

The Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2012

**Looking for
God on Mars**



~2 KM

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2012 Volume 64, No. 5 Issue 557

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What Atheists Think of You

“Isn’t it always a form of child abuse to label children as possessors of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about?” — Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*¹

The gloves have come off. Modern atheists have become militant, and particularly repugnant to them is the idea that you should be able to pass your Christian values to your children. They have declared war on religion, particularly on Christianity. The sad thing is that most Christians have no idea that they and particularly their children are the targets of this massive assault. As author Dinesh D’Souza states in his book, *What’s So Great about Christianity*:

It seems that atheists are not content with committing cultural suicide—they want to take your children with them. The atheist strategy can be described in this way: let the religious people breed them, and we will educate them to despise their parents beliefs. So the secularization of the minds of our young people is not, as many think, the inevitable consequence of learning and maturing. Rather, it is to a large degree orchestrated by teachers and professors to promote anti-religious agendas.

Before getting into the material of this article, I need to make a disclaimer. I would like to make it clear that this editorial is not an attack on public school teachers. There are many very good Christian school teachers working in the public school system. The problem lies with the secularist philosophy of modern education and the philosophy practiced in the nation’s colleges of teacher education.

In this editorial I will quote a number of modern atheists that will make clear the plans they have for you, your children, and grandchildren. The war is on, and Christians need to understand their enemy and the stakes in this battle.

Many Christians know that something is wrong — that our children are turning away from our long-cherished values and beliefs. Most chalk this up to the pressures of modern society, but it’s much more than that. Young people are leaving the Church as never before and abandoning their family values. What most Christians have forgotten is that there is a devil out

there, and that he works through the kingdom of men to subvert the work of God. What he wants most of all is to make sure there is no “next generation of Christians” in this and other Western countries.

The primary frontline of our battle is the classroom of our taxpayer-funded public schools. There was a time when prayer was commonly accepted in our schools, but no more. One of the first acts of Congress after ratification of the American Constitution was to publish Bibles for the express purpose of being read and taught in our schools. Compare that with what is going on today. Student Bible clubs and religious groups have to go to court constantly just to have equal status with other groups meeting in our public schools, such as gay, lesbian, and transgender groups. Christian kids are marginalized whenever school administrators can get away with it.

There are several fronts on which our Christian kids are being hammered by atheists and secularists. One of the principal sources of contention is the insistence of explaining science through the lens of Darwinism. Everything in science today revolves around the concept of evolution, which is patently *anti-religious*. Even though the majority of people believe in some sort of creation, Darwinism is assumed to undergird all scientific discussion. Other options are not permitted to be discussed. Just think back on all the battles that have taken place in our state houses over this issue, and religious people who would like to at least be granted another option apart from Darwinism are ridiculed openly in the press as uneducated religious bigots. You see, the very liberal American press is also involved in this attempt to impose secularization on our school-aged children.

If you ever had any doubts about the agenda of these atheists, think about these words of noted atheist, Richard Dawkins: “Faith is one of the world’s great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate. Religion is capable of driving people to such dangerous folly that faith seems to me to qualify as a

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Looking for God on Mars

By **Kenneth Westby**



News Flash: “Evidence of *God Particle* found” (AP, Geneva, July 2, 2012). I’m reminded of the old song, “Lookin’ for Love in All the Wrong Places,” made famous in the movie *Urban Cowboy* and sung by Johnny Lee. Lookin’ for the so-called God Particle or finding evidence of ancient life on Mars are exciting pursuits to which billions of dollars now flow. Besides the obvious scientific value there lurks a deeper quest: to “prove” that life didn’t start on earth and that God isn’t needed to explain how everything came into being. Some folks seem intent on chasing God to prove he can’t be found; others chase after God to find and be found by Him. What will Mars tell us?

It’s an old country music tune and that’s not my favorite genre of music, but the words seem to fit something that has been going on since Darwin’s dream captured men’s fancy: finding that God doesn’t exist and being happy at that discovery.

I’ve spent a lifetime lookin’ for you.
Single bars and good time lovers were never true.
Playin’ the fools game hoping to win.
And telling those sweet lies and losing again!

I was
Looking for love in all the wrong places.
Looking for love in too many faces.
Searching their eyes, looking for traces
Of what I’m dreaming of.

Last night I watched the crowded control room of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena as it exploded in cheers at the successful landing of *Curiosity* the latest Mars rover sent from earth to explore Mars. It was a stupendous accomplishment and we must stand in awe at the creative mind God gave mankind that he could do such things—Mars, 35 to 250 million miles away from earth in its elliptical orbit! (The sun is a more or less steady 93 million miles from earth.) Exploring God’s creation, in my opinion, is money well-spent. But the motivation behind many of today’s most costly scientific projects is not what it used to be in the days of Sir Isaac Newton who observed, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and domain of an intelligent and powerful Being.”

The founders and pioneers in modern science were predominately Bible believers, not humanistic materialists. The long list includes Galileo Galilei, Roger Bacon, Nicolaus Copernicus, Michael Servetus, Michael Faraday, George Mendel, Louis Pasteur, and Robert Boyle (who said the study of science could improve our ability

to glorify God), and many more. (See a partial list of the hundreds of Christian & Jewish thinkers who developed and founded modern science at: wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_thinkers_in_science.)

These greats of science were amazed at the complexity and vastness of the created order of laws and elements and life and for them investigating creation was a look into the handiwork of God and to some degree an insight into God himself.

Modern scientific investigation often approaches the cosmos with equal curiosity and enthusiasm, but not to find or understand its Maker, but to demonstrate that the cosmos had no Maker at all and there is no longer a need for the myth of God.

Of course, not all scientists are agnostic or atheists, but it is dominated by materialists, thoroughly secular and naturalistic in their world view, who also regard bible belief with hostility. They see belief in supernatural creation as an enemy belief. Even the new field of Intelligent Design, a thoroughly scientific approach to explaining the complexities of creation, is seen as a threat to their doctrine that no God is needed for anything, anywhere, anytime. It is a faith-belief that goes beyond evidence and is in fact, religious.

It is important for evolutionary science to find something, anything, that seems to say: “There, the Bible is false, maybe this (latest dug-up bone, Piltdown Man, Peppered Moths, *God Particle*, or whatever) is how the cosmos and life evolved and see, no God was needed.” So far, like the song, it has been a “fool’s game.”

The God Particle

We’ve heard a lot about it of late but don’t be confused by the name. It is a joke, a nickname used

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Three Important Hebrew Words *Galut, Hitbolelut, Hitorerut* (Exile, Assimination, Awakening)



by Daniel Botkin

The main theme of the Bible can be summed up in the words Exile and Return. The Bible is the story of Paradise Lost and Paradise Restored. Man is exiled from Eden in the first few chapters of Genesis, and restored to Paradise in the last few chapters of Revelation. These two great events serve as the bookends of man's sin-filled history. Between these two bookends, each of us is either working toward the End of the Exile and the Restoration of Paradise, or wasting time and energy and resources that could be used to help bring about the restoration of all things.

Why do so many Bible believers waste their time and energy and resources pursuing worthless goals? Because they have the mentality of Exile, but they do not focus on the reality of Restoration. They rightly sense that they do not belong to this world. They intuitively feel like exiles banished from Paradise. Yet they think and live like people who do not believe in a future return to Paradise. These believers know what the Bible says about these things, and from a doctrinal perspective they believe it. But, the reality of it has not yet sunk deeply into their minds and hearts, at least not deeply enough to affect the way they use their time, energy, and resources.

It's one thing to realize that this world is not our home, and that man has been banished from a Paradise that was once his, and that life should not be filled with pain, sorrow, sadness, suffering, death, and funerals. All true believers know this. But it's another thing to passively accept this exile status as a permanent condition and to be apathetic about working to help bring about the End of our Exile from Eden.

Christians could learn a lesson from the early Jewish Zionists of one hundred years ago. After the Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel in A.D. 70, they prayed for centuries for an end to their exile. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, some Jewish leaders decided to do more than just pray for an end to their exile. They decided to work to bring about the restoration of Zion. In effect they said, "We can't just pray and wait for the Messiah to come and end the exile. We also need to work and do our part to bring it about."

Many Orthodox Jews opposed this Zionist idea. They thought it was preposterous to take practical steps to make their hopes and prayers a reality. "the restoration

of Israel is a job for *Mashiach*, not us," they said. Nonetheless, the Zionists worked, sacrificed, and suffered to make their dream a reality and Israel once again became a nation in 1948.

The modern State of Israel is far from perfect. The great majority of Israeli citizens live a secular Jewish lifestyle. Only a small percentage of Israeli Jews even make a serious effort to live by the commandments of the Torah, and an even smaller number acknowledge Yeshua as the Messiah. But in spite of Israel's flaws, God has allowed the nation to survive since its rebirth in 1948 — a rebirth that happened because a significant number of Jewish leaders refused to passively accept their exile status as a permanent condition. They quit thinking like exiles permanently stuck in the exile, and started thinking like exiles on their way back home. This is how we need to start thinking about our spiritual Exile from Eden.

