

Any pilgrim who has “walked about Zion” can testify to Jerusalem’s atmospheric appeal. Like the ancient Jewish exiles, we too exclaim, “If I forget you o Jerusalem let my right hand forget her cunning” (Psalm 137:5). Gary Frazier and Jim Fletcher have given the church a great gift in *The Miracle of Israel*. This small country, hardly the size of the state of New Jersey, is, in fact, just that . . . a miracle. This thrilling narrative not only looks back at the past, looks around us at the present, but reveals biblical truth about Israel’s certain and secure future. Read it and reap!

O.S. Hawkins

President/CEO, GuideStone Financial Resources

Former Pastor First Baptist Church in Dallas

Frazier and Fletcher know the Book of promise and the land of promise better than anyone. Don’t miss their riveting and compelling new book, *The Miracle of Israel*. It will inform your mind, inflame your heart, and bless your soul.

Dr. Ed Hindson

Founding Dean & Distinguished Professor

of Religion

Rawlings School of Divinity

One of the world’s smallest countries is also routinely the biggest news story, and as a journalist, I find that profoundly interesting. Looking behind the headlines, however, is even more compelling, and any objective person can see how special Israel is in history. Now my friends Gary Frazier and Jim Fletcher have produced a remarkable book detailing the supernatural preservation of the Jewish people. I strongly recommend that you read *The Miracle of Israel*; it will strengthen your faith and reach those in your circle who are skeptical of the Bible.

Joseph Farah

Editor and Chief Executive Officer

WND.com, WND Books, WND Films

I do not know of anyone with a bigger heart for or better grasp upon matters of the Holy Land and End Times than Gary Frazier. I highly recommend his new book, *The Miracle of Israel*, for your greater awareness and readiness in these last days.

Dr. James MacDonald
Senior Pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel
author of Act Like Men and Vertical Church
JamesMacDonald.org

A number of years ago, I visited Israel for the very first time with my friend, Gary Frazier. This journey opened my eyes and heart to the greatness of our God. The Word of God came alive! Therefore, *The Miracle of Israel* communicates one resounding truth: God lives! One of His most amazing proofs of this is His land and His people. When you read this book, your faith will come alive!

Dr. Ronnie Floyd
President, Southern Baptist Convention
Senior Pastor, Cross Church

I have known Gary Frazier for many years. I trust him and his knowledge of Israel and his love for the Word of God. I, too, love Israel and have traveled there more than ten times. I read with excitement this new book by Gary Frazier and Jim Fletcher, which tells the story of God keeping His promises. It is the story of a sovereign God. It is a wonderful portrayal of prophecy promised and promises fulfilled. As Gary and Jim tell the story of Israel's history, Isaiah 46 and Deuteronomy 3 come alive!

In this wonderful book, these two authors powerfully portray a strong apologetic for the Word of God as it predicted, revealed, and proved the reality of the nation of Israel and the coming of a Savior from that nation. They tell accurately of events that have occurred, that are occurring, and that will occur. I encourage you to read this new book.

Frank S. Page, PhD, President
Chief Executive Officer, SBC Executive Committee

I began reading *Miracle of Israel* by my friend Dr. Gary Frazier last night and couldn't put it down. Gary is one of the most knowledgeable people I know when it comes to Israel and Bible prophecy. But I wasn't prepared for the wealth of information and inspiration in this amazing book. What a resource — a much-needed resource — for the body of Christ. I'm praying for God's favor upon this book and upon His people, the Jews (Genesis 12:3).

Barry L. Cameron, Pastor
Crossroads Christian Church, Grand Prairie, TX
**Author of *The ABCs of Financial Freedom* &
*Contagious Generosity***

At Southwest Radio Church, we have long taught that the astonishing establishment of the state of Israel is a miracle unique in history; irrefutable proof that God is alive and keeps His promises. How glad I am to see this remarkable book that details the chronological story of the Jews' divine preservation, and the founding of Israel in our lifetime. This is one you'll want to keep handy, as we move into the most fascinating period in all of history. A miracle indeed!

Pastor Larry Spargimino
Southwest Radio Ministries, Oklahoma City

Gary Frazier is my friend. He reminds us of the miracle-working God we serve who always keeps His promises to His people. *The Miracle of Israel* will encourage you to trust God more than ever before in your daily walk with Christ. Gary writes with conviction and clarity and is more than qualified to speak on this subject. I have traveled to Israel with him on numerous occasions and been blessed by his teaching each and every time. If you love God, His Word, and His people, you will love this book!

