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Uncovering the Bible's Buried Civilizations

The Babylonians

'That bitter and hasty nation'

By Christopher Eames



*Borsippa Ziggurat, a possible location of the
Tower of Babel*

Yves GELLIE/Gamma-Rapho/ Getty Images

The [European] Community is living largely by the heritage of the Holy Roman Empire, though the great majority of the people who live by it don't know by what heritage they live."—OTTO VON HABSBURG

It's easy to confuse all of the aggressive nations in the Bible: the Assyrians, Syrians/Arameans, Persians, Chaldeans/Babylonians—just to name the larger ones. It is also easy to mix up when, where and how they interacted with Israel. It doesn't help that when opposing empires conquered one another, they often morphed into the same conglomerate.

In this article, we'll look at an empire mostly described fairly late in biblical history, yet an empire the Bible reveals as the *foundational model* of humanity's empires and religions.

Let's examine the *Babylonians*.

Beginnings—a Despotic Founder

Babylon began soon after the great Flood. The Flood dates somewhere in the middle of the third millennium B.C., probably around 2350 B.C. Genesis 10 discusses the first great post-Flood dictator who emerged after that time, Noah's great-grandson Nimrod:

"Cush fathered Nimrod, who was the first powerful man on earth. He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the Lord. That is why it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of [or against] the Lord.' His kingdom started with Babylon ..." (Genesis 10:8-10; Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Nimrod was the founder of Babylon, or "Babel" as it is rendered in the King James Version (*Bavel* in Hebrew). The following verses state that Nimrod was also the founder of a slew of other cities that are confirmed by archaeology, such as Nineveh and Calah (also known as Kahlu, but better known by its more common name Nimrud).

Three classical historians—Berossus, Ctesias and Stephanus of Byzantium—use different sources that all date Babylon's original founding to around 2250 B.C. This lines up perfectly with the time that Nimrod would have been on the scene, after his grandfather Ham survived the Flood 50 to 100 years prior. Babylon, the genesis of Nimrod's empire, has been identified through

archaeology. It is called, in the native Akkadian language, *Babili*.

Nimrod, whose name means “rebel,” led the way after the Flood in turning to paganism. He established a system of worship whose traditions are still heavily utilized around the world *to this day*. A study of this can be found in Alexander Hislop’s book *The Two Babylons*.

Ancient Jewish historian Josephus wrote about Babylon’s founder in *Antiquities of the Jews* (1.4.2; emphasis added throughout):

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. ... He also gradually changed the government into tyranny—seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would *build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!*

Tower of Babel

And so work began on the tower of Babel. Josephus stated that it was deliberately built in a manner so as not to allow water to seep through. “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). Seeing their rapid progress and what they determined to do, God confounded the language of the people in order to disperse them and prevent them from gathering together into one small, tightly packed location. Consequently, the world began to be colonized.

Incredibly, **just as with the Flood**, the history of the tower of Babel isn’t just limited to the Bible. In fact, it isn’t limited to those nations of the Mesopotamian area. Various traditions that are similar to the tower of Babel and confusion of languages episode can be found all over the world—across Asia, the Americas, the Pacific, Africa, Europe and, of course, the Middle East. You can read more about these traditions in our article “**The Tower of Babel: Just a Bible Story?**” As with the Flood, if we take the Bible

literally, we *ought* to find tower of Babel traditions all around the world—seeing that Genesis 11 states it was only *after* this event that populations were scattered across “all the earth.”

For the purposes of this article, we’ll briefly look at an eighth-century-B.C. Assyrian inscription and its similarities with the account of the tower of Babel. Though the tablet was badly damaged, its message is still clear:

... he the father of all the gods had repudiated; the thought of his heart was evil. ... of Babylon he hastens to the submission, small and great he confounded *on the mound*. Their walls all the day he founded; for their destruction in the night ... he did not leave a remainder. In his anger also his secret counsel he pours out; *to confound (their) speeches he set his face*. He gave the command, he made strange their counsel

The parallels are clear. So where is this tower of Babel today? There are various theories about its exact location, but we can’t be certain. It is generally believed that the tower of Babel was in the form of a *ziggurat*. These were massive ancient religious structures found throughout Mesopotamia—especially dating to the early, post-Flood centuries. A massive ziggurat at Borsippa, known as *Birs Nimrud* (Tower of Nimrod), is one contender for the tower of Babel. The massive, crumbling remains of this ziggurat are located within the Babylon province. Wherever the true site is, a building in the shape of a ziggurat would certainly fit descriptions from those such as Josephus, who commented on the tower’s mountainous supporting *width* rather than sheer vertical height.

Abraham and Beyond

The confusion of the languages and dispersion of the people dashed Nimrod’s hopes of a powerful, centralized Babylonian power. In the intervening time up to Abraham (c. 1900 B.C.), the Assyrians began to grow in power as the dominant regional empire. Their burgeoning might, however, was brought to a halt after Abraham and his servant army defeated an alliance of the Assyrian kings (Genesis 14). This paved the way for an age of Egyptian power and expansion—and it also

allowed Babylonia to develop into its own unique power.

At this point, a distinction must be made between Babylon and Chaldea. Chaldeans are often referred to as Babylonians. The Chaldeans lived in the southern region of Babylon. Especially during the eighth to sixth centuries B.C., the Chaldeans are referred to synonymously as Babylonians, and many Chaldeans reigned as king over Babylon. After Persia's conquest of Babylon, historians speculate that the name "Chaldean" referred more to social class than race. For the purposes of this article, we can consider the Chaldeans as more or less a large "tribe" of wider Babylonia.