The Hebrew word for exile is *galut* (גלות). It comes from the verb *galah* (גלה), which means to uncover or to make naked — especially in a disgraceful sense, because captives taken into exile were often stripped. Living in exile, whether physical or spiritual exile, is a disgrace. The only way to deal with the disgrace and shame of exile is to quit thinking like exiles permanently stuck in the *galut*, and start thinking like exiles on their way back home to Paradise.

When I studied Hebrew in Israel, one of the Hebrew textbooks used in the classroom told about the history of the early Zionists. Three key words that we learned in this context were *galut* (גלות, "exile"), *hitbolelut* (התבוללות, "assimilation), and *hitorerut* (התעדרות, "awakening"). Prior to early Zionist visionaries like Theodore Herzl, most Jews thought that the best way to live in the *galut* was to assimilate — *l'hitbolel*, a reflexive *l'hit* — verb which is formed from the verb root BaLaL, בלל, a word first found in Genesis 11:7 and 9: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because Yahweh did there confound [BaLaL] the language of all the earth."

In the Hebrew language, assimilation is connected to Babel — or, in its more familiar transliteration from Greek, Babylon. To assimilate means to blend in with

the Babylonians, to live like the worldlings around you, to keep a low profile when it comes to your faith, to camouflage your spiritual identity so you don't stick out and look noticeably different from your heathen neighbors. This is how most Jews lived in the late 1800s. They thought the best way to survive in the *galut* was *hitbo/e/ut*- assimilation. Unfortunately, that's how most Christians live today.

When Zionist leaders started talking about taking practical steps to end their exile, many Jews experienced *hitorerut* — an awakening. For these Jews, the idea of *hitbolelut* in the *galut* was shattered by *hitorerut*. The idea of assimilation in the exile was shattered by an awakening. If we want our spiritual exile to end, we have to experience *hitorerut*, a spiritual awakening that will shatter our apathetic acceptance of assimilation.

Curiously, another word that is etymologically connected to *galut* is the name *Galyat* — “Goliath” in English. Of course Goliath was a Philistine, not a Hebrew. Nonetheless, according to both of my Hebrew lexicons (*Gesenius* and *Strong's*) and the index of my *Scofield Reference Bible*, the name *Galyat* (Goliath) means “exile.”

What does Goliath have to do with our spiritual exile? Well, if we want to slay the exile mentality that urges us to assimilate and blend in with the Babylonians, we can look at how David slew Goliath, and apply some of those principles in our battle against the assimilationist mentality that pressures us to conform to the World.

When David was young, Israel's main enemy was the Philistines. Originally Saul was anointed by Samuel to be king. Yahweh told Samuel that the purpose of Saul's anointing was “that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 9:16). Saul was later rejected because of his presumption and rebellion and stubbornness, and David was anointed to replace him. Since David was replacing Saul, we can conclude that David was anointed for the very same purpose, namely, to save Israel from the Philistines. David's very first act to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines was the slaying of Goliath, the Philistines' greatest champion. If you want to slay the exilic, assimilationist mentality inside you, you must target the *galut* mentality the way David went after *Galyat*.

Most people are familiar with the story of David and Goliath.

The Philistine and Israelite armies were camped across from each other, separated by a valley. The giant Goliath challenged the army of Israel to send him a man to fight. All the Israelites “were dismayed, and greatly afraid” (1 Sam. 17:11). David arrived, delivering food to the Israelite camp, and heard Goliath roaring out his defiance.



David and Goliath

“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” David asked.

David's eldest brother, Eliab, heard David inquiring about Goliath and angrily said, “Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.”

In spite of his brother's uncalled-for scolding, David decided that he would answer Goliath's challenge. When King Saul heard about it, he objected because David was but a mere youth, while Goliath was an experienced man of war. David told Saul about the lion and the bear that he had smitten as a shepherd, then added, “and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.”

Saul offered his armor to David, but David was not used to armor, so he did not take it. Instead he took his staff, five smooth stones, and his sling. And of course his trust in the Lord.

Goliath saw David and said,

“Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?” Goliath cursed David by his gods and declared that he was going to feed David's flesh to the fowls.

“thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield,” David replied, “but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” Then David added that he was going to take off Goliath’s head and feed the carcasses of the Philistines to the fowls of the air and wild beasts of the earth, “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”

Goliath started coming toward David, and David ran to meet him.

“And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in the forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead: and he fell upon his face to the earth.”

David then ran up to Goliath, took the giant’s own sword, and cut off his head. “And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.”

The story of David’s defeat of Goliath has been used by preachers to teach people how to overcome all sorts of things: bad habits, fears, trials and temptations, etc. But now let’s consider how this story can help us defeat the “Goliath” that is bound up in the giant’s name *Galyat*, namely the *Galyat* of *galut*, the mentality of exile that pressures us to assimilate, to blend in with Babylon to conform to the world.

First let’s clarify what we mean by spiritual exile. The Jews were exiled and taken into Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and they were exiled a second time when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. For Christians there is a spiritual exile that parallels the Jews’ physical exile. Most Christians are exiled from their place in the commonwealth of Israel. They do not understand that their faith in Jesus, Israel’s Messiah, has made them a member of the commonwealth of Israel. (See Ephesians 2.) They do not think about the implications of the fact that the new covenant was made only with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not with Gentiles. (See Jeremiah 31:31.) They do not realize that the only way they can have any legitimate claim to be partakers of the new covenant is to find a legal way to get themselves into the house of Israel, which they do through their faith in Israel’s Messiah. They do not think about the fact that in the New Jerusalem there is no gate for Gentiles; there are only twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and if they expect to enter New Jerusalem, they will have to enter as a member of one of those twelve tribes of Israel (See Revelation 21:12).

Most Gentile Christians are exiled from their Messianic Israelite identity, and live like Gentiles instead of like Messianic Israelites. Their exilic, assimilationist mentality is expressed in statements like the following:

- “We’re Gentile Christians. We are not part of Israel.”

- “We’re members of the Gentile Church.”
- “The New Testament replaces the Old Testament.”
- “That commandment was just for the Jews to do until Christ came.”
- “We’re under grace, which replaces the law of Moses.”
- “We don’t have to obey that, because Jesus fulfilled the law.”
- “The law was nailed to the cross.”
- “We go to church on Sunday instead of the seventh day because Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday.”
- “Instead of celebrating ‘Jewish’ holidays like Passover and Feast of Tabernacles, we celebrate holidays like Christmas and Easter.”
- “Instead of keeping the Old Testament dietary laws, we have church hog roasts and Easter hams.”
- “The Church replaced Israel.”
- Etc., etc., etc.

This is the *Galyat* that our generation is facing, a *galut* mentality that infects the minds of good Christian people everywhere. Christians think they must conform to the world and resign themselves to spiritual exile.

This *galut* mentality is well-equipped and well-armed, just as Goliath was. Goliath had a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, greaves of brass on his legs, and brass between his shoulders. The staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam and had an iron spear head that weighed 600 shekels. We are likewise confronted by a Goliath that is well-protected by centuries-old errors that are deeply entrenched in church creeds and doctrines which most Christians assume are true.

This Goliath is well-equipped with money and ecclesiastical power. This emboldens Goliath to defy the armies of the living God, and to dare you to do anything to change the *galut* mentality in the Church.

Goliath is self-confident and he is persistent: “the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days” (1 Samuel 18:16). But forty is the number associated with God’s testing and judgment. While everyone’s eyes were on Goliath, God was at work behind the scenes. He was directing the steps of an obscure but anointed young shepherd lad who was going to bring Goliath down. The same thing is happening now. Everyone thinks Goliath is unconquerable. “to survive in the *galut*, we must give in to *hitbolelut*. We have to assimilate and blend in with the Babylonians.”

The Israelites did not know that *Galyat* was going to be defeated by an obscure but anointed young shepherd. Likewise, Christians today do not know that their spiritual *galut* can be overcome by help from an obscure but anointed remnant of faithful shepherds who have the faith and courage to answer Goliath's challenge.

If you want to be a part of this faithful end-time remnant, wake up, experience *hitorerut* and learn some lessons from David. David's faith was based on the word of God through His prophet, and his faith was strengthened by remembering and recalling times in his life when Yahweh gave him victory. David mentioned the lion and the bear. If Yahweh enabled David to grab a lion and a bear by their beards and overcome them just to rescue a couple of sheep from David's flock, then how much more would Yahweh enable David to slay this Philistine to save the Israelites, the sheep of Yahweh's own flock? Are not the sheep of Yahweh's flock of more value than the sheep of David's flock?