Dr. Robert Jeffress, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

I've known Gary and Jim a long time, and their love for Israel and prophecy allows them to see clearly that the Jewish state is the greatest miracle of our era. I love the fact that they show clearly that if God keeps His promises to an ancient nation, He will keep His promises to us as individual believers. *The Miracle of Israel* is a tour de force, one I'm thrilled to recommend!

Terry James

Author and General Editor of Raptureready.com

Gary Frazier and Jim Fletcher believe in miracles. If you don't, this book will cause you to rethink your point of view as they point us to a miracle unfolding before our eyes. This work will help you understand the place of Israel in Scripture, in prophecy, and in the future.

Gene Appel, Senior Pastor

Eastside Christian Church, Anaheim, CA

Gary Frazier and I have been friends for more than 30 years and I know him well. Gary is a member of Prestonwood Church and has spoken for me many times. I know of no one more knowledgeable, concise, and committed to spreading the Word of God. *The Miracle of Israel* is yet another example of Gary's passion for Christ, love for His Word and the Jewish people's right to exist in the land God has given them. Read it, be inspired and trust God more!

Pastor Jack Graham

Prestonwood Baptist Church

I've been to Israel numerous times and have seen this land for myself. Then I dive into the Scriptures and am reminded that God's people and this place are truly a miracle. From their humble beginnings to their war-torn history, God has had His hand on Israel and has protected His people for the sake of His name. Gary's book is an in-depth look at the providence of God in relation to the most magnificent place on earth. Immerse yourself in its pages — then book a trip to the Holy Land!"

Michael Catt

Senior Pastor, Sherwood Church, Albany, GA

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A Word from Gary

Have you ever experienced a miracle? How would you define a miracle? Would you recognize a miracle if in fact you witnessed it? On the surface, most people say no to the first question, stammer on the second, and hesitate to answer the last. Yet miracles do occur on a daily basis, and therefore we should be very careful before denying their existence. The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, is purported to have stated, “He who does not believe in miracles is not realistic.” This is a remarkable statement from a man who lived his life as an atheist.

I want to be clear, I believe in miracles. I believe in miracles not just because I have both seen and experienced miracles in my journey, but primarily because I know God and His Word.

The book in your hand is a book about a miracle and subsequent miracles. The historical narrative we trace begins in Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia, moves to an ancient land known as Canaan, then to Egypt, continues to a cross in Jerusalem, and spreads to the many nations of our world before arriving at a barn in Austria. It then comes to a courtroom in Vienna, continues to a hotel in Switzerland, a house in Tel Aviv, the West Wing of the White House, and to presidential palaces in Cairo, Egypt; Amman, Jordan; and Damascus, Syria.

As we journey we will be introduced to men of faith, such as Abraham, Moses, King David, Solomon, and many others. You will meet men and women of vision such as Eliezer Ben Yehuda, Theodore Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, and Menachem Begin. We will dig into the role played by former presidents of America and be amazed as we see God working through men in history to bring about the fulfillment of His Word.

This story recalls the horrors of the Holocaust, the struggle of a people to survive and ultimately flourish in a difficult and hostile land surrounded by enemies. It is a record of wars fought, ethnic clashes, and constant interference and pressures from foreign powers. This is a story of a people and a nation hated by most, tolerated by some, cherished by God, and loved by the followers of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This journey finally ends on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, having encompassed a time span of six thousand years. Our quest will take us back to the Garden of Eden in ancient Mesopotamia and forward to modern-day Israel and finally on to the New Jerusalem.

This is a book about miracles of history that affect each and every one of us, whether we recognize them or not. We will ponder how the Creator God has and is working in the history of His world. In the end we will see that God has done and will do exactly as He promised as recorded in Isaiah 46:9–10, where He states:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

The Creator God had a plan from the very beginning, and if we look for His hand in world history, both past and present, we can be certain of His hand in the future. Join me now as we journey

down the corridors of time, along the halls of history and experience with me, *The Miracle of Israel: The Shocking, Untold Story of God's Love for His People.*

Gary D. Frazier
Jerusalem, Israel

Preface

In November of 2011 I received a life-altering call notifying us that my wife, Sandra, had inoperable, incurable breast cancer. After tests at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, we were told she had 36 months to live, more or less. In March 2012, God healed her! Do you believe God can heal? The Bible, God's Word, teaches there are three types of illness.

