount of funds raised in January exceeded \$1.2 billion, the highest amount for a single month ever.



The highest reported amount was \$300 million by Rapyd, which embeds fintech services into apps, in a Series D round.

Rapyd, now valued at \$2.5 billion, is one of five unicorns—privately held companies worth at least \$1 billion—that raised

NEWS IN BRIEF



LATIN AMERICAN SUPPORTERS OF ISRAEL

The Israel Allies Foundation (IAF) organized a virtual conference gathering over 20 Spanish-speaking government officials who are all members of the Israel Allies Caucus in their country's parliament that aims at strengthening the ties between their country and Israel.

The IAF is coordinating a network of 50 Israel Allies Caucuses in parliaments around the world, 11 of which are in Latin America.

The twenty legislators who attended the meeting, coming from no less than seven Spanish speaking countries, including Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Uruguay, Guatemala, Argentina, Colombia and Honduras, shared their thoughts regarding the ties between their respective countries and Israel.

-jpost.com
10 February 2021



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

the majority of the January funds reported. Israel has the most unicorns per capita.

The other four are new to the unicorn “club”—OwnBackup, Melio and K Health of Tel Aviv, and DriveNets of Ra’anana.

-www.israel21c.org, 4 February 2021

Commentary: The world has awakened to the high-tech capability of Israelis and their constant stream of newly created companies. Wikipedia writes about Israel:

The economy of Israel is a highly advanced free market, primarily knowledge based economy. Israel ranks 19 on the latest report of the UN’s Human Development Index, which places it in the category of “Very Highly Developed,” allowing the country to enjoy a higher standard of living than many Western countries. The prosperity of Israel’s advanced

economy allows the country to have a sophisticated welfare state, a modern infrastructure, and a high-technology sector competitively on par with Silicon Valley. Israel has the second-largest number of startup companies in the world after the United States, and the third-largest number of NASDAQ-

listed companies after the U.S. and China. Intel, Microsoft, and Apple built their first overseas research and development facilities in Israel, and other high-tech multinational corporations, such as IBM, Google, HP, Cisco Systems, Facebook and Motorola have opened R&D centers in the country.

-en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Israel

There’s more to come; Revelation 21:24 makes this prophecy: “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the

kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

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(See *Miracle of Israel*, Item #2303, \$13.99.)





MIDDLE EAST

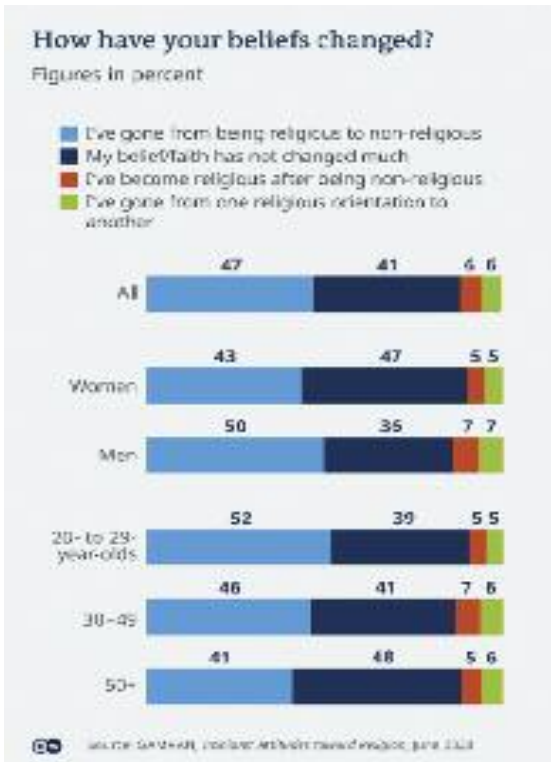
Are People Losing Their Religion?

Recent surveys indicate strongly that across the Middle East and Iran, almost half the population is loosening their ties to Islam.



Officially, Arab states have major Muslim populations, varying from around 60% in Lebanon to almost 100% in Jordan or Saudi Arabia.

However, several recently conducted and very comprehensive surveys in the Middle East and Iran, have come to similar conclusions: They all show an increase in secularization



NEWS IN BRIEF



PIZZA BY DRONE

Pizza Hut Israel plans to test delivering pizza by drone starting this summer, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

According to the report, deliveries would be made from only one Pizza Hut in the trial phase, in Bnei Dror, a village near Netanya.

Delivery wouldn't be to customers' homes, but to designated drop spots, like parking lots, which would need government approval. From there, drivers would be waiting to pick up the pies and complete the delivery. That would allow the Pizza Hut branch to reach several thousand customers that it doesn't currently service.