Like David did, remember and recall all the times in the past when the Lord gave you victories. Let these precious memories of your heavenly Father's faithfulness to you in the past fill you with faith for the present and for the future.

Another lesson from David is in regards to the armor Saul offered him. Saul had good intentions, but this armor was not what David needed to face Goliath. It did not fit David's style, and would have been cumbersome. Rather than helping David, Saul's armor might have caused David's defeat had he accepted it. So David politely declined the offer.

Sometimes well-meaning Christian leaders may offer you the "armor" that they think is necessary to do the work of the Lord — things like a seminary education to put a "Doctor of Divinity" after your name, formal ordination to put a "Reverend" in front of your name, a clerical collar around your neck so people will know you are a clergyman, denominational affiliation, courses in psychology, hermeneutics, homiletics, eschatology, and counseling. For people like David, a lot of this stuff is like Saul's armor. It's not a good fit. It may be okay for some warriors who want it or feel more secure with it, but for the simple Davids of this generation, it's just going to be dead, cumbersome weight if they wear it. It will hinder rather than help in their battle against the *galut* mentality, because ironically much of it is borrowed from the *galut*.

After David declined Saul's armor, he took his staff and went in search of what he needed. He found five smooth stones. Just one of those stones slung exactly right was all that David needed to bring Goliath down. You too can take your staff in your hand and let the Lord lead you and show you what you really need to conquer the *galut* mentality in your life and in the minds of others.

Israel was facing an entire army of Philistines. They could have attacked the Philistine army and tried to defeat them one Philistine at a time. Today God's people are facing an army of problems in the church world: sexual immorality and perversity, drug abuse, drunkenness, divorce, humanism, denial of the inspiration and authority of the Bible, false doctrines, antinomianism, compromise, worldliness, even abortion, and a host of other ills. We can try to defeat these things one at a time, and perhaps win some partial victories. But Israel got a quick and complete victory over the Philistine army when Yahweh's anointed cut off the head of Goliath.

We can fervently preach against one particular sin or another and plead with Christians to behave, and maybe they will behave as long as we are there to watch them. We can wage war against abortion or communism or the sodomites' agenda, and maybe we can get some bad laws changed and prevent some other bad laws from being passed. This is good, but it is only a partial, temporary victory. It's like cutting weeds off at the surface without digging out the roots that feed the weed. If the root is left intact, the weed is going to immediately start making its way toward the surface again. In a similar way, if Goliath's head is left attached to his body, *Galyat* will continue to live and defy the armies of the living God. As long as the *galut* mentality remains attached to the Body of Messiah, the members of Messiah's Body will continue to think and live like exiles. They will resign themselves to permanent exile in this age, and will continue to assimilate and blend in with the Babylonian worldlings. But if you take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) and cut off Goliath's head, you kill the exile mentality. Then it will have no more control over you than Goliath's severed head had over his lifeless body.

The severing of *Galyat's* head in a believer's life marks the beginning of the end of their *galut*. Once the exile mentality is dead, then the mind can be renewed. "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

A renewed mind will no longer think like an exile doomed to permanent exile, to assimilation, and to worldliness and compromise. A renewed mind will think like an Israelite mind. So if you don't yet think of yourself as an Israelite, take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and cut off that exile mentality. Take up the Bible and learn what it says about the Israel of God, and watch those Philistines flee.

The above article is adapted from the 14-hour CD series, "Life of David, Teachings from 1st Samuel." Available in vinyl case for donation of \$65 to Gates of Eden, PO Box 2257, East Peoria, IL 61611-0257

Westby: "Looking for God on Mars." cont. from page 4.

from a book¹ describing this subatomic particle (a quark) called the *Higgs boson* after the man who proposed its existence, Peter Higgs. It doesn't imply anything about God except that this as-yet-unseen "particle" might be the key to how all things are held together, move, and have "mass" –properties that can be seen and weighed. The name really says that this particle, not God, is the mystery power behind how the cosmos works. This theory is one of many intended to replace any logical need for God. There are particles that have measurable mass like neutrons and protons and those like photons (also a quark) that do not. This so-called God Particle is believed to be the mysterious thing that gives mass to matter. Granted, much of this is still quite theoretical, yet the huge underground Hadron Particle Collider on the Swiss-French border is a multi-billion dollar investment to find this elusive particle.

For the present it remains a mystery to physicists. Its existence is sure and the effects of its footprint can be measured, but so far it has evaded sighting or capture. It is estimated that in the time you took to read this article billions of these particles would have passed through your body...ouch.

This is exciting stuff. To think that the sub-atomic building blocks the Creator uses have been detected. They are terribly fast and terribly tiny and apparently, terribly powerful. How does the Higgs boson relate to Dark Matter and Dark Energy—great forces that make up 95% of the cosmos that cannot be seen? And how about gravity which for the most part still remains a mystery? Are there gravity "particles" (gravitons) that exert force? They too have eluded sighting or capture, but their footprint and shadow is everywhere felt. Gravitons must travel at hyper velocities (virtually instantly) making the speed of light seem like a sloth strolling by comparison. Ah, what a marvelous universe of mysteries to explore!

Of What Are Evolutionists Afraid?

The big problem for materialistic science would be to discover some design or purpose to things for that brings one to the obvious logic that a designer must be out there in charge—a scary prospect for an atheist and one that must be avoided at all costs. Perhaps Mars will help their case.

It works like this: Looking for and finding some evidence of life—tiny, ancient, it doesn't matter—will drive the stake in the heart of the biblical story. Finding life on Mars for the atheistic community is akin to not finding God. In this contrived logic life on Mars becomes a proof that the Bible is wrong and consequently the Bible's God doesn't exist. What a champagne-popping a triumph that would be.

The materialist's assumption is that the Bible demands that life can only be on earth. While the focus of Scripture is directed to the thinking people on planet earth, and has little interest in discussing life and events before Genesis One, what iron law forbids the Creator of Life from doing what he does best anywhere in his vast, apparently limitless cosmos?

So far no evidence of life forms has been discovered outside our beautiful planet, but if in time some is what will that prove? God didn't *just* make Earth, he made an array of ten hundred billion galaxies each with ten hundred billion stars and planets beyond number. Even these numbers are scientific guesses for it seem the more powerful our instruments of detection are, the ever more vast our cosmos appears.

There is life everywhere in our universe albeit the carbon-based life on earth has only been experienced on earth. Those of us who respect the veracity of Scripture accept that the cosmos has been filled with intelligent life of an angelic kind for countless eons before Adam and Eve breathed their first oxygen from God's mouth. Life of one sort or another fill the domain of God's creation.

A Purpose for Everything

If God has made other man-like creatures on Mars or anywhere else, I've not seen any suggestion of it in the Bible. Sure, he could have made a man and a woman anywhere on his property, and he owns it all, but he tells us that he prepared the earth specifically for that purpose. The record of history and anthropology seems to confirm that.

What is unique is God's description of man's creation in His Image. That is pictured as an earth-bound event in a sanctuary garden called Eden. Man is a creature of the earth from which he was formed and to survive he must take some of the earth with him (food, water, air, etc.) wherever he might journey beyond its realm.

View the fine film, *The Privileged Planet*² or read the book of the same title to learn that the earth is perfectly positioned in our Milky Way to support life. It is called by scientists the *sweet spot*: right size sun, right distance from other suns, right size moon (same size in the sky as the sun), right position in the Milky Way where other locations could not support life, and our Milky Way in the right position for the forces exerted upon it from the other moving galaxies, and the list goes on. The earth was *purposed* as The Privileged Planet to host those made in God's Image.

Ah, "purpose," that is a bad word to secularists. Purpose implies a plan and a plan implies a planner,

and bang, we're back to the God issue again. So the scientists develop a vocabulary and speaking protocol that dances around all the evidence that point to purpose, or design, or intelligence, or the miraculous. It is a learned discipline and takes a lot of around-the-barn talk, to hide the obvious while talking long about the details.

The organization of galaxies is a level of complexity that rivals the human body itself—irreducible complexity (an eye for example can't "evolve" as it must have millions of parts organized for sight or it doesn't work—no need to gradually evolve if no "evolutionary benefit" is realized) of which our body has thousands of systems of sophistication impossible to achieve by the accident of evolution or the random results of a "big bang," but must be the product of towering intelligent design. There exists a constellation of laws that govern all matter—seen and unseen—what could be called a living, dynamic universe. The laws of physics didn't invent themselves and they come forth from forces and powers that are truly supernatural.

Evolutionists are afraid that one day their "religion" will be seen for the myth that it is and they will have to face facts...and God. Meanwhile they must keep busy making sport of creationists and chasing their rainbow hoping to find at its base proof that God doesn't exist. Hello Mars.