Abraham himself grew up in Chaldea (Genesis 11:28, 31). He was well familiar with the Babylonian system of religion, culture and governance. He was on the scene at the rise of the Babylonian Empire, which was governed by what is known as the First Dynasty of Babylon. This dynasty appears to have begun just after 1900 B.C., gradually encompassing the surrounding territory. One of these early Babylonian rulers was Hammurabi, a man famous for a detailed code of laws for his society. Babylonia grew swiftly under his rulership.

It was probably around this time that we find another token mention of the Chaldeans in the Bible. The book of Job records the numerous curses that befell Job as a result of his self-righteousness.

"While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The *Chaldeans* made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Job 1:17).

Job was likely the very son of the patriarch Issachar, one of the 12 sons of Jacob (see Genesis 46:13). Job was a leading figure in the land of Uz, a territory believed to have encompassed the southeast region of modern-day Israel and southern Jordan. Evidently, this was within the reach of marauding Chaldeans.

After Hammurabi, the Babylonian Empire gradually fell into decline and was conquered by

the Hittites. After the Hittite sacking, the eastern Kassite peoples swept in and took control of Babylon, beginning a Kassite dynasty around the 16th century B.C. Toward the end of the Kassite rule, Assyria broke away from Babylonian control, established its own empire, and became a powerful adversary. The Elamite Empire also grew in power and finally destroyed the Kassite dynasty in 1157 B.C.

A new line of Babylonian kings subsequently began to rule. King Nebuchadnezzar I soon defeated Elam (note, this is not the famous Nebuchadnezzar II of the Bible), and he was successful in fending off Babylonia from Assyrian attacks.

Encyclopedia Britannica describes the ensuing complex devolution of Babylonia:

For several centuries following Nebuchadnezzar I's rule, a three-way struggle developed among the Assyrians and Aramean and Chaldean tribesmen for control of Babylonia. From the ninth century to the fall of the Assyrian empire in the late seventh century B.C.E., Assyrian kings most frequently ruled over Babylonia, often appointing sub-kings to administer the government. The last ruling Assyrian king was Ashurbanipal, who fought a civil war against his brother, the sub-king in Babylon, devastating the city and its population.

This intervening time period in Babylonia's history was one of dominance under the powerful Assyrian Empire. It is the period when Assyria is *heavily* featured in the Bible—and it conquers the northern kingdom of Israel.

It is in this intervening time period, just before Babylon's greatest rise to power, that we must pause to examine some details.

Laying the Foundation for Babylon's Rise

After the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered around 718 B.C., the Assyrian invaders uprooted virtually all the Israelites in the land. They were replaced with a variety of new inhabitants, among them *Babylonians* (2 Kings 17:24). These implanted peoples would later become known as Samaritans, whose strange

religions were morphed with a skewed understanding of the laws of God (verses 25-28).

Not long after this time period, Assyria attempted and failed to conquer Jerusalem under **King Hezekiah**. Hezekiah fell ill shortly after this stressful encounter, and was visited by a delegation of Babylonian well-wishers carrying a letter of goodwill from King Merodach-Baladan (Isaiah 39:1—identified in ancient Babylonian history as Marduk-apal-addina II). This Babylonian king had managed to maintain a degree of independence from Assyria at the time. The flattered Hezekiah showed this delegation around Jerusalem. All the Jewish riches—even throughout the wider dominion—were shown to the ambassadors by the naive king.

After the Babylonians had left, the Prophet Isaiah approached the king, querying him about the nature of the visit. Hezekiah affirmed that the men were from a “far country”—from Babylon—and that he had shown the ambassadors all the national treasures. Isaiah responded with harsh criticism from God for Hezekiah’s openness toward the Babylonians:

“Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isaiah 39:6-7).

Ezekiel 23 also prophesied the deadly consequences of Judah’s “doting” on and fraternizing with the Babylonians. And just as described by the prophets, the Babylonians were about to burst onto the world scene in their greatest show of power and strength.

A New Babylonian Empire

Within a century, Assyria had descended into infighting and chaos. A Chaldean leader named Nabopolassar established himself as king over Babylon and began the most prolific period of Babylonian dominance, to that point. Babylon became his capital, and he sacked the powerful Assyrian city of Nineveh. Even the Egyptians united with Assyria to try to stop the emerging

Babylonian Empire. This brings us to another important stage in the biblical story, involving King Josiah. In order for Egypt to assist Assyria in battling the Babylonians, they needed to travel through the land of *Judah*. Pharaoh Necho (a man not only mentioned in the Bible, but also thoroughly attested to in archaeology) rushed to the aid of the Assyrians, but Josiah, king of Judah, stood in his way.

“After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I* come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not” (2 Chronicles 35:20-21).

Josiah, however, wouldn’t be stayed. He mounted a resistance against the pharaoh in the valley of **Megiddo**, where he was wounded and later died. It is not known *why* Josiah fought against the pharaoh. Perhaps he disdained the idea of Egypt passing through the land. More likely, he harbored sympathies toward the Babylonians, as did his great-grandfather Hezekiah, and as described in Ezekiel 23. Knowing Egypt’s and Assyria’s track records with the Israelites may have made Josiah more naively willing to jump into bed with the Babylonians.

Although the Egyptians defeated the Jews at Megiddo, they were about to enter a world of trouble, suffering two separate defeats at the hands of the Babylonians.

The Fall of Jerusalem

In 605 B.C., the Egyptians and Assyrians were soundly defeated at the battle of Carchemish. The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Egypt at the hand of the new king of Babylon—the infamous Nebuchadnezzar II (see Jeremiah 46). History concurs that this happened. The scene was now set for the fall of Judah and the well-known story of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

The Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah in three separate waves. The first was around 600 B.C. Jehoiakim was on the

throne of Judah and had served Babylon for three years before rebelling (2 Kings 24:1-6). Armies of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites set about plundering Judah. Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiakim brought in chains to Babylon, along with various temple treasures and captives (2 Chronicles 36:5-8). It was at this same time that Daniel and his three friends were also captured and taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:1; more on this later).