-jpost.com
9 February 2021



and growing calls for reforms in religious political institutions.

A recent survey among 40,000 interviewees by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN), which researched Iranians' attitudes toward religion, found that no less than 47% reported "having transitioned from being religious to non-religious."

Pooyan Tamimi Arab, assistant professor of Religious Studies at Utrecht University and co-author of the survey, sees this transition, as well as the quest for religious change, as a logical consequence of Iran's secularization.

A woman in Kuwait, who requested DW not publish her name due to safety concerns, also strictly differentiates

between Islam as a religion and Islam as a system. "As a teenager, I didn't find any proof of the government's claimed regulations in the Quran."

She recalls how, around 20 years ago, such thoughts had been mainly resented—but today the difference in the people's attitude toward Islam can be felt everywhere. "Rejecting the submission to Islam as a system doesn't mean rejecting Islam as a religion," she explained.

The more people differentiate between religion as a faith and religion as a system, the louder the calls for reforms. "The trend puts a dent in the efforts of Iran as well as its rivals, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, that are

NEWS IN
BRIEF 

IRAN PRODUCING URANIUM METAL

Iran has carried out its plan to produce uranium metal, the U.N. atomic watchdog confirmed, despite Western powers having warned Iran that would breach their 2015 nuclear deal as uranium metal can be used to make the core of an atom bomb.

Iran began breaching its nuclear deal with major

powers step by step in 2019 in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the deal the previous year and Washington's reimposition of sanctions on Tehran.

A law passed in response to the killing of its top nuclear scientist in November, which Tehran blames on its foe Israel, called for steps including opening a uranium metal plant. Iran told the International Atomic Energy

Agency in December it planned to produce uranium metal fuel for a research reactor.

France, Britain and Germany, all parties to the deal, said they were "deeply concerned" and that Iran's uranium metal production had no civilian credibility but potentially serious military implications.

-reuters.com
10 February 2021



competing for religious soft power and leadership of the Muslim world,” said James Dorsey, senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University’s S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

Dorsey, an expert on the region, highlights two contrasting examples. While the United Arab Emirates has lifted the bans on alcohol consumption and unmarried couples living together, Saudi Arabia has labeled having atheist thoughts as a form of terrorism.

-*www.du.com*, 4 February 2021

Commentary: The tendency is clear and undeniable: Islam is slowly but surely losing its absolute grip on Middle Eastern society.

The growth of atheism is not surprising either. Google.com finds, “There has been a remarkably sharp trend away from religion. In virtually every high-income country, religion has continued to decline.”

BigThink.com quotes the reliable Pew Report and states:

At the moment, Christianity is the religion of about 31% of the people on Earth, reports Pew. But there are telling trends, with the Christians in Europe dying faster

than new ones are being born. That’s significant because Europe is considered the religion’s heartland, even if it is spreading fast in Africa. Between 2010 and 2015, Christian deaths in Europe outnumbered births by nearly six million, with Germany alone accounting for 1.4 million more Christians deceased than born.

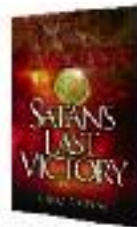
What does all this mean prophetically? The answer is almost too simple: a new religion in the making, one based on technology, science, and success.

Many historians agree: religion was the major contributing factor to the many wars throughout the centuries. Thus, it stands to reason that a global religion—scientifically confirmed, politically established, and ultimately globally enforced—will come into being. Statements such as found in Revelation 13:3b

are yet to be fulfilled: “and all the world wondered after the beast.”

7436

(See *Revelation 13: Satan’s Last Victory*, Item #1067, \$11.95.)





ISRAEL

Tel Aviv Among Healthiest Cities in the World

The report analyzed cities based on a few criteria, including but not limited to: sunlight hours, pollution levels, life expectancy and obesity levels.



According to the report’s findings, Tel Aviv has among the lowest

obesity ratings worldwide and ranks among the highest for life expectancy—with people living up to 82.8 years of age on average.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the city’s low obesity rates and high life expectancy is its known vegan scene and Mediterranean diet.

“We promote a plant-based Mediterranean diet in accordance with the recommendations of the Health Ministry and the World Health Organization, and in accordance with the principles of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP),” said Eitan Ben-Ami, director of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality’s Environment and Sustainability Authority.

In addition, Tel Aviv’s infrastructure has been updated to allow for cycling, walking and exercising in the open air all over the city, according to Ben-Ami, who added that “as of 2019, about 24% of the city’s area is recognized as green space, and the city’s sea breezes clean the air.”