1. A sickness unto chastisement

In other words, we have chosen to sin against God, to break His law, and as such we suffer the consequence of our rebellion. The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:29–30 and states, “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [die].”

2. A sickness unto death

Ecclesiastes 3:1–2 states, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die.” Hebrews 9:27 tells us, “It is appointed unto men once to die.”

3. *A sickness unto the glorification of God*

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him (John 9:1–3).

So, we prayed and asked God if there was willful sin or disobedience that brought the cancer on. No! Was it Sandra's time to physically die? We felt the Lord God was not through with either of us, and we agreed. No! So we prayed and waited, and we like to call what happened *God's Miracle for Sandra*.

But the fact is, God is always at work keeping His promises IF we are paying attention.

The October War Miracle

It was October 1973 in the midst of the Yom Kippur War. Israel was defending its right to exist after being attacked by Egypt and Syria on their holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur* in Hebrew.

Investigative reporter Michael Greenspan recounts the following as seen in the made-for-TV series *Against All Odds* produced by William (Bill) McKay. A small company of IDF soldiers led by David Yaniv was in northern Israel on the Golan Heights attempting to infiltrate into the Syrian village of Quneitra. As they crested a hill and descended into a valley, all of a sudden they realized they had walked right into the midst of a minefield. As they tried to figure out what to do in order not to be killed, they determined they would use their knives as they had been trained to locate, dig up, and disarm the mines. However, this would be a slow process, and with dawn coming they would be exposed to the Syrian soldiers. Suddenly out of nowhere a severe wind began to blow with such intensity the soldiers were almost

blown off their feet. The windstorm lasted only a few minutes before subsiding. As the wind subsided and they opened their eyes, what they saw shook them to the very core of their being. The wind had blown away the top level of the soil, revealing the location of each and every mine. Had the winds not blown, and had they continued, they would at best be captured and at worst been killed or maimed.

Coincidence? Chance? Luck? Or was it a miracle of God?

The Hand from Heaven Miracle

The Israelis were literally being overrun in the Golan Heights in the first hours of the Yom Kippur War by the Syrian army, who had crossed the eastern border into Israel with 1,400 tanks and men. Israel had been caught off guard. The Israelis deployed their forces of only 200 tanks, only to be largely decimated by the onslaught of the Syrian forces. Avi Dor Kahalani, a veteran of the Six Day War of '67, whose story became a best-selling book entitled *Fury 77*, was the tank company commander. Kahalani was on his radio screaming for reinforcements. He was being told reinforcements were on their way, but they must hold out until they arrived because if the Syrians broke out into the valley there would be no stopping them in their march to Tel Aviv. Kahalani kept radioing as the situation became more dire by the moment, and continued to be told help was on the way. The fact was, help was not coming; there was none to send.

As the battle raged, it came down to just 7 Israeli tanks and a few IDF light helicopters with 2 wire-guided missiles each against over 1,000 Syrian tanks. The Jewish soldiers were certain they were about to meet their maker. Kahalani was firing on the Russian-made T82 tanks and miraculously blowing them away one by one. Suddenly, something happened! The Syrian tanks stopped dead in their tracks. Momentarily, the hatches opened and the tank crews came climbing out and took off running. The Jewish tank crews were in shock. What was happening? They

immediately began to advance against their enemy and capture many of the Syrians who held up their arms in surrender.

Later, as the Syrians were being interrogated a recurring story was told. The tank was full of fuel. The gun turret was loaded with a shell and ready to fire. Suddenly it seemed as if a horrendous pressure built up in the cockpit to the point they felt their ears were going to burst. They opened the hatch and as they looked out they saw what seemed to be *a hand from heaven* pressing down upon them. They became horrifically frightened, so they climbed out and ran for their lives.

Granted, this is a pretty wild story and one most would question. However, as the tank crews were being interrogated individually, each one told the exact same story.

Coincidence? Chance? Luck? Or was it God at work?

Let's investigate together and see at what conclusion we arrive.

Gary D. Frazier

Section One:

The Past

Chapter 1

Beginnings and Father Abraham

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran (Genesis 12:1–4).

In order to understand the miracle of Israel, and by extension the miracles that impact believers — including, of course, *you* — it is critical to read and absorb the early chapters of the Bible, beginning at the beginning, Genesis (the word “Genesis,” in Hebrew, means “beginnings”).