In place of Jehoiakim reigned Jehoiachin, his son. This man had one of the shortest lengths of reign in Judah—just over three months. Even in this short period of time, he managed to establish a reputation as an “evil” king. Jeremiah prophesied that this man would fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and none of his seed would assume the throne of Judah (Jeremiah 22). Subsequently, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem a second time. Jehoiachin, his servants and his mother emerged and gave themselves up to the king of Babylon. More treasures were looted from the temple and were carried back by the Babylonians, along with 10,000 Jerusalemite captives. Among this captivity was Kish, a man who would become the great-grandfather of Mordecai (Esther 2:5-6). “None remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land” (2 Kings 24:14). Jehoiachin, while taken captive, was kept alive in Babylon. We’ll see mention of him further down—biblically and archaeologically.

In place of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar made his uncle, Mattaniah, king. He is better remembered by another name given to him by the Babylonian king—Zedekiah.

Zedekiah reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. He too was an evil king and had the gall, even in his already weakened position, to rebel against King Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian king must have been incredulous—for the third time, he amassed forces to descend on Jerusalem. Jeremiah the prophet warned Zedekiah of the punishment coming on Judah from the hand of God. He repeatedly warned the king to surrender to the Babylonians in order to spare his life, the lives of the people, and Jerusalem itself.

Zedekiah, though, was stubborn. He was an ineffective king. He secretly desired to remain in contact with Jeremiah to find out the will of God, yet he was too scared of appearing weak before his people by giving in to the Babylonians. Thus, Zedekiah was belligerent against God *and* against the Babylonians. He and his nobles took comfort in the fact that Egypt’s army, under Pharaoh Apries, was on its way to help them against the Babylonians. The Babylonians left Jerusalem, and as Jeremiah had prophesied, throttled the Egyptian army before returning to Jerusalem to continue the siege (Jeremiah 37).

Annoyed with Jeremiah’s words, the princes Shephatiah, Pashur, Gedaliah and Jehucal had Jeremiah thrown into a chamber filled with mire. He would have died in the chamber were it not for his rescue by Ebed-melech the Ethiopian. There has since been an amazing archaeological attestation to two of these evil princes who desired to kill Jeremiah. Within the royal palace area at Jerusalem, two royal bullae (clay seals) have been uncovered bearing the names “Jehucal son of Shelemiah son of Shovi” and “Gedaliah son of Pashur” (Jeremiah 37:3; 38:1).

It was a year and a half from the time that the Babylonians arrived in Jerusalem to the time that the siege was finished. Starvation had taken its toll on the inhabitants. The walls were finally broken through, and Zedekiah and the royal family attempted escape—only to be caught by the Babylonians and carted off to King Nebuchadnezzar. The last thing Zedekiah witnessed was the slaughtering of his sons, and then his eyes were burned out—an ignominious end for a pathetic king.

There is archaeological attestation to a number of the biblical names of Babylonian princes described at this defeat of Jerusalem. One of these princes was named Nergalsharezer (Jeremiah 39:13). Archaeology has revealed evidence of this prince, who was actually the son-in-law of King Nebuchadnezzar. He is known in Akkadian as Nergal-sar-usur (more commonly as Neriglissar). This man will feature again further down in Babylon’s story. Another is Nebo-sarsekim, the Rabsaris (poorly translated into English in Jeremiah 39:3 as two separate names: “Sarsechim, Rabsaris”). Another is Nebuzaradan,

the captain of the guard (verse 9). He is mentioned on Nebuchadnezzar II's prism as "Nabu-zer-iddin."

The Babylonians treated the Prophet Jeremiah favorably. King Nebuchadnezzar II himself had heard of this man, and personally gave orders for the above-mentioned captain Nebuzaradan to treat him well. As such, Jeremiah was set free with a reward. The king of Babylon established Gedaliah as governor over the cities of Judah, within which only the destitute were allowed to stay. Judah was thoroughly crushed.

But this would not be the last the surviving Jews in the land would see of the Babylonians.

Jews in Egypt, Jews in Babylon

A rogue Jew named Ishmael, who had some royal genealogy, gathered 10 men of dubious character and killed the Babylonian-appointed governor Gedaliah along with dozens of other Jews. Ishmael and his men then rounded up hordes of Jews and began herding them toward the land of the Ammonites, with whom Ishmael had an allegiance. Ishmael and his men fled, however, when the captain Johanan and his forces arrived to free the captive Jews.

Johanan began to govern the beleaguered Jews. Fearing retribution from Babylon for the death of Gedaliah, the Jews began an "exodus" into *Egypt*—against God's warnings. Jeremiah prophesied that the Jews who would flee to Egypt would again face death at the hands of a Babylonian invasion. True to form, archaeology has revealed a Babylonian invasion into Egypt that occurred around 568-567 B.C.—18 years after the fall of Judah. The Bible's account of these events largely ends with the Jews who fled into Egypt.

The story picks up again with the Jews who were taken to Babylon. You'll remember that Jerusalem's Jews were taken captive in multiple waves. The young Daniel and his three friends were part of the first wave, taken during the reign of Jehoiakim. The book of Daniel describes how Daniel and his friends were separated along with other captives for their wisdom and cunning in knowledge and science. These captives were

chosen to learn the Chaldean language and to serve King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel and his three friends rose to high rank in the Babylonian kingdom, after Daniel interpreted one of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. This was an incredible prophetic dream, illustrating the progression of four successive world-ruling kingdoms, beginning with Babylon and ending in our day with the coming of the Messiah.