Dark Matter

Take Dark Matter as a case in point of the design complexity of the universe. The matter that can be seen or detected (stars, planets, space dust, etc.) is not anywhere massive enough to account for the gravitational forces and other energy forces operating in the universe. For many decades physicists have been mesmerized and dogged in pursuing what has come to be called *dark matter*. Dark because it can't be seen and evades detection yet it obviously exists by the forces it exerts.

The latest estimates are that the composition of the universe is: 70% dark energy, 25% dark matter, 5% normal matter that can be observed such as stars. So, about 95% of the Universe is composed of unseen energy and matter. Does that give you a different picture of what is "out there," what is holding everything together and making it function according to laws of physics? Giving it a name doesn't solve the mystery.

It is sometimes explained as a dynamical energy fluid or field that fills space but operates differently from normal matter and energy. It has also been called *quintessence*, meaning the fifth element suggested by Greek philosophers. Ideas of gravity have been called into question and Einstein's theory of gravity may be incorrect. Confused? Mystified? Well, so is the scientific world.

I'm reminded of the phrase in Colossians 1:16 where God's creation is discussed and it includes "things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." Paul didn't have the Higgs boson particle in mind or dark matter, per se, but allowed that most of what God created is unseen though just as real as what is seen.

Why the need to find life on Mars? Are we lonely on earth? Is there not enough life on our planet to keep us enthralled? Do we know everything there is to know about life in its millions of forms and functions that we now have to move on? I don't think that is the case. Sure, curiosity is there and discovery is challenging and fun, but this push to find life, even tiny micro-biotic life somewhere other than earth is evolution's search for the Holy Grail.

Scientists have been re-plowing soil sample tests done by the Viking 1 Mars lander in 1976 and now think they may have read them wrong. Regardless, they are 99% sure that there is life on Mars. "The ultimate proof is to take a video of a Martian bacteria. They should send a microscope — watch the bacteria move," said Joseph Miller of USC's Keck School of Medicine. Well, maybe there will be one on the next mission landing which is scheduled for 2016.

Why the Rage Against God?

Evolution proposes a Godless emptiness which helps to explain why such atheistic anti-Christian states like Communist China and the old Soviet Union are so chaotic and so murderously cruel to their own people. There is no God holding them accountable; no morality that says they can't do what they want to do.

Peter Hitchens, British journalist and brother to the famous spokesman for atheism, the late Christopher Hitchens, was himself an avowed atheist for much of his life until he returned to Christianity. He writes movingly of his journey into unbelief in his excellent book: *The Rage Against God: How atheism led me to faith*.³

"I set fire to my Bible on the playing fields of my Cambridge boarding school one bright, windy spring afternoon in 1967. I was fifteen years old. The book did not, as I had hoped, blaze fiercely and swiftly. Only after much blowing and encouragement did I manage to get it to ignite at all, and I was left with a disagreeable, half-charred mess. Most of my small invited audience drifted away long before I had finished, disappointed by the anticlimax and the pettiness of the thing. Thunder did not mutter. It would be many years before I would feel a slight shiver of unease about my act of desecration. Did I then have any idea of the forces I was trifling with?

"I was engaged at the time in a full, perfect, and complete rebellion against everything I had been brought up to believe."

Hitchins described the years that followed as his “Godless period” when he moved with “arrogance, adolescent petulance, ingratitude, cruelty, and insensitivity.” He is a candid writer and he did come, like The Prodigal, back to God, back to the Bible and back to reason and peace. Hitchins’ comments on The Prodigal parable from Luke 14 are rich.

“Now of all the parables, this one has been the most disturbing for me from the moment I encountered it, which I did—as few do now—in the ringing, unforgettable poetry of the King James Version, which fills the mind with vivid pictures. I could not have known, when I first heard that parable how much it would eventually apply to me with direct personal force, and in how many ways. But it went home, deep and hard, all the same. I almost know it by heart, and cannot pass a beech tree in autumn, with a litter of nuts about it, without the words, “He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat,” coming to mind.”

When Hitchens’ life was in period of personal turmoil he one day found himself in Washington D.C. with time between flight connections. He visited the Museum of Art and there was a startlingly pessimistic version of The Prodigal Son by the painter Thomas Hart Benton. It looked like a coming home scene from John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. A frightening contrast to the happy scene that emerges from the hopeful parable Jesus spoke. Hitchins describes this painting which for him seemed a dire, personal warning.

“He has come home too late. Nobody has seen him from afar off and run joyfully to meet him. There will be no forgiveness, no best robe, no ring, no “music and dancing.” He stands in his shabby clothes with his poor, roped suitcase. A beaten-up car—the last trace of his squandered wealth—is parked in the background. He is gaping, with his hand to his mouth, at the ruin of the family homestead, ruin caused by his own greed and wastefulness. He looks as if it is just dawning on him that he is stupid and cruel and without hope. The light is failing in a chilly sky beneath wind-ripped, twisted clouds. Instead of a fatted calf, there is a stark, white animal skeleton, the skull horned, lying in the untended grass. We can guess at the grief, resignation, and failure that have overtaken the family and its home during his heedless absence. Who can he blame for it but himself? The desolation is infinite.”

Looking Over the Highest Rock

Reading Peter Hitchins’ description of the fool’s empty life and the grief he caused made me think of what damage has been wrought by godless evolution. It is a theory straight from the pit of hell and the damage it has caused is beyond calculation. We sinners can cling to the hope Jesus’ parable offers, but the road from unbelief to belief is a road less traveled these

days. One day there will be an epiphany and men will no longer be looking for God for his kingdom in all the wrong places, for it will fill the earth. At that time Yahweh will let his servants (and scientists) in on the secrets that mystify:

“This is what the Yahweh says, he who made the earth, Yahweh who formed it and established it—Yahweh is his name: Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:2-3).

Robert Jastrow, founder of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, is a world famous astronomer and professor at Dartmouth and Columbia universities. His oft-quoted statement in *God and the Astronomers* contains concepts our Mars explorers should keep in mind.

“A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation.

“This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: in the beginning God created heaven and earth.... At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”⁴

There will be no little green Martian Men curiously looking over a high rock at *Curiosity*, but back on earth evolutionists are still putting their faith in a bad dream.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you’, declares Yahweh” (Jeremiah 28:13-14).

End Notes:

1. *The God Particle: If the Universe is the Answer, What Is the Question?* By Leon Lederman.
2. *The Privileged Planet: How our place in the cosmos is designed for discovery*, Guillermo Gonzales and Jay w. Richards, Regnery Publishing, 2004, 444 pages.
3. *The Rage Against God*, Peter Hitchins, Zondervan, 2010, 224 pages.
4. Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, pp. 115-16 (quoted in *The Creation Hypothesis* by J. P. Moreland)

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They That Wait upon the Lord

by **Lori Godfrey**

Part Two

Have you ever asked yourself why God chose to use the eagle as the metaphor in Isaiah 40:31 when all other birds were at His disposal? Because the eagle is like no other no other bird. With powerful wings that have a wingspan of up to eight feet, not to mention sharp vision, the eagle has the uncanny ability to search out its prey while overcoming adversity. It is also the only bird that will fly directly into an approaching storm without a care of impending danger. The eagle takes advantage of the fierceness of the wind, gliding above the storm unscathed. All other birds will seek refuge approaching storms.

We as Christians should take on the personality of the eagle when our time of impending danger arrives. We know that at times we will encounter danger. The Bible warns us often about difficult times, especially in these last days. I understand why the Lord chose the eagle for the metaphor in Isaiah. As the Scripture says: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

Waiting on God will always bring us to the place of renewing our strength, enabling us to mount above adversity, run and not become weary, and walk and not faint. In my first article, "They that wait upon the Lord" I wrote "Waiting is the atmosphere of quiet reserve, arriving only after you have sought God." In our daily walk with our heavenly Father there will be times when He will ask us to wait on Him, not necessarily due to trials we may be encountering, but because of something that He may want us to have. In that moment, however, His time is not our time. I know in my own personal life I have for over a year been waiting on something He has promised.

Is waiting an easy endeavor? No, but remember that His blessings will supersede the time it took for us to wait. As long as the earth remains, we will find ourselves waiting on God. That is just how life in the Lord works. But we can be assured; He will never ask us to wait on something that He cannot bring to pass.

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Joy in the Morning

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

Judging from Adele Sullberg's carefree nonchalance one could easily have concluded that she never had a serious thought. But her Bible teacher discovered that beneath her apparent indifference was a mind with deep spiritual perception. He discovered this from a quiz he gave, in which he asked his students to write down what they would say to a dying person to bring hope and encouragement in his last moments of life.

Most of the answers showed little understanding of a dying person's needs, but Adele's answer showed an insight far beyond her 20 years. She said she would begin by speaking to the person about his loved ones, then she would ask if he would someday like to meet them again. She would then say that Jesus has made this possible for those who are willing to accept His perfect life and death in exchange for their sinful life. Finally she would appeal for the person to make this exchange.