God had a plan from the very moment of creation, and if we look for His hand in world history, both past and present, we can be certain of His hand in the future.

Let's take a look at history, according to the Bible.

HIStory

It is of the utmost importance that we know *HIStory*. Sadly, many today have no historical reference from which to draw and as such, cannot grasp the present, let alone the future. The majority of people today have been taught history in light of a series of names, places, dates, and seemingly disconnected events. The result of this type of teaching has, for the most part, failed to inspire students to love, appreciate, and respect history as well as see the value of understanding how world events are, in fact, connected one to another.

If one views history through the lens of Scripture, the Bible, and sees God working in the affairs of men and nations with Israel and the Jewish people at the center, then history becomes truly exciting because it validates it is His story!

By the way, many today are unaware that the Bible is the only sacred book in the world that records verifiable history, including the astonishing instances of predictive prophecy.

The question is often asked: Is there really a god who is involved in the affairs of men, or is this a myth, a fairy tale made up by men who are weak and therefore need the concept of a god to worship? Well, we want to share with you how God works in history. People often think the promises of God should be fulfilled instantaneously, and if not, they deny the very existence of the creator.

It doesn't quite work that way.

In Isaiah 46:9–10, we read:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from

ancient times the things that are not yet done. saying,
My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

This is a promise from God. He Himself has already written the final chapter of history and of each and every life as well. Wow! Can this be true? Are the steps of my life ordered already? If this is true, am I only a puppet on the stage of life? Absolutely not! God, as the Creator, has given each and every one of us the freedom of choice. We get to choose what we will do. We get to choose whether or not we will believe and trust God or reject and deny His existence. This is why God reveals in the above passage that He already knows and therefore can reveal His plan to the world. Not because we are puppets on His stage, but because to Him the future is the past and therefore He has already seen each and every choice we make. Please remember, time was created for man. God is timeless, eternal, and therefore He looks “*back to the future.*”

As a result, His promises are always sure. We find no such claims in other sacred books, such as the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, or the writings of Buddha or Confucius.

In any event, the Bible tells us clearly how nations — and in particular, a Nation — came into being.

Despite what you’ve heard from left-leaning revisionist university professors, liberal preachers, or the media, biblical history is sound and provable. Although the Bible is not a history book, 50 percent of it is in fact history, and when the Creator records history, He does so accurately.

The Garden

The first 11 chapters of the Bible set the stage for an unfolding drama that not only chronicles the creation of all that exists but gives us a working foundation for the present and a look to the future. We read those first words, *In the beginning God created.* Since this is not a book about creation, let us say plainly — yes, we believe in a Creator and in six literal 24-hour days of creation

as well as a supreme being who spoke the world, and all that is within it, into existence. And no, we do not believe in Frederick Coyle's "big bang" theory no matter how popular the TV show might have become! Then God rested from His work on the seventh day. If you would like to dig into this more deeply, we would refer you to the works of a good friend Ken Ham and his staff at www.answersingenesis.com, as well as Dr. Henry Morris III and the scholars at the Institute for Creation Research at www.icr.org.

These first chapters of Genesis point us to a period of some two thousand years where we find only one kind of people on the earth — Gentiles. As we read, we trace the genealogy and chronology of these created beings whom God intended to leave their fathers and mothers, marry, have families, and care for His creation as they honored Him with holy living and obedience to His commands.

We do not have to read very far until we begin to realize there is a problem. The problem is that the man and woman God had created in His image chose to sin against Him, severing their sweet fellowship with Him. The ensuing years saw the continued rebellion against a holy God and His commands. Sadly, by the time we come to the sixth chapter of Genesis we read these words:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them (Genesis 6:5–7).

As bleak as these words sound, the next verse gives us great hope:

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. . . .
Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and

Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 6:8–10).

Yes, God did ultimately destroy every living thing on the globe with a worldwide flood. The only exceptions were those whom God brought to safety within the ark built by Noah and his wife, along with their three sons and their wives. Only eight human beings shared the ark, Darren Aronofsky (writer and director of the movie *Noah* [2014] evidently forgot to check the Bible before he made the movie¹ since he added Tubal-Cain with two of every kind of unclean animal, seven of every kind of clean animal, and seven of every kind of bird. (Were there dinosaurs on the ark?²)

Now here is where it gets interesting. After the Flood, these eight humans emerged from the ark and began the process of re-populating the world. As we read the genealogy of the three sons, this is what we discover. Shem was 98 years old when the Flood ended and the earth became inhabitable once again. Two years later, when he was 100 years old, he began to have sons and daughters and would do so until he died 402 years after the Flood.