It wasn't long, however, before Daniel's three friends fell out of Nebuchadnezzar's graces. They refused to bow down before a great statute that the king had set up, so Nebuchadnezzar commanded that they be thrown into a fiery furnace. Miraculously, the three survived the flames, accompanied within the furnace by a fourth figure whom the astonished Nebuchadnezzar declared was in the form of "the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25). Nebuchadnezzar hastily decreed that anyone who spoke against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego would face death.

A clay prism, listing Babylonian officials during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, contains a very possible reference to Daniel's three promoted friends. One of the names on the list is Ardi-Nabu, a direct equivalent to the Aramaic "Abed-nego." Another name is Hananu—he could be Hananiah (also known as Shadrach—Daniel 1:7). The third, Mushallim-Marduk—possibly Mishael (also known as Meshach—same verse). The similarities are too close to overlook.

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

King Nebuchadnezzar later had another dream—this time of a mighty tree that was cut down and whose stump dwelt with the beasts of the field for seven years (Daniel 4). Daniel explained that this dream meant Nebuchadnezzar would lose his position reigning over Babylon and would become insane, living for seven years as one of the beasts of the field. This curse would come as punishment for Nebuchadnezzar's colossal pride and self-exaltation. Daniel implored the king to humble himself, if only to postpone this punishment.

Yet within only 12 months, Nebuchadnezzar was mid-sentence glorifying his own

accomplishments when a voice from heaven spoke and condemned Nebuchadnezzar to his fate.

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws” (Daniel 4:33).

This bout of madness has not been identified in Nebuchadnezzar’s history, outside of the Bible—so say the secular sources. But if we are to dig a little deeper, there *are* some interesting details that appear to directly relate to this time in Nebuchadnezzar’s life.

Not much is known about his later years. We see that from 562-560 B.C., his son Evil-merodach sits on the throne. From 560-556 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law Neriglissar (mentioned above) sits on the throne. And from 556 B.C., for only 9 months, Neriglissar’s son Labashi-Marduk sits on the throne. These three, short-reigning men held Babylon’s throne for a collective period of about *seven years*. Could this have been the time that Nebuchadnezzar was mentally unfit to rule? Could these three men have taken the reins of Babylon for the duration of Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity? It would certainly have helped cover up the shameful degradation of Babylon’s once-greatest king.

Kings Evil-merodach and Belshazzar

Nebuchadnezzar’s short-reigning son, Evil-merodach (as mentioned above), is described in 2 Kings 25:27-30 as taking King Jehoiachin out of prison and showing him favor. This would have been around 562 B.C.—nearly 25 years after the final fall of Judah. Jehoiachin was given a change of clothes and was issued a daily allowance of food, “a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life” (verse 30). Babylonian records show a very interesting correlation to this account. King Jehoiachin is mentioned a number of times on Babylonian tablets regarding *oil rations/deliveries*. The tablets variously refer to him as “king” and “son of the king of Judah.” The texts offer a unique snapshot into Jehoiachin’s life as a captive in Babylon. Babylonian King Evil-

merodach is also attested to through archaeology by the native name Awel Marduk.

King Belshazzar is described in Daniel 5 as the *last* king of Babylon, killed when the city fell to the Persian Empire. There is the famous account in Daniel 5 of Belshazzar’s debauched feast, which utilized the utensils plundered from Jerusalem’s temple. A hand subsequently appeared in midair, writing strange words on the wall. The Prophet Daniel was brought in and correctly interpreted the words to mean that Belshazzar’s kingdom was fallen.

Yet historians have insisted this “Belshazzar” never existed. The Bible is the only known document that mentions him. Every real historian knew that King *Nabonidus* was the final king of Babylon, and that he was not killed by the Persians, but rather taken prisoner. Other historical documents clearly supported this. Here, it seemed, was an irreconcilable difference between the Bible and ancient history.

In 1854, British Consul John Taylor was excavating an ancient ziggurat, or temple, located in the area of ancient Ur, an area ruled by Babylon. There, he discovered what became known as the Nabonidus Cylinders. On these cylindrical clay documents, King Nabonidus recorded the history of the ziggurat and made a request: “[A]s for *Belshazzar*, the *eldest son*, the offspring of my heart, the fear of thy great divinity cause thou to exist in his heart, and let not sin possess him, let him be satisfied with fullness of life.”

In actual fact, Nabonidus had been spending a great deal of time in northwest Arabia, and had evidently left his son Belshazzar to rule as king over Babylon proper. This makes sense when you consider the reward that Belshazzar gave the Prophet Daniel for interpreting the “writing on the wall”—he offered him the *third* highest position of government (Daniel 5:16, 29). Why the third? Surely it was because Belshazzar himself was only the *second* in command—third was the best he could give!

And so, in only one night, Babylon fell to the emerging Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C. The way in which Babylon was taken—its leaders in a

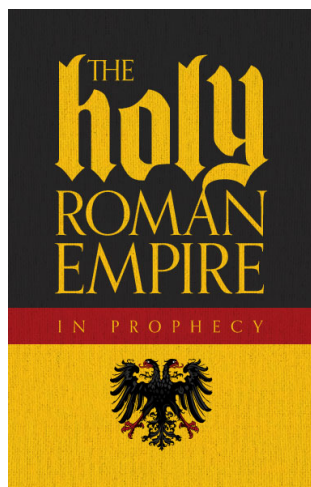
drunken stupor and its gates literally left open for the invaders—happened just as the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied nearly 200 years earlier.

After Babylon's Fall

Babylon subsequently became part of the Persian Empire, the city now administered by King Darius, who himself continued a close working relationship with the Prophet Daniel. Under the benevolent leadership of King Cyrus, captive Babylonians were allowed to live freely, continuing Babylonian society, culture and worship just as before. This is attested to, famously, by the Cyrus Cylinder. These freedoms given to the Babylonians parallel directly what Cyrus offered to the Jews, allowing them freedom to return from captivity to the land of Judah and rebuild the temple.