Some years ago the Washington Post had a story on the front page about a nurse, Joy Ufema (pronounced You-fee-ma), who specialized in caring for the dying. The article stated that most people are afraid of being with a dying person because it reminds them of their own finiteness. As a result those who need our presence most, frequently get it the least.

Joy also disclosed that many people tended to shun her. But in spite of this, she said she found her work rewarding. There were the grateful smiles of her patients, the thank-you cards from the relatives, and such things as the small pewter flower mug in her office, the gift of 17 children of a woman who died of cancer, which bears the inscription: "Weeping may endure for a night, but Joy cometh in the morning."

No one relishes the thought that unless Jesus comes within his lifetime, he will someday die. But it is true nevertheless, and what human being would not want someone by his side with words of encouragement at such a time? Why, then, should we avoid encouraging someone else in his hour of greatest need? Death holds no fears for the Christian.

We must recognize, of course, that ministry to the dying is not everyone's calling. But who can gainsay that it offers unique opportunities for serving our Lord and our fellow man? What an opportunity to tell someone that weeping may endure for a night but joy comes to the believer in Jesus in the glorious resurrection morning!

Your calling may not be to minister to those with only a short time to live, but remember, we all are journeyers on the road to "the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns" until the resurrection.

*Donald Mansell, **New Every Morning**, page 17. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.*

Survey of Sabbath Sentinel Readers

In this issue we are asking you, our readers to fill out our reader survey. The purpose of our survey is to help us understand better the wishes of our readers. So please fill out the survey below and send it to us at the BSA address listed on the inside front cover. Thanks for your help. Our desire is to serve you better.

1. What is your age group?

60 or above ___

50-59 ___

40-49 ___

30-39 ___

29 or below ___

2. Are you a member of the Bible Sabbath Association?

Yes ___

No ___

3. Do you contribute at least once a year to the Bible Sabbath Association?

Yes ___

No ___

4. How many articles do you typically read out of each *Sabbath Sentinel*?

4 or more ___

3 ___

2 ___

1 ___

0 ___

5. What do you do with *The Sabbath Sentinel* after you finish an issue?

Save it ___

Throw it away ___

Give it away to someone else ___

6. Have you ever visited the BSA website?

Yes ___

No ___

7. What is your preference format for *The Sabbath Sentinel*?

In magazine format ___

In Website format ___

In both formats ___

No preference ___

kind of mental illness." In response to the belief of many Christians that God speaks to them and answers their prayers, Dawkins responds, "many inhabitants of lunatic asylums have an unshakable faith that they are Napoleon.... But this is no reason for the rest of us to believe them."

The Strategy of Atheists and Secularists

I should define what I mean by "secularist." I mean those who live as if there were no God, no Judge of humanity. The secularist desires to eliminate the influence of religion on society, particularly the Christian religion. We find these people in all walks of life, in the nation's teachers' colleges, but most prominently and vocally in the news media—in television and in print media. They criticize any public display of religion. They are willing quislings of the ACLU and espouse the virtues of alternative lifestyles and multiculturalism. Without them militant atheism would have no platform to propagate their poisonous doctrines.

The first weapon in the atheist war against religion is to eliminate any influence of any religion, particularly Christianity, in our public schools. Many schools have come under attack from groups like the ACLU threatening them with lawsuits if they continue to offer prayers at sporting events, sing Christian songs at concerts—in short, any public display of religion by students. Rather than fight against this absurdity, many school districts have simply thrown in the towel and acquiesced to the demands of these anti-religious groups. After all, lawsuits are costly, and many school administrators don't have the stomach for such a fight, either that or they secretly agree with the demands of those making these threats.

As John Dewey, atheist and founder of the American public school system once said: "You can't make socialists out of individualists—children who know how to think for themselves spoil the harmony of the collective society which is coming, where everyone is interdependent." Dewey's point, of course, was that if America were to become a socialist nation as he desired it to be, the battleground had to be within the public school system. In making this statement, Dewey was parroting Vladimir Lenin who stated, "Give me your four-year-olds, and in a generation I will build a Socialist state."

The assault on religion begins in the science classroom. The assumption of Darwinism undergirds all of modern science. Anyone who questions the validity of Darwinism, whether student or school board, is either openly ridiculed or challenged with a lawsuit. There is no middle ground in this battle—no cry for "tolerance"

toward religious people. As physicist Steven Weinberg states: "I personally feel that the teaching of modern science is coercive of religious belief, and I'm all for that." Weinberg continues on to say that if scientists can destroy the influence of religion on young people, "then I think it may be the most important contribution that we can make." As stated in an editorial in the magazine, *The Economist*, "Darwinism has enemies mostly because it is not compatible with a literal interpretation of the book of Genesis."

Evolutionary biologist E. O. Wilson advocates a slightly different approach leading to the same outcome. His idea is to present the mind itself as the product of evolution which makes free moral choice as an illusion. "If religion... can be systematically analyzed and explained as a product of the brain's evolution, its power as an external source of morality will be gone forever."

Wilson hits on something that is fundamental to atheism and Darwinism. That is morality. Who decides what is moral and what is immoral, and most important, who is moral and who is immoral? We in the West have devolved into believing that no one, not even God in Heaven, has a right to tell us what we should or should not do. We have bought into the lie that all morality is personal, and that no one has a right to judge our personal behavior. This belief, however, is completely false. We continually have people in our lives who are influencing or trying to control our moral behavior.

Before children leave home to start kindergarten, their parents shape their morality, for good or for bad. Once a child is in the public school system, he or she is continually bombarded by influences contrary to the beliefs of the student's parents. Not to diminish the influence of peers, particularly during their teen years, youngsters face a barrage of messages that put them in doubt of the beliefs of their parents. Whether it is in the science classroom where Darwinism is assumed to be the basis of all modern science, or in "Health and Nutrition" class where the students may learn how to put a condom on a cucumber, the not-so-subtle objective is to diminish the influence of parents by sexualizing the students and causing them to doubt their parents' biblical beliefs. The objective of atheist scholars is to make science the only access to reality. Abolish all supernatural or transcendental truth, and science becomes the only source of truth. With God out of the picture there is no source of morality—no source of right and wrong.

Atheist Carl Sagan for many years had a program on PBS called "Cosmos." He also had a trademark slogan for that program. It went like this, "the cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be." This television

program was often recommended by teachers as a supplement to classroom studies. The program's message was always that the supernatural does not exist. The only thing that exists is what we can see, feel, and measure.

At a 2006 conference on science and religion Carolyn Porco, a research scientist at the Space Science Institute in Colorado, recommended ways to eliminate the supernatural as a subject of devotion: "We should let the success of the religious formula guide us. Let's teach our children from a very young age about the story of the universe and its incredible richness and beauty. It is already so much more glorious and awesome—and even comforting—than anything offered by any Scripture or God concept I know."

At a lecture a few years ago psychologist Nicholas Humphrey argued that secular teachers and professors should work to free children from the damaging influence of their parents religious instruction. "Parents, correspondingly, have no God-given license to inculturate their children in whatever ways they personally choose: no right to limit the horizons of their children's knowledge, to bring them up in an atmosphere of dogma and superstition, or to insist they follow the straight and narrow path of their own faith."

One recommendation of atheist philosopher Richard Rorty is that anti-religious professors at universities should "arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like their own." Rorty stated that students were fortunate to find themselves "under the benevolent *Herrschaft* [rule] of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents." Parents who send their children to college should be aware that as professors "we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable."

We have yet to discuss another and equally powerful strategy to discredit parental values and promote atheism. That is the power of adolescent sexuality—hormones. One agnostic expressed it this way: "Against the power of religion we employ an equal if not greater power—the power of the hormones." From this point of view religion is viewed as sexual repression and atheism as the means for young people to liberate themselves moral restraint and indulge their sexual appetites.

Noted atheist Aldous Huxley, grandson of Darwin's friend and ally Thomas Huxley, once stated: "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning;

consequently I assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was...liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."

How do we protect our children in the public (taxpayer-funded) schools? I'm not sure we can. If parents want to preserve their children's love for God and Jesus Christ, they need to find other alternatives such as private, Christian schools and supplement that with a lot of Bible teaching in the home. As author and Christian apologist Dinesh D'Souza puts it in *What's So Great about Christianity*:

Children spend the majority of their waking hours in school. Parents invest a good portion of their life savings in college education to entrust their offspring to people who are supposed to educate them. Isn't it wonderful that educators have figured out a way to make parents the instruments of their own undoing? Isn't it brilliant that they have persuaded Christian moms and dads to finance the destruction of their own beliefs and values?