-www.jpost.com, 25 January 2021



Senior citizens are seen exercising on the Azrieli Mall in Tel Aviv. (photo credit: AMIR TERKEL)

Commentary: The Mediterranean diet is definitely a leading one globally. World-o-Meter reports the average life expectancy of Mediterranean countries (and the USA for comparison):

- Italy 84.01
- Spain 83.99
- Israel 83.13
- Malta 83.06
- Greece 82.06
- USA 79.11

We are reminded that food is a gift of God, as we can read in Ecclesiastes 3:13: “And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.” 7427



(See *The Remarkable Wisdom of Solomon*, Item #2223, \$12.99.)

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isaiah 62:10).

BY ARNO FROESE

We notice the double emphasis, “go through, go through” and, “cast up, cast up.” This is a prophecy for the people of Israel to prepare for the return to the land.

When we read Israel’s recent history, we quickly learn of the many difficulties put in the path of those who wanted to return to Zion. Books have been written documenting the travails of Jews being expelled from many countries.

We know of the Crusaders destroying Jewish communities throughout Europe and the Middle East. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, Jews were expelled from France. In 1290, King Edward I of England ordered the expulsion of all Jews from England. The year 1392 saw the Jews expelled from Bern, Switzerland. In 1492, Ferdinand II and Isabella I signed a decree for all

Jews to be expelled from Spain. Between 1744 and the 1790s, Frederick II, Joseph II, and Maria Theresa sent impoverished Jews to the East. In 1791, Katerina the Great of Russia restricted Jews to the Western part of the Empire by means of deportation. In 1862, Jews were expelled from Kentucky within 24 hours, by Ulysses S. Grant through General Orders No. 11.

The most horrible and diabolical act against the Jews was committed between 1933-1945 by Nazi Germany. The Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem documents some 6 million Jews being cold-bloodedly murdered during the Second World War.

Furthermore, from 1947 to 1972, about 900,000 Jews were displaced from Arab and Muslim countries.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 40 declares: “The voice of him that cri-

eth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (verse 3). We know this has been fulfilled; the Lord did come to Israel. He fulfilled the various prophecies spoken about Him in the Old Testament. But the previous two verses speak of our days and the future: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” How do we know?

Note that they had “received of the Lord’s hand **double** for all her sins.” That has never happened biblically speaking. When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezra confesses: “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us **less** than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such de-

liverance as this” (Ezra 9:13). But Isaiah also has this to say: “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them” (Isaiah 61:7).

Therefore, Isaiah 40:1-2 speaks to the Gentiles. It is our task to take heed of the doubly emphasized: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” That’s what our Action for Israel program is all about. And with us, hundreds of thousands, even millions of Christians around the world pray for Israel, for the Jewish people, and for the day when they shall experience the fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Coronavirus

Israel has developed into an extremely successful nation. The meager population of about 600,000 Jews in 1947 has grown to almost 7 million individuals today. Yet another 4 to 5 million are still in the Diaspora. Due to anti-Semitism and acts of terrorism in Europe, a relatively large number have left for Israel, but there are more to come. Here an article by Hannah Brown in the *Jerusalem Post*:

The coronavirus crisis has accomplished what decades of government ad campaigns did not do—it has brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis back from abroad and made the country more enticing as a home for American Jews.

As of July [2020], more than 190,000 Israelis had returned to Israel from abroad, including more than 6,000 who had been away from the country for over half a year, according to data released by the Foreign Ministry. Many of those who returned early in the pandemic had been Israelis working in China,

where the effects of the virus were first felt. Israeli embassies and consulates abroad have issued approximately 10,000 travel documents, including issuing new passports (often for children of Israelis born abroad who had not been in Israel yet) and renewing and extending passports for Israelis planning to come back since the beginning of the pandemic.

While Israel has had its challenges handling the pandemic, it still has a notably lower mortality rate from the disease than many countries around the world where Israelis tend to live, notably the US, which has had over 1,000 deaths per every million of the population, as opposed to Israel, with 370 deaths per million. Areas where many Israelis live, including such cities as New York, have been hit particularly hard. For example, there have been over 7,700 deaths in the borough of Brooklyn alone since the pandemic began, many of them in the Jewish community.

And now, with the vaccination campaign in Israel bringing the


Pfizer vaccine to more than one million Israelis in less than two weeks, Israel is looking more attractive than ever as a place to live, both to Israelis who have been living abroad and American Jews who are thinking of moving to Israel.