As we continue reading the historical narrative, we learn that eventually one of his descendants named Terah would have a son whom he would name *Abram*. Terah dwelt in a



Map showing modern-day Iraq, with Baghdad and the ancient site of Ur noted. (Shutterstock)

1. <http://www.charismamag.com/blogs/fire-in-my-bones/20140-seven-of-the-worst-mistakes-in-the-movie-noah>
2. <https://answersingenesis.org>.

place called Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:31; today thought to have been in what was Mesopotamia and is today Iraq).

Apparently, Abram was quite a guy because God chose to speak to him and gave him a command associated with a promise.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3).

In this incredible promise, God was setting the stage for a future *miracle* that would ultimately change the world. It was a miracle that would bring a new era upon the earth and that would bring a Savior to fallen humanity. It would be a miracle that would change the course of history forever. The miracle would be known as the *Jews*, and their land would be called *Israel*.

In terms of geographical and family background, Abram's family had settled in a prosperous region. In Genesis 11:31, we read that Terah took his family to a place called Haran (thought to have been somewhere in Mesopotamia). It was there that both Terah and Abram were instructed to leave and go to the land of Canaan.

Now, the land of Canaan, inhabited of course by the Canaanites (descendants of Ham), is still disputed today. Geographically, it is located within the borders of modern Israel. (Incredibly, former Palestinian terrorist leader Yasser Arafat claimed the Palestinians were directly descended from the Canaanites and were therefore

Fascinating Fact

While the Palestinians attempt to claim they are descendants of the Philistines (who came from the Island of Crete), they are in fact from the Saudi peninsula and have been in the land no more than about 200 years.

entitled to the land, rather than the Jews! He should have gotten his story straight since they also claim to be descendants of the Philistines, hence Palestine.)

Terah died in Haran (Genesis 11:32).

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee (Genesis 12:1).

It is here that we are introduced to the great promise God made to Abram's descendants:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

Notice that the curse is very personal as the Lord uses the pronoun "him." Do you think anti-Jewish tyrants down through history — think Haman (Esther), Hitler, Stalin, and many others — have not been cursed? Abram was obedient, and that made all the difference.

The Covenant

God would take this man Abram, whom He later would rename "Abraham" (Abram = great father, Abraham = father of a multitude), and enter into a covenant with him, which we today must seek to understand fully. This covenant would be without conditions on Abram and his descendants, yet wholly dependent upon the faithfulness of the Creator.

It happened this way: God spoke to Abram and promised him descendants that would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. The problem was that Abram's wife, Sarai, was barren and they had no children. Yet Abram believed what God told him.

And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the

midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites (Genesis 15:9–21).

This covenant, although often ignored and misunderstood, still stands! God, the Creator and owner of the universe and all that is therein, conveys this land to Abraham and his descendants, but only those who would come through the line of his soon-to-be miraculously born son, Isaac.

How much land? It is huge!

. . . from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites and the Jebusites (Genesis 15:18–21).

Have the Jews ever occupied all the territory God bequeathed them? No. Will they? Yes! When? Check out chapter 8 for the answer, but for now know this, YES! God's covenant is eternal and unconditional.

Have you ever wondered if God has a sense of humor? On many occasions we have. In fact, every time we pause and take a good look at the world in which we live, we become more convinced this is true. For example, what's up with the two-hump camel? How about the platypus?

We could go on and on, but you get the idea. The reason we mention this is because in Genesis 17 God would pay a visit to Abram and Sarai after they had taken matters into their own hands and had a son by Sarai's Egyptian servant girl, Hagar. They named the boy Ishmael, and when he was 12 and Abram was 99, God comes to Abram and has a talk with him. The gist of the conversation is that God tells him He is going to give him another son that Sarai will birth. We can only imagine what Abram thought! *Yeah, right. God, are You kidding me? Just in case You forgot, I'm 99 and Sarai is 89. We're a little old to be having a baby, don't you think?*

It gets better. Abraham fell face down and laughed! Really, that's exactly what he did. He says to himself,

Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?
(Genesis 17:17).