The temples in which the atheists and secularists worship are the public schools along with the colleges and universities. As Christians we must cease being timid believers. The world is waiting for us to be bold and proclaim the Word of God fearlessly. There is no other way to be saved than through God's Son. Have we forgotten our first love, or are we willing to move in front of the crowd and beckon men and women to come to Christ? There is no other way, and our children are looking for us to leave them a legacy of hope and victory in Christ Jesus.

I would like to end this article with a quote from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who spend many years in the gulags of the old Soviet Union: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

Are you willing to cut away that part of you that allows sin to advance in you and against your children?

End Note

1. The majority of these quotes are taken from chapter 4 of Dinesh D'Souza's book, *What's so Great about Christianity*.

—Kenneth Ryland

A BRIDE FOR ISAAC, A BRIDE FOR THE MESSIAH

by Doug Ward



The plot of the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis can be summarized in just a few words (“A bride is found for Isaac”), and most of the action in the chapter (vv. 11-61) takes place within a single day. Yet at sixty-seven verses, Gen. 24 is the longest chapter in Genesis and has the third most verses of any chapter in the Pentateuch.¹ Why does the Bible devote so much space to a description of the matchmaking mission of Abraham’s servant Eliezer? What important lessons are contained in this detailed narrative? To answer these questions, let’s take a closer look at Genesis 24.

The Servant’s Assignment

Our chapter begins by noting that “Abraham was now old and well advanced in years” (v.1, NIV). Not only was Abraham at least 137 years old by this time; he had also recently lost his beloved wife Sarah (Gen. 23:1), who had stood beside him through many challenges and trials. According to one tradition, his eulogy for her is preserved in the description of the “woman of valor” in Prov. 31:10-31 [2, pp. 250-251]. Whether or not this tradition is true, Abraham loved Sarah deeply and must have missed her desperately. The exorbitant price he paid for their burial place (23:16) certainly reflects his regard for her as well as his trust in God’s promises and his awkward position as a sojourner in the land of Canaan.

Not knowing how much longer he had to live, Abraham concentrated on a major item of unfinished business: finding the right wife for his adult son Isaac, through whom God’s promises were to be transmitted to future generations. He delegated this crucial task to “the chief servant in his household” (v. 2). That servant is never named in chapter 24 but is traditionally identified as “Eliezer of Damascus” (15:2). Assuming that he was part of Abraham’s household at the time of the patriarch’s original journey from Mesopotamia to Canaan, Eliezer was no youngster himself. He had been serving Abraham for over sixty-two years! In any case, Abraham placed great trust in him.

Abraham instructed Eliezer to go back to Mesopotamia and seek a bride for Isaac among Abraham’s large extended family there (vv. 3-4; 22:20-24). He made his steward solemnly swear (vv. 2,9) that he would not arrange a marriage for Isaac with a Canaanite partner. There were probably at least two rea-

sons for this stipulation. First, the moral depravity of the Canaanites was well known, going all the way back to Canaan himself (see 9:20-27). The “sin of the Amorites” (15:16) would eventually lead to their ejection from the land. In the meantime, the example of Abraham’s nephew Lot had demonstrated the disastrous consequences of too close an involvement with the local population.

Second, as suggested by Rabbi Chanoch Waxman [3], Abraham must have hoped that Isaac’s wife would share some of the character traits of Sarah and himself. In particular, a woman who would leave her home behind and travel to a distant country to marry a man she had never met was likely to possess the kind of faith that had led Abraham and Sarah to undertake a similar journey over sixty years before.

Abraham also specified that under no circumstances was Isaac to accompany Eliezer (v. 6). Isaac’s place was in the land that God had promised to him and his descendants. Abraham had faith that even under this constraint, God would bring about the success of Eliezer’s mission (v. 7).

The Character of Rebekah

Eliezer prepared carefully for the journey to Mesopotamia, which would normally take three to four weeks (v. 10; [2, p. 267]). He must have had plenty of time on the trip to consider how to accomplish his mission. Upon his arrival in Haran he went first to the local well, a natural place to pick up information about the inhabitants, including Abraham’s family. He then prayed for guidance, asking God to make known the right bride for Isaac through a particular sign:

“May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master” (v. 14).

Eliezer received an immediate response to his entreaty. Before the servant had even finished praying, Abraham’s beautiful grandniece Rebekah appeared at the well, shouldering a water jar. When Eliezer requested a drink, Rebekah offered water to his camels too, just as he had specified (vv. 15-21). Seeing the answer to his prayer, the servant produced a gold nose

ring and two gold bracelets for the young woman and asked who she was.

Some rabbinic commentators wondered about the servant's choice of identifying signs for the future wife of Isaac. Wouldn't it have been a matter of common courtesy for any young woman at the well to have offered water to Eliezer's animals? These commentators saw an additional test hidden in the details of the ring and bracelets. The weight of the ring was one *beka*, and the numerical equivalents of the letters in *beka* add up to 172, which happens to be the total number of words in the text of the Ten Commandments. The two gold bracelets could represent the two tablets of the Decalogue, with the ten shekel weight of the bracelets signaling a further connection to the commandments. Building on this data, one thread of Jewish tradition claims that Eliezer wasn't just offering jewelry to Rebekah. In addition, he presented to her the divine truths he had learned from Abraham in order to test her willingness to receive such instruction [2, p. 271].

However, one does not have to resort to numerology to discern something significant about Rebekah's character from the text of Genesis 24. Providing water for ten thirsty camels would have required a great many trips to the well, and Rebekah didn't merely propose to give the camels a drink. Instead, her offer was to draw water for them "until they have finished drinking" (v. 19). In addition, we should notice the eagerness with which she carried out this task. Verse 20 says that she "quickly" emptied her jar and "ran" back for more water. Waxman [3] points out the parallels between Gen. 24:20 and Gen. 18:6-7, where Abraham "ran" and "hurried" to provide a meal for his angelic visitors. In her hospitality and humble servant's attitude, Rebekah was like Abraham. Eliezer must have observed these qualities in Rebekah as he watched her scurry back and forth to water the camels.

Waxman also notes a contrast in Gen. 24 between Rebekah's attitude and that of her brother Laban. Laban offered food and lodging for Eliezer and the camels, but he may have been motivated by the wealth Eliezer displayed (v. 30). And though he and Rebekah's father Bethuel were forced to admit (perhaps grudgingly) that God had directed Eliezer to Rebekah, Laban still hoped to detain Abraham's servant for as long as possible. On the other hand, Rebekah did not hesitate or suggest any further delay when she was asked if she would go with Eliezer to become Isaac's wife. Instead she simply answered, "I will go" (v. 58), much as Abraham had responded to God's calling over sixty years before (Gen. 12:1-4). Rebekah was indeed the right person to marry the son of Abraham and Sarah.

Lessons about Marriage

The final verse of Genesis 24 briefly describes what happened when Eliezer and Rebekah arrived back in Canaan and Isaac first met his new bride:

"Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

This verse seems to imply that the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was a happy one. Rebekah was a worthy successor to Sarah as matriarch of the line of promise, and she filled the large gap left in Isaac's life after the death of his mother. Isaac's affection for Rebekah was so great that it was not possible for him to successfully pretend in Gerar that Rebekah was merely his sister (Gen. 26:8). Later he sent his son Jacob back to Mesopotamia to find a wife among Rebekah's relatives, a further indication of his esteem for Rebekah (Gen. 28:2).

In his book *I, Isaac, Take Thee, Rebekah* [4], noted Christian evangelist and teacher Ravi Zacharias points out several factors that increased the chances of marital success for Isaac and Rebekah and can also help produce for us the strong marriages that God intends us to have.

First, Isaac and Rebekah did not make the decision to marry entirely on our own. In addition, the decision process involved members of both sides of the family. This process was initiated by Abraham and Eliezer, both men of faith. God's will was sought and followed, ensuring that an appropriate match was found.

Second, Isaac and Rebekah were both people of upright character, mature and ready for marriage. Isaac was a man of prayer, as evidenced by the fact that he was communing with God when Eliezer and Rebekah met him (Gen. 24:63). Isaac was submissive to God's will in his life and honored his father (see, e.g., Gen. 22). The similarity between the events of Gen. 26 and analogous events in Abraham's life emphasizes that Isaac was one who sought to follow in his father's footsteps.

Rebekah was a virgin (Gen. 24:16) who brought the gift of purity to her marriage with Isaac. Probably she too had prayed that God would bring her the right husband, and she must have waited patiently for God's answer. When the time came for the final decision to be made, her family left that decision up to her, an indication of their confidence in her maturity and good judgment.

Many commentators have pointed out the order of events recorded in Gen. 24:67—"she became his wife, and he loved her." Isaac and Rebekah were mature enough to know that love is much more than a feeling.

More importantly, love is a commitment to lay down one's life for the other person on a daily basis. In her readiness to provide water for Eliezer and his camels, Rebekah demonstrated that she was ready to make this kind of commitment. Her kind and giving nature surely brought a great blessing to Isaac.