-www.jpost.com, 3 January 2021

Most interesting is the fact that the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine was developed by husband-and-wife team Dr. Uğur Şahin and Dr. Özlem Türeci. He was born in Turkey, and moved with his parents at the age of four to Germany, where his father worked at the Ford factory in Cologne. Özlem Türeci was born in Germany

to Turkish immigrant parents, and naturally adhered to the Islamic religion. Quite strikingly, an article published by the *New York Times* concludes: “On the day they were married, Dr. Şahin and Dr. Türeci returned to the lab after the ceremony.” That shows total dedication.

But it also emphasizes the importance of globalism. Muslim immigrants developed the most popular Covid-19 vaccine for the Western world.

For Israel and the rest of the globe, the Muslim-developed BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine is a gigantic step toward the control and even eradication of Covid-19. 



“I will bless them
that bless thee...”
(Genesis 12:3).

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At a Crossroads...

Thank you for standing with us in prayer, as we asked in the last article, “A Request for Prayer.”

By David Phillips *Project Manager*

VOLUNTEERING

We at the Ebenezer Home have faced many challenges recently. Not only concerning the project, but also in running and managing the Home itself. As with other ministries here in Israel, our volunteers' program has been delayed by the government. We are deeply thankful that we still have one very faithful volunteer from the USA, but she too will probably have to leave sometime mid-2021. The government has changed all volunteering conditions; we continue working out the details so we can resume our volunteers' program, but it looks like it won't happen until sometime after Pesach (Passover). More than ever before, this has made us realize the absolute need to become independent, as we must increasingly rely upon hiring Israelis, which is quite taxing on our non-profit ministry budget.

ENLARGEMENT PROJECT

As mentioned in the previous article, Ebenezer was approved to add an additional floor with a 12-bed nursing ward, on top of the existing building. But what we soon realized is, this minor change in the additional nursing ward beds would leave us very vulnerable. The reason is that we would still have to rely heavily on donations and support; not to mention that there wouldn't be sufficient beds to meet the ever-growing needs. Yet with a larger number of nursing wards, we could become much more self-sufficient financially.

During this pandemic, we found ourselves standing at a crossroads. Many ministries worldwide are facing financial issues. As believers, we have been asking ourselves, “What will the future hold?” as we cannot see the end of the current pandemic



anytime soon. But we always have hope. We are encouraged by our Lord Yeshua; He warned us that these things would come, yet His promises stand forever. We know that He cares for His children, those who belong to Him.

At the crossroads, we are presented with four options:

1. As you already know, a 12-bed nursing ward added to the top of the existing Ebenezer Home.

2. Acquiring a new lot of land and building a new home. This would mean leaving our beloved spot in Haifa.

3. Purchasing an existing home and renovating it.

4. Tearing down the existing facility and rebuilding it from scratch, into a new 3 to 4 nursing ward home, with 36 beds each.

The greater extension will be an expense we need to take into consideration, but once completed, the government will pay for each occupied bed and the nursing care of the residents! This would mean we would be self-supporting.

The demand is growing for more nursing wards, especially for believers who want to spend their last days in a home with Christian, biblical values. The Ministry of Health is encouraging us to not only extend the Home by just one nursing ward, but to go ahead and extend it by 3 to 4 nursing wards. They are looking toward a future where these needs must be met. That would be best for Israel.

Ebenezer has the vision to serve the elderly who have been serving the community of believers; to help the very last of the Holocaust survivors still living, a generation that is almost gone. We also see the need to minister and care for the second generation of Holocaust survivors, some of whom are deeply traumatized by their Holocaust-surviving parents. This second generation of Holocaust survivors are now in their 70s (or older) and will soon need to enter a senior citizens' home.

Presently, we prefer option #4: tearing down the current facility and rebuilding it into a 7-8 story building. This would mean that

EBENEZER HOME



we could use the same property where we are located without moving, while allowing us to add 3-4 nursing wards to the home. We have presented this idea to the municipality, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, government tax offices, etc., for their approval. We pray for a positive answer. Please stand with us in prayer as we await their response!

This vision from God, we shall follow. We shall go on until He takes us Home to the place He has prepared.

The residents and the team at Ebenezer greet you all, thank you, and want you to know that we

love you! Without your prayers—bringing us new hope each day in this time of quarantine and lockdown—we would not know how to face tomorrow.

I leave you with part of this hymn, “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow” by Ira Stanphill:

“I don’t know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day...I don’t worry o’er the future, For I know what Jesus said. And today I’ll walk beside Him, For He knows what lies ahead. Many things about tomorrow I don’t seem to understand, But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand...”



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