From this point on, the Babylonians largely fade from view. Space here does not permit a proper investigation of where their descendants went. However, certain evidence points to later migration as slaves into Italy, specifically, the northern regions of Italy.

But the Bible is not finished with the story of the Babylonians. For just as with the other civilizations that we have covered in this series, there are a number of *end-time* prophecies regarding the Babylonian people—specifically, regarding the widespread *havoc* that they will bring. You can read more about that in the book ***The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy***



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Israel's momentous decision **The settlements or the Saudis?**

While no Israeli leader has done more to promote closer ties with the Gulf States than he, Netanyahu is pursuing an "annexation first" strategy.

By Joel C. Rosenberg

Israel is rapidly approaching a momentous decision.

Should our new unity government move quickly to apply Israeli sovereignty over swaths of hotly contested territory known in the Bible as "Judea and Samaria," and to the international community as the "West Bank" of the Jordan River? Or should we defer discussions of unilateral annexation for the time being and place a higher priority on establishing full peace treaties with Gulf Arab states that are steadily warming towards normalization?

Put another way: Do we want the settlements now, or peace with the Saudis?

It is clear where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stands. While no Israeli leader has done more to promote closer ties with the Gulf States than he, Netanyahu is pursuing an "annexation first" strategy. He believes that Israel has an "historic opportunity" to establish permanent sovereignty over up to 30% of the biblical heartland with the consent and coordination of the Trump administration. It is, he says, "an opportunity that should not be missed," one that will certainly evaporate next January if US President Donald Trump loses re-election and Joe Biden becomes president.

It is not clear where Defense Minister (and alternate Prime Minister) Benny Gantz stands. He, too, is on record as supporting annexation and signed a coalition agreement allowing for a vote of the Knesset on the issue as early as July. But he has also said that he would only move forward "in coordination with the international community." Both in public and in private, he has expressed a desire to sequence events in such a way as to maximize the opportunity for peace with the Gulf States. What's more, he has

expressed deep admiration for the role Jordan's King Abdullah has played as a peacemaker, declaring on the campaign trail last October, "I'm pledging here that when I lead the State of Israel, I'll do all in my power to strengthen the peace agreement with Jordan and move relations with Jordan forward."

A front-page story in the Hebrew edition of Israel Hayom on May 27 argued that Israeli leaders do not really have to choose. Citing unnamed sources in the region, the article suggested that Arab leaders have privately signaled both Washington and Jerusalem that while they will publicly criticize any Israeli move towards annexation, they will actually be fine with it. Is that true? Not according to Jordan's King Abdullah II, who warns annexation "will lead to a massive conflict with Jordan." Could that include suspension of its peace treaty with Israel. "I don't want to make threats and create an atmosphere of loggerheads," he told a German publication, "but we are considering all options."

OVER THE past several years, I have traveled extensively throughout the Arab world, on my own as well as hosting delegations of American Evangelical leaders on bridge-building trips. Even though I am a dual US-Israeli citizen (and have two sons who have served in the IDF), I have been afforded the remarkable opportunity to build friendships with – and spend many hours in private conversations with – Jordan's King Abdullah II, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and their most senior advisers and cabinet members, as well as senior officials in Bahrain. I specifically asked my contacts about the Israel Hayom article. One Arab official after another gave me an earful about how completely off-base it was.

"Not only is this article not true or accurate, it's quite literally the opposite of what is happening," one senior Arab official in a Gulf state told me. "Moderate Arab countries are warning of the consequences of annexation."

To clarify, I asked the official to comment on the accuracy of this statement. What if the Israeli government doesn't annex all 30% of Area C, but "simply" decides to annex something that everyone knows will ultimately stay in Israel's

hands in a final peace agreement with the Palestinians, the cities of Ariel and/or Ma'ale Adumim, for example? While there would be a great deal of criticism in the Arab world and Europe at first, wouldn't it eventually blow over, as with the American Embassy move?

"No, this is not accurate," the Arab official replied emphatically. "This is delusional thinking. It will not just blow over – it will harm what Israel claims it wants, better relationships with Gulf Arabs."

Not a single one of my Arab contacts are telling me they will be fine with Israeli annexation. To the contrary, all of them are telling me this will seriously rupture relations with Israel. What's more, they are baffled by the timing.

"I can't understand why Israel is doing this now," another Arab official told me. "Arab relations with Israel are so good, better than ever. The prospect of historic breakthroughs with the Gulf states are improving every day. The last thing we need is new tensions with the Israelis. We have too much on our plates. The COVID crisis has been devastating. Our attention is totally focused on protecting the health of our people and re-opening our economies. Who benefits from creating a new crisis now?"

I was particularly struck by what one Arab official asked me.

"Why take the focus off [Palestinian leader Mahmoud] Abbas? He's the one refusing to make peace. Why let him off the hook? The Trump plan gives the Palestinians four years to make a deal with Israel. Why doesn't Israel let the clock run and show that Abbas isn't serious about peace. To pursue annexation will shift all the focus to Israel, which will be subject to global condemnation."

In my face-to-face meetings with Arab leaders throughout the region, I have been astounded by how impressed they are by Israel's economic progress, technological innovation and military strength. I have also been stunned – and encouraged – by how actively and seriously they are considering making steps towards full peace treaties with Israel.

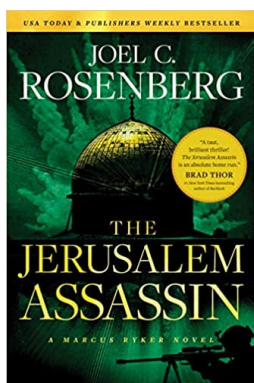
Thus, while I would love to see the day that more of the biblical land of Judea and Samaria is peacefully incorporated into the State of Israel, count me as one who thinks our first priority should be establishing historic peace treaties,

economic ties and strategic security alliances with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and even Morocco and Sudan. To squander such opportunities would be a momentous mistake.