In summary, Isaac and Rebekah were receptive to the guidance and wisdom of God and their families, possessed strong character, and were well prepared to make a lifelong commitment to each other. These qualities were a firm foundation for their marriage and will help anchor our marriages as well.

A Bride for the Messiah

In the book of Genesis, chapter 24 follows shortly after the account of Abraham's greatest test—God's directive that he offer Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22). This incident is full of symbolic meaning. For Christians, Abraham's willingness to give up Isaac represents God's willingness to give his own Son as a sacrifice for human sin.

Messianic Jewish teacher Ariel Berkowitz proposes in [1, pp. 71-72] that we carry this symbolism forward to chapter 24. He observes that just as Abraham sought a bride for Isaac after Isaac was rescued from death as a sacrifice, so God desires a bride for the Messiah, his resurrected Son (see Rev. 19:6-8). Berkowitz then explores the analogy further, suggesting several parallels between the two settings. Here are some of the possibilities, including those listed in [1] along with a few additional ones:

(a) In Gen. 24, Rebekah did not come looking for Isaac. Instead, Abraham set in motion the process of finding Isaac's wife. Similarly, God has taken the initiative in calling a group of people to follow his Son (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Thes. 2:13-14).

(b) Eliezer was sure that God had chosen a bride for Isaac in advance (Gen. 24:14). In the case of the bride of the Messiah, that choice was made "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4).

(c) Abraham sent out his trusted servant to identify and bring back Isaac's bride. The servant's name is not mentioned in Gen. 24, an indication that the servant's own identity did not matter. The servant was so dedicated to Abraham that he could be thought of as an extension of his master. Similarly, God sends the Holy Spirit, an extension of himself, to identify and prepare his Son's bride (Eph. 4:7-16).

(d) Isaac's bride would share with her husband the substantial riches with which Abraham had been blessed (Gen. 24:35-36). Similarly, the bride of the Messiah will inherit the entire universe along with him (Rom. 8:17).

(e) Abraham wanted Isaac's bride to be someone like himself, a person with the humble and willing attitude of a servant, given to hospitality. God looks for similar qualities in his Son's bride (Matt. 20:20-28; John 13:13-15; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:21).

(f) Isaac's bride would also need to be willing to step out on faith, leaving home and family behind, as Abraham and Sarah had previously done. It is the same with the bride of the Messiah (Luke 9:57-62; 14:26).

(g) With the character attributes in (d) and (e), Rebekah was different from those around her—her brother Laban, for example. The bride of the Messiah is also chosen to stand out from human society at large (Matt. 5:14-16; John 17:14).

As with any analogy, it is possible to stretch the connections too far. Keeping that in mind, though, it is a valuable exercise to consider the messianic typology of Gen. 24 and other patriarchal narratives.

Conclusion

In Genesis 24 we see the faith of Abraham, the wisdom and loyalty of his trusted servant Eliezer, and the sterling character of Rebekah. These are examples for us to emulate as children of Abraham and members of the collective bride of the Messiah. Doing so will strengthen our marriages and our relationship with God.

References:

- [1] Ariel Berkowitz, *Torah Club Volume Two: Yeshua in the Torah*, First Fruits of Zion, Littleton, Colorado.
- [2] David Klinghoffer, *The Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism*, Doubleday, New York, 2003.
- [3] Chanoch Waxman, "The Bride of Yitzchak," commentary on Parashat Chayei Sara available online at http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha_62/05chayeisara.htm
- [4] Ravi Zacharias, *I, Isaac, Take Thee, Rebekah*, W Publishing Group, Nashville, 2004.

Footnotes:

1. Numbers 7 (89 verses) and Deuteronomy 28 (68 verses) are the only chapters in the Pentateuch with more verses than Genesis 24.

Doug is a Ph.D. and professor of mathematics at Miami University in Ohio. He and his wife Sherry have four children. He is a student of the Hebrew roots of Christianity and edits Grace & Knowledge, a magazine that appears online at graceandknowledge.faithweb.com. Doug attends the Church of the Messiah near Dayton, Ohio.

Legacy Institute Update from Taungoo, Myanmar

(During the Days of Unleavened Bread several months ago)

Gloria and I are together here in Taungoo, Myanmar (Burma) with 33 Church of God brethren and children to keep Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

We have been able to come together from different parts of Myanmar. One graduate of Legacy Institute in Chiang Mai came all the way from the China border bringing two friends to see us. She had to cross into China via mountain trails and come around into Kachinland by a circuitous route to avoid the fighting between the Burma army and the Kachin Independence Army. She could not take the train from the China border because trains were being fired upon. It took her three days to reach us. So far, we have been able to keep the Feast in peace and safety, but not without trials. The evening of the First Holy Day (the evening we call the Night to Be Much Observed) a heavy storm blew up and saturated the facility where we are staying and the surrounding rice fields with heavy rain and fierce winds. The day after the Holy day, several members returned to their homes located about 10 miles away to find 4 of their roofs had blown off and one member's house was tilted onto its side. Gloria gave Tu Mar, our Burma deacon's wife, funds to buy roofing and building material, and today (Monday), several members left the festival site to begin making repairs. Please pray that the repairs will last as we are now entering the monsoon season in Myanmar.

Elections are being held now in Myanmar and it looks as if Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Gyi's political party has gained a significant number of seats in the new parliament. The people of Myanmar are hopeful that this will bring about improvements in living conditions in the country. Inflation is rampant and the local currency is not worth much.

We will be returning to Yangon (Rangoon) right after the Last Holy Day and then fly back to Chiang Mai. I am hopeful we will miss most of the Water Festival in Burma where riotous celebration, drunkenness, and throwing dirty water all over everyone is rampant. Gloria and I look forward to getting back to Thailand and seeing our grandchildren once again.

*Leon Sexton
Director of the Legacy Institute*

If you would like to keep up with the activities of the Legacy Institute, you can follow their blog at <http://www.legacyinstituteorg.blogspot.com/>



Group photo of those gathered at Taungoo, Burma (Myanmar)



Children gather with mothers and grandmothers soon after the "Blessing of the Children Ceremony."

The Original Apostles Reinterpret the Scriptures

By Bryant Buck



In the first two articles in this series I went over how the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament and how Jesus reinterprets the Scriptures. In this final article I will go over how the original apostles of the 1st Century reinterpret the Scriptures. Near the end of the previous article I touched on the fact that Yeshua Himself gave to these original apostles the gift of reinterpreting the Scriptures. So that is where I will begin this study.

“Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things were written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45 NAS) Basically, this text in Luke teaches us two things. First, we don’t understand the Scriptures unless Yeshua opens our minds to understand the Scriptures.

(In other words, the Scriptures are revealed by Yahweh – not analyzed by men.) Second, Yeshua explained the Scriptures to the apostles that He had ordained, thus committing to them the reinterpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures that would continue throughout the New Testament Scriptures after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Luke 24:45 does not declare that Yeshua opened the minds of the original apostles only to understand some Scriptures. Rather, He gave them the understanding of the Scriptures, meaning all of them.

In John 17 Jesus is speaking to His original apostles: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14 NAS) The passage in Luke 24:44-45 does not stand alone; John 17:14 likewise informs us that Jesus committed His Father’s words to these same apostles. We know this for certain because Jesus Himself gave them the words of His Father.

In Jude 17 (NAS) we read this admonition: “But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What words? Continuing on with Jude 18 (NAS), we read: “that they were saying to you, ‘In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.’” The Old Testament Scriptures predict mockers, but here we see the prediction made specific to the last time. The apostles had received more revelation from the Lord. Plus Jude could have declared that we ought to remember the words of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. But he didn’t; he left the Old Testament prophets out. In effect, Jude was stating what we have already observed – that the original apostles of the 1st Century are indeed divinely ordained reinterpreters of the Scriptures.

Now some will argue that since Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles, he did not receive the same gift of Scriptural reinterpretation as they received. Let me answer this first by recognizing that although Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles, he was an apostle of the original generation of apostles of the 1st Century. Can you state with certainty that Jude’s admonition in Jude 17 only included the original twelve apostles? Jude 17 did not say “the original twelve apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “twelve” is not in this verse. We know from many other verses that the early church recognized Paul as an apostle along with the twelve original apostles. (See, for example, Acts 13:1-3, Acts 13:50 together with Acts 14:4, and Galatians 1:17.) Since Jude did not limit his admonition to the original twelve apostles, there is no reason to believe that Paul was not one of the apostles to whom Jude was referring.