So Abraham then offers an alternative and says to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Genesis 17:18). In other words, *God we have a son already, and I'm not overly excited about having a baby around, changing diapers and all that!*

God responds and says, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac [Isaac means laughter] and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (Genesis 17:19).

Abraham and Sarah's first child, Ishmael, is born through the natural process, but Isaac, the first Jew, is a *miracle of God* and a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham! God proceeds to tell Abraham that He will bless Ishmael and his descendants and then God adds the big word, BUT! He says,

But my covenant I will establish with Isaac (Genesis 17:19, 21:11–12).

In one brief but succinct statement, God makes it crystal clear that while He loves the descendants of Ishmael, the covenant concerning the land belongs solely to those who come through the line of Isaac. If we fail to comprehend and accept this truth, we will never understand the issues surrounding this most disputed piece of property that has become the most fought-over piece of real estate in the world.

Fascinating Fact

Muslims reject the Bible because they claim Jews wrote it. In addition, they believe it has been corrupted and therefore the Koran is the only true word from god/Allah.

Israel Is Born

Isaac would have a son and he would name him Jacob, but God would change his name to Israel, which means, *he struggles with God*. The rest of the Old Testament is the historical drama of the Jewish people and their struggling with God in disobedience and the consequences they suffered and continue to suffer even to this day. God's intention was to supernaturally birth a people, an ethnicity that would accomplish at least three purposes:

1. The Jews were to be a *monotheistic* people, in that they would worship the true Creator, as opposed to the pagan peoples who worshiped a plurality of gods.
2. They were to be a *holy* people as opposed to the ungodliness of their neighbors.
3. God intended to showcase the Jews to the world as an example of what He could do for those wholly committed to Him.

They failed miserably on all counts! But God did not, nor would He give up on them.

The Egypt Years

Now, look, one of the early prophecies in the Bible, and one quite remarkable, is given when God tells Abraham:

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance (Genesis 15:13–14).

This is incredible; it is one of those moments when God tells humans directly *what will happen*. Don't forget Isaiah 46:9–10. This makes God and the Bible unique in history. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened. You see, Abraham eventually died (at age 175!), and one of his descendants, Jacob, had 12 sons who would become known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel:

Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim, Manasseh.

Fascinating Fact

Although we'll get into this in more detail later, those names will appear on the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12.)



An Amazing Prophecy

A remarkable prophecy appears in Genesis 49. The scene is the gathering of Jacob of his sons, at the time of his death. He tells them that he will reveal what will happen in the last days!

In Genesis 49:10, he makes a somewhat strange statement:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

What? What is a scepter, and what is Shiloh? The great scholar Henry Morris explains:

This important prophecy has been strikingly fulfilled. Although Judah was neither Jacob's firstborn son nor the son who would produce the priestly tribe, he was the son through whom God would fulfill His promises to Israel and to the world. The leadership, according to Jacob, was to go to Judah, but this did not happen for over 600 years. Moses came from Levi, Joshua from Ephraim, Gideon from Manasseh, Samson from Dan, Samuel from Ephraim and Saul from Benjamin. But when David finally became king, Judah held the scepter [a symbolic, ornamental staff] and did not relinquish it until after Shiloh came. "Shiloh" is a name for the Messiah, probably related to the Hebrew word for "peace" (*shalom*) and meaning in effect, "the one who brings peace."³

Already in Genesis, we see strong references and prophecies looking forward to the Messiah coming, the Messiah being Jesus Christ (there are 14 generations from Abraham to David, and 14 generations from David to the Babylonian captivity, and 14 generations from the captivity to Jesus).



3. Henry Morris, *The Defender's Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), p. 85.

Eventually, one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, would become a high official in Egypt, and because of his position, his father and brothers were able to come to Egypt in order to escape a famine ravaging Canaan. It was those 70 souls who would become a vast nation, one whose very numbers would concern Egyptian officials as the years went by.

Even in this, the Lord was working.

He would send them into bondage in Egypt, and for 400 years they would endure incredible hardships at the hands of their oppressors. However, God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable and that they would live in the land of Canaan! In God's time, He would raise up a deliverer by the name of Moses.

This man who did not speak well would, by God's power, lead the Jews out of Egypt, through 40 years in the wilderness, and to the shores opposite the Promised Land before his death. The final blow to Pharaoh and the Egyptians would be when God would institute the Passover.