*Joel C. Rosenberg is a dual US-Israeli citizen who lives with his family in Jerusalem. A New York Times best-selling author with some five million copies in print, his most recent political thriller, **The Jerusalem Assassin**, explores the prospects of an historic peace summit between Israel and Saudi Arabia, brokered by an American president.*

*The Jerusalem Post
June 2, 2020*



Former Secret Service agent turned CIA operative Marcus Ryker returns in the latest chilling, thought-provoking thriller from Joel C. Rosenberg. Former Secret Service agent turned CIA operative Marcus Ryker returns in the latest chilling, thought-provoking thriller from Joel C. Rosenberg.

The Abraham Accords may herald new security structures for the Middle East

Israel has the opportunity to work with Arab state partners on how to use normalization to impact the territorial configuration in a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

By Dore Gold

The Abraham Accords are a turning point in the Middle East. The UAE has become an important power not just in the Persian Gulf, but around the Horn of Africa. Israel touches on the same geographic region, creating many areas for cooperation. Both countries can use their alliance with the United States to shape responses to the Iranian threat. The Emiratis are very enthusiastic about the breakthrough, which Israel can surely appreciate as previous peace partners did not feel the same way. In turn, Israel will advocate for their peace partners in Washington, as they did with the Jordanians.

The Abraham Accords create new possible security structures for the Middle East in the future. Israel is currently in a position similar to that of Europe at the end of World War II, when the United States was planning to pull out and Russia would fill the vacuum. In response, the United States created NATO. Security structures are very important in light of changes in the region, and partners can help design a different Middle East based on stable players. Israel has a legitimate argument about its qualitative military edge, but it is not against the Emiratis. If Israel suddenly decides to go easy on QME, the ultimate effect will be on other Arab states who are not at peace with Israel and would try to exploit such a QME pullback.

In terms of the Palestinians, the key is whether they are ready to consider reasonable proposals. President Mahmoud Abbas was not ripe for a deal

toward the end of the Obama years, and the same situation holds today. Since the time of Israeli strategist Yigal Allon, it has been widely accepted that certain portions of the West Bank would be retained by Israel and certain territories would be returned. When Israel accepted the Trump peace plan, it accepted the territorial divisions in the proposal as being relevant for the future. Israel has the opportunity to work with Arab state partners on how to use normalization to impact the territorial configuration in a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

For instance, Palestinians need an arrangement to increase their gross national product; perhaps the new regional partnerships could facilitate routes for trucking and trains from Haifa to the West Bank to Jordan to the Gulf. The Palestinians would financially benefit as conduits for trade. It is important to consider how peace between Israel and Arab states can interact to create better outcomes for the region.



Ambassador Dore Gold has served as President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs since 2000. From June 2015 until October 2016 he served as Director-General of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously he served as Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Ambassador to the UN (1997-1999), and as an advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Israel Hayom

Israel Must Recognize An Independent State of Kurdistan

By Ariel Natan Pasko

It's very ironic that all the noise about the Kurdish independence referendum; the battles between Kurdish and Iraqi forces; Turkish, Syrian, and Iranian opposition to Kurdish independence; discussion in Israel whether the State of Israel should recognize Kurdish independence; is taking place within a few weeks before and just after the 16th Yahrzeit – anniversary of the murder – of former Israeli Tourism Minister and Moledet Party founder Rechavam Ze'evi by PFLP terrorists in 2001.

It's no secret that close relations existed between Israel and the Kurds throughout most of the sixties and into the seventies, until the collapse of the Kurdish revolt in Iraq, in 1975. Ze'evi – as a young military officer – had been to Kurdistan in the 1960s and Iraqi Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani had been to Israel. Reflective of this, the 1996 Moledet Party Platform, Chapter 9: Foreign Policy, paragraph 17, stated “Israel will act against the oppression of peoples like the Kurds...”

Ba'athist “forced Arabization” of minorities – Kurds, Yezidis, Assyrian Christians, Armenians, and others, in Kurdistan – northern Iraq – began in the 1960s, and lasted until the early 2000s. The Kurds, were brutally suppressed by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, starting in the late 1970s. During the 1987-88 Al-Anfal Campaign, an estimated 180,000 Kurds were killed, hundreds of thousands more, were expelled from their traditional homeland in northern Iraq. During the campaign, over 3,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed and replaced with Arab settlers, and chemical weapons were used against them, as in the infamous 1988 Halabja Massacre, that killed as many as 5,000 and injured up to 10,000 people.

In fact, the town of Kirkuk, in the news a lot recently, was originally a Kurdish majority,

multi-ethnic city. The Ba'athist Arabization program concentrated on moving Arabs to the vicinity of oil fields in Kurdistan, particularly the ones around Kirkuk. According to Human Rights Watch, from 1991 – after the Gulf War – until 2003, the Ba'athist Iraqi government, systematically expelled over 500,000 Kurds from the Kirkuk region.

The Kurdish people are the largest, stateless, ethnicity in the world, estimated between 30-45 million worldwide, with the majority residing in historic Kurdistan. The area the Kurds consider Kurdistan includes, parts of southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northern Syria (Western Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), and northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan). The Turks, Syrians, and Iranians, have all oppressed their Kurdish populations also.

The Kurds have always looked toward Israel as a role model. The Jews are the only minority in the middle east – actually the remnant of the indigenous population of the land of Israel as the Kurds are in Kurdistan – that has liberated itself politically from the 7th century Arab imperialist invasion, occupation and oppression of the region.

With this in mind, Israel should actively and openly revive the former policy of support for the Kurdish people. Israel must recognize the State of Kurdistan, as soon as they declare independence, establish diplomatic relations, exchange embassies, work in international forums and agencies to support their independence, and at the UN, to have them admitted as a member state.

In a recent article, Dr. Mordechai Kedar, of Bar-Ilan University in Israel, raises an important point. Kedar referring to, “Israeli pundits, army officers and politicians...view the current regional situation as a golden opportunity that Israel must take advantage of by accepting the Arab peace proposals, establishing a Palestinian state and embarking on a new era of cooperation with the ‘moderate Sunni axis’ in order to bring peace and security to Israel and the entire area.” He then asks, “Why? Because all these countries fear Iran as much as, and possibly more, than Israel does.” Referring to recent, seemingly warmer relations between Israel and the Sunni Arab states in the

region who feel threatened by Iran, He then asks, “But let us suppose that the Iranian threat disappears because Israel succeeds in an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities...Will the Arab and Western worlds be grateful to Israel and act to protect Israel’s interests?”

Kedar then answers, “What happened to the Kurds will happen to Israel. The Kurds fought ISIS, sacrificed their soldiers and people, and were thrown to the wolves once they were not needed. That is exactly what the world’s nations will do to Israel once it extricates them from the Iranian problem. Why not? The immediate interests of each and every country and not the moral rights of the Kurds and the Israelis are what makes the world go round.”

In my recent article, “North Korea: The Israeli Connection” I made a similar point, “As the saying goes, ‘countries don’t have friends, just interests.’ There are close parallels between the US, South Korea and Japan, vis-a-vis North Korea, and the US and Israel, vis-a-vis Iran. So Jews and Israel should be watching closely how the Trump administration ‘protects’ its allies. One can get a picture of just how well America would cover Israel under its ‘security umbrella,’ when pushing Israel to take a ‘chance for peace’ as has been suggested, in any future Middle East peace deal, by watching the Korean crisis unfold. And, it will give a clue as to how much Israel can count on the US in dealing with Iran’s nuclear program.” One could now add to that, watch how the Trump administration has abandoned the Kurds.

Israel should pro-actively support the legitimate aspirations of the oppressed minorities – the indigenous peoples – of the Middle East and North Africa, like the Kurds and Berbers, and build alliances with them. It should be a corner stone of Israeli Foreign Policy.

In 2014, PM Netanyahu said that, “It is upon us to support the Kurds’ aspiration for independence,” and called them a “fighting people that have proven political commitment and political moderation, and they’re also worthy of their own political independence.”

In August of this year, Netanyahu told a visiting delegation of 33 Republican Congressmen from the US, that he was in favor of an independent state for the Kurds, “a brave, pro-Western people who share our values.”

And again, speaking at the state memorial ceremony for Ze'evi, just recently, Netanyahu said, "The Kurds demonstrate national maturity and international maturity... We have very great sympathy for their desires and the world needs to concern itself with their safety and with their future."

Till now, Israel has been the only country to openly support Kurdish independence, with Netanyahu last month backing "the legitimate efforts of the Kurdish people to attain a state of its own." But, he did not specify how and where such a state should come into being.

Well, now that they've voted for independence, you have to put your words into action! The State of Israel must recognize the State of Kurdistan as soon as they declare independence.

Popular former Likud MK Gideon Sa'ar – and a potential challenger to Netanyahu – has also urged Israel support Kurdish independence, saying in June that, "they have proven themselves over decades to be a reliable strategic partner for us." And again, on the day of the referendum in late September, "I hope that if there is a majority for independence, Israel will be the first country to recognize Iraqi Kurdistan."

Finally, Israeli Middle East expert Dr. Eddy Cohen – as reported in Arutz Sheva recently – said that if the Kurds are dislodged from their positions by Iran it could endanger Israel and therefore Israel has a strategic interest in helping the Kurds.

Israel has always had a strategic interest in the success of the Kurds. That's why Israel has supported them since the 1960s, and why I've been calling for Israel to support Kurdish independence since the early 2000s.

I think the Americans blew it in 2003, they should have carved Iraq into three areas – or states on the way – approximately, a Kurdish north, Sunni center, and Shiite south. They should have offered the Kurds independence almost immediately, they then would have had a strong regional ally and bulwark against Iran much earlier. A de-Ba'athification program for the Sunni center should have been implemented, similar to de-Nazification in Germany after WWII. The Shiite south, by having their own area, might not have become as radical as they

did. Without the power struggle with the Sunnis; in the "unified" Iraq, that the Americans attempted to maintain; the Shiites might not have drawn closer to Iran, being that they were Arabs and not Persians. The two other areas both under American military occupation, could have been offered a performance based track toward eventual independence, and seeing what the Americans did with the Kurds, would have proven the Americans trustworthy.

The Americans seem to be missing the boat of opportunity again, with regards to the Kurds. But Israel shouldn't, it's about time that Israel recognize an independent State of Kurdistan!

Ariel Natan Pasko, an independent analyst and consultant, has a Master's Degree specializing in International Relations, Political Economy & Policy Analysis. His articles appear regularly on numerous news/views and think-tank websites and in newspapers. His latest articles can also be read on his archive: The Think Tank by Ariel Natan Pasko.

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Kurdistan

Netanyahu and Kurz A Two-Faced Partnership

Austria and Israel have never seemed so closely allied, but danger lurks.

By **Josué Michels**



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz shake hands during a joint press conference at the prime minister's office in Jerusalem on June 11, 2018.
AMMAR AWAD/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has dramatically changed his country's foreign policy toward Israel. Previously, Austria and Israel maintained a cold relationship. But with Kurz, that relationship has been heading in a new direction. Will the warm relations last?

To understand how significant this development is, you must look at Austria's history, one marred by anti-Semitism.

The European continent has been plagued by various waves of pogroms against Jews. For centuries, Austria was at the heart of the Habsburg empire and ruled much of Europe while allied with the Catholic Church. During the Spanish Inquisition, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V greatly supported its cause and heavily persecuted the Jews. This hatred toward the Jews continued into the New Age, flourishing in the 19th and 20th centuries.

"During the last few decades of the Habsburg empire, anti-Semitism became a pronounced and firmly established aspect of Austrian life," writes Menachem Z. Rosensaft in *Jews and Anti-Semites*

in Austria at the End of the Nineteenth Century. At this time, Vienna was a model of "cultural sophistication," Rosensaft notes. As described in *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler morphed from a "soft-hearted cosmopolitan" to "an out-and-out anti-Semite" while in Vienna. *Watch Jerusalem* editor in chief Gerald Flurry explains in *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* that the history of the Holy Roman Empire inspired Hitler. During World War II, millions of Austrians followed Hitler's example. Even more recently, Austrian foreign policy has been motivated by a certain disdain for Israel. In "Is a Netanyahu-Kurz Bromance Responsible for Austria's New Direction on Israel?" the *Times of Israel* wrote on June 29:

In May 2010, after Israeli troops killed nine Turkish activists in a skirmish aboard a Gaza-bound ship, Austrian authorities immediately singled out Israel as the guilty party.

The Vienna City Council in a near-unanimous motion declared that it "strongly condemns the brutal action against the peaceful aid fleet—especially in international waters." It ignored evidence that the activists assaulted the Israeli troops during their seizure of the boat, which was legally mandated under Israeli rules.

"Israel must end its counterproductive blockade on the Gaza Strip. Such bloodshed is shocking and I expect rapid and complete clarification," said Michael Spindelegger, who was then Austria's foreign minister and a former leader of the same People's Party that Kurz now heads. The scene is very different today. Kurz is leading all of Austria, against popular opinion, into a new partnership. Lukas Mandl, an Austrian lawmaker in the European Parliament, commented that Kurz is "not afraid to make unpopular moves, for which he gets a ton of criticism, if he believes that's the right thing to do. I think he's acting out of conviction on Israel, too."

Karl Pfeifer, a well-known Austrian-Jewish journalist and Holocaust survivor, said Kurz is making "a huge shift" for any Western European country. "But it's especially remarkable in Austria" given its tradition of near-neutrality and its history in World War II.

Austria's relationship with Israel has had its ups and downs over the years, but rarely if ever has it been on such a high as it is under Sebastian Kurz and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a 2017 speech for the American Jewish Committee, Kurz called Austria's incorporation into Nazi Germany the darkest period in the country's history. He also noted that it "guides my political work today." He gives anti-Semitism "a zero-tolerance approach" and promised that under his leadership Austria will "be a strong partner of Israel."

Kurz has backed these words with action. *Times of Israel* wrote:

The chancellor, who is head of the conservative People's Party, has been to the Jewish state six times since 2014 and sharply changed course on the countries' formerly cold relations. ...

One of the fellow world leaders Kurz feels closest to is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. That could help explain why Kurz has reversed his country's stance toward Israel during his tenure from very critical to very supportive. Austria is the only Western European nation whose government is actively shielding the Jewish state from sanctions by the European Union over Netanyahu's plan to annex parts of the West Bank. New sanctions would require complete consensus among its 27 members.

In March, Kurz congratulated Netanyahu on a "clear election victory." While many hoped for Netanyahu to lose the election, Kurz stood with him.

Kurz also praised Netanyahu for his advice during the coronavirus crisis. "Also, I can say in this case: Thank God for Bibi Netanyahu," he said. "He contacted me some time ago and told me, 'Hey, you're underestimating this over there in Europe. Wake up and do something.' That was a wake-up call that shook me up."

During Kurz's visit to Jerusalem last year, Netanyahu welcomed Kurz as a "tremendous friend of the State of Israel, a champion of fighting anti-Semitism, a great leader for Austria."

While there, Kurz addressed one of Israel's greatest concerns: Iran. "I am very concerned about Iran's statement to want to enrich more uranium," he told Austrian reporters after his meeting with Netanyahu. He also said that Austria would act with Europe, "united and determinedly," against Iranian nuclear ambitions. In response to Kurz's visit, Netanyahu said:

You have backed up your words with actions. You've shown zero tolerance toward anti-Semitism; you established a place of remembrance in Vienna listing the names of all 60,000 Austrian Jews who perished in the Holocaust; you're funding youth visits to Mauthausen and education and memorial projects. Yesterday you announced in Yad Vashem a €4 million fund for a heritage center in Yad Vashem. We are deeply grateful for these and other important steps and for your leadership.

...

You also said that during Austria's presidency, you will raise these concerns, as well as anti-Semitism. I must say, this is a breath of fresh air and this is leadership. ...

Finally, Sebastian, I want to tell you how moved I was and how many Israelis have been moved by the fact that you have actually moved things forward, you've moved our relationship, which between Austria and Israel was always good, but you are taking it to greater heights. I know this is personally important for you and I want you to know that it's personally important for me. But what we understand too is that this intensifies the bond between Israel and Austria, which I think is important for our common future. So thank you once again and welcome friend, welcome to Jerusalem.

But there are also indications that Kurz is not the defender of Israel that he presents himself to be.

Warning Signs

"One hitch in Kurz's narrative came through his alliance with the far-right Freedom Party, which helped Kurz form a parliament majority in 2017," *Times of Israel* wrote. "Jewish groups like the Jewish Community in Vienna had urged Kurz not to partner with the Freedom Party, which was founded by former Nazis and has a long record of anti-Semitism