In Acts 15:2 (NAS) we read these words: “And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.” In the contention over the circumcision the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to get the matter resolved. In the ensuing discussion first the apostle Peter, then the apostles Paul and Barnabas, and then the apostle James (the Lord’s brother – not the original apostle James who was already dead by that time – see Acts 12:2 & Galatians 1:19) are recorded as the men who did the speaking. We know from Acts 13:50 and Acts 14:4 that Paul and Barnabas were apostles of the Lord. So only apostles spoke in the discussion at the council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. What were they discussing? They were discussing whether the original Jewish position that circumcision was required for salvation or the later revelation which Paul received that circumcision was not required for salvation was correct. They concluded that Paul’s revelation was correct. Moreover, by confirming Paul’s revelation that circumcision was not required for salvation, the apostles at Jerusalem in effect both confirmed Paul’s apostleship and his reinterpretation of the Scriptures.

In 2 Peter 3:14-16 (NAS) Peter testified to Paul’s ministry as follows: “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.” Many emphasize that Peter stated that

some of Paul's writings were hard to understand. However, what they overlook is that Peter equated "his letters" (that is, Paul's letters) to "the rest of the Scriptures." The apostle Peter, one of the original twelve apostles, in effect declared Paul's letters SCRIPTURE. If the original apostles recognized that Paul received the heavenly revelation that circumcision was no longer necessary for salvation and that his letters were indeed Scripture, we should no longer doubt that that Paul, like the other apostles of his generation, received from Yeshua Himself the ability to reinterpret the Scriptures.

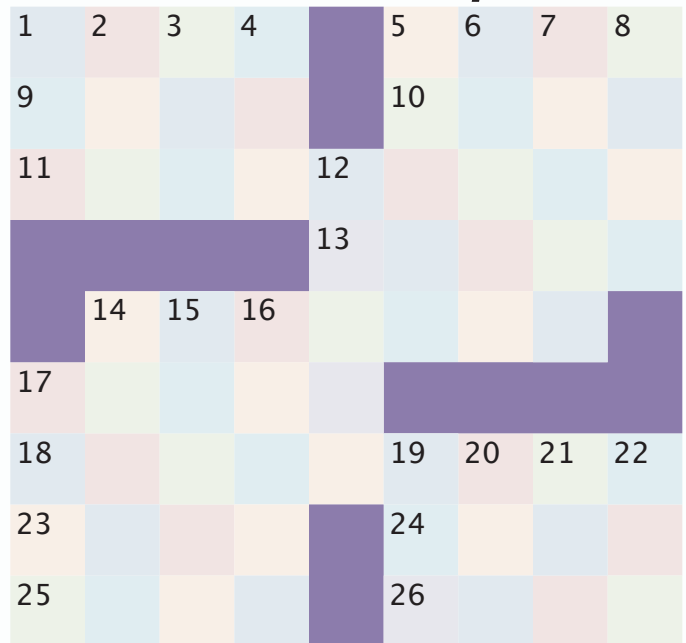
So what Scriptures did the original generation of apostles reinterpret? To start with, they reinterpreted virtually all the Old Testament Scriptures regarding circumcision. Under the old covenant you had to be circumcised to find salvation in God's family. But Acts 15 and Galatians entirely reinterpret the place of circumcision in the process of salvation. After treating the subject of circumcision at length in Galatians, Paul concluded the reinterpretation of the place of circumcision in God's order as follows: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6 NAS) Likewise, in Philippians he wrote: "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3 NIV).

The original apostles also reinterpreted the place of the commandments in relation to our salvation in Christ. Yet they never did away with the commandments as many modern Christians believe. (See, for example, Romans 13:8-10 and 1 John 2:3-4.) However, in more than one place they declared that righteousness cannot be attained by keeping the law, but only by faith in Christ. So at the end of a lengthy passage in Romans 3 treating the whole subject of how a man is justified by faith in Christ, Paul wrote as follows: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law." (Romans 3:28 NAS) What many modern Christians neglect, however, is the final Scripture in this passage. "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." (Romans 3:31 NAS) Now we don't keep the law to be saved; we keep the law because we are saved. Peter made the same reinterpretation as Paul in Acts 15:11 (NAS): "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

In concluding this series, I recognize that there are many today who want to reinterpret the whole Bible through the lens of the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). They can do so if they wish, but they can't do so and still believe the clear message of the New Testament. As we have seen, if you believe the New Testament, then you see that the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament, Jesus reinterprets the Old Testament, and so do His first generation of apostles.

*Bryant, a BSA board member, is the founder and leader of Solid Rock Home Fellowship in Freeport, Illinois. After retiring from a career selling life and health insurance, Bryant has gone on to pursue his love of writing. He now has two published books: **The Prayer Warrior** and **My First Christian ABC Book**.*

Problem People



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ACROSS

1. Jehu destroyed his worship out of Israel
5. Identical
9. Weapon projectiles
10. Neanderthal weapon
11. Phony
13. Colorado or Arkansas
14. Christ was inflicted with many of these
17. Begets
18. Talebearer of a sort
23. Egyptian Christian
24. Ancestor of Moses
25. Singles
26. Just one of 25 Across

DOWN

1. Humbug
2. Christian music singer ___ Grant
3. Increase the sound
4. Card game
5. Paper money issued for temporary use
6. According to Revelation Jesus is this "for evermore"
7. Silences
8. Father of Peleg
9. Firm and fresh
14. Amorite king
15. Rubbish
16. Pauses
19. Priest at Samuel's birth
20. Finished working (abbr.)
21. First transplant recipient
22. Edge

Downs Syndrome Child Arrested in Pakistan for Blasphemy

Open Doors News

Can a girl reported to be as young as 11 commit blasphemy? And in Pakistan, where blasphemy is punishable by death, should the law even apply? Last week's arrest of the girl is re-igniting Pakistan's national debate about religious freedom.

The Facts

Agence France-Press published a succinct recap of what happened:

A Christian girl with Down's Syndrome has been arrested on blasphemy charges in Pakistan, accused of burning pages inscribed with verses from the Koran, police and activists said on Sunday.

Police arrested Rimsha ... on Thursday after she was reported holding in public burnt pages which had Islamic text and Koranic verses on them, a police official told AFP.

According to the New York Times in a report published Monday, Aug. 20:

Malik Amjad, landlord of the family's rented house, said the controversy started early last week after his nephew saw [the girl] holding a burned copy of the Noorani Qaida. The nephew informed a local cleric, Khalid Jadoon, Mr. Amjad said.

Mr. Amjad said the incident bothered few local residents initially and caught fire only at the instigation of the cleric and two conservative shopkeepers.

The Washington Post also published an account that does a good job capturing just how difficult it has been to get at the truth:

The incident involving the girl happened Thursday afternoon, evidently while she was gathering trash — but beyond that, everything is in dispute. Some locals claim to have witnessed her and her mother burning the entire Koran.

But Tahir Muhammad, a 30-year-old shop owner and landlord, said the girl found just one page of the holy

book while cleaning a house, mixed it with other papers and burned it.

A 10-year-old neighborhood girl said she saw the whole thing and took the ashes to the mosque — with no pages of the Koran extant. In interviews Sunday, two men at the mosque said that only ashes remained and that the imam mixed in some pages himself before turning over the “evidence” to police.

The girl was arrested and jailed after angry crowds threatened to burn Christian homes in the area, the BBC reported. Some sources, cited anonymously by the Pakistani newspaper Dawn, wanted to set her on fire.

An estimated 500 to 1,000 Muslims, including many outsiders, turned out the following Friday to demand punishment for the alleged blasphemer, blocking a nearby highway and burning tires. The mob also menaced police.

After an initial court appearance, she has been held in detention, a move police said they made to protect the girl from the mob. Hundreds of Christians who live in the sector of the city fled to other homes around Islamabad to avoid being caught up in Islamic indignation. Zeenews.com, an Indian website, reported that angry Muslims beat the girl's parents, and have burned several Christian homes in the area. Some reports say her parents have been placed in protective custody as well.

News accounts differ on the girl's name. Most identify her as Rimsha Masih, and at least one identifies her as Rafta. Most reports say the girl is 11. AFP, however, cited an anonymous police source who “described [her] as being in her teens.” Several news reports also say that Christian advocacy organizations have claimed that Rimsha has Down syndrome, which is associated with learning disabilities. The *New York Times*, however, cited “senior police officers” as saying the girl is 16 and healthy.

Rimsha lives in Sector G-12 of Islamabad, an area that one news report said is known as Umarra Jafar, and which AFP reported is called Mehrabad.

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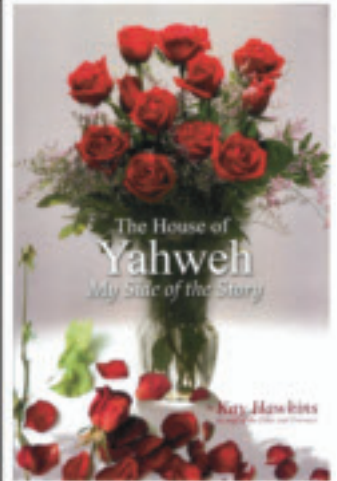
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