God told Moses that on the 10th day of the month of Nisan the Jewish families were to take a lamb one year of age and take it into their homes where it would become a family pet for four days. On the 14th of that same month, in the evening they were to take the innocent lamb and slit its throat, drain the blood into a basin, take a hyssop branch and make the sign of a cross by wiping the blood on the lintel over the door and the sides of the door, the doorposts. Then, in the night God would send the death angel, and wherever there was a house without the blood applied, the first-born would die (Exodus 12).

It had been 430 years since Jacob and his 11 sons had joined their brother Joseph in Egypt. The first 30 years they had flourished until Joseph died, but then it had been 400 years of living hell under the tyrannical and oppressive rule of the pharaohs. However on this day, the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan, it all came to an end . . . or had it?

The Wilderness Years

Things in Egypt had been hard, but through the years the descendants of Abraham through Isaac had come to know what to expect from their oppressors more or less, and had managed to survive. This God-given *desire to survive* would become a driving force in the life of the Jewish people in the centuries that lay ahead.

Now they faced the wilderness, the desert, and had little or no experience surviving in this barren, thirsty land. I must pause to remind us at this point that the God who promised is the God who delivers — and deliver He did!

First it was wiping out Pharaoh's entire "cavalry" in the waters of the Red Sea. While the Bible skeptics claim this never happened, evidence was discovered in the Red Sea Gulf of Aqaba in 2003 that substantiates the biblical account and cannot be dismissed. Items discovered were remains of hundreds of bodies, chariot wheels, weapons, and many tools, to name just a few.



An Amazing Prophecy

In one of his last books, *god Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, Christopher Hitchens reveals his anti-Bible bias by claiming that the Exodus story never happened. Hitchens was in many ways a brilliant writer, but in this regard he missed badly. His evidence that the Exodus never happened? Merely this:

It goes without saying that none of the gruesome, disordered events described in Exodus ever took place. It was all [the biblical account], quite simply and very ineptly, made up at a much later date.⁴

4. Christopher Hitchens, *god is Not Great* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2007), p. 102.

Really? Then Mr. Hitchens, and all critics, please explain prophecies such as the one found in Exodus 12:14:

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial;
and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout
your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordi-
nance for ever.

This is quite extraordinary, because in the 3,700 years since this prophecy was given, Jews the world over — many of them not believers — stop what they're doing to observe Passover each year!



Then God delivered their need for water and food. Not just a few drops, but water for approximately two million people. He turned bitter water to sweet water and later would bring water from a rock, manna to sustain them, and finally, quail for meat.

God constantly dazzled the people by miracle after miracle, proving His great love for them as well as His plan of redemption by giving Moses the Ten Commandments. God would further give specific instructions for building the articles to be placed in the temporary Tabernacle.

For 40 years these chosen by God would remain in the wilderness, while God would purge from them those who exhibited unbelief in God's promises concerning the land.

Moses, Joshua, and Caleb would continue to lead and exhort them to simply trust the God who had delivered them. Ponder this thought for a moment: God had entered into

Fascinating Fact

Moses sent 12 spies to spy out the land and 10 came back and reported that while the land was abundant and beautiful there were giants in the land and they could not defeat them! Failure to trust and believe cost these 10 the joy of entering into the Promised Land. Many make the same mistake today. Trust and believe Him!

a covenant and had sworn by Himself with regard to the Jews as His chosen people, and that the Deliverer, the Messiah, would come from or through this lineage. How then could He let them die out? He could not, and He would not!

The Promised Land

After 40 years in the wilderness/desert and the dying off of the unbelieving generation who failed to trust God, the day had finally arrived! The land promised to Abraham's descendants lay just across the rushing waters of the Jordan River. God had brought them out of Egypt and slavery to bring them in to experience freedom from oppression and obedience to God who created, called, and cherished them.

All they had to do now was figure out how in the world they were going to get across this river with two million men, women, and children! But God! He was at work again, just as He had been every step of the way.

God told Moses to appoint Joshua as their leader and for him, that is Moses, to address the people one last time before his departure.

But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see (Deuteronomy 3:26–28).

Moses then reiterates to the chosen the Ten Commandments and says:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:4–5).

Thus begins the beginning of this overarching story of redemption, promise, and provision. Come with us as we detail the rest of this fascinating story, which culminates on a mountain in Israel, the mountain you can reach despite your own valley experiences in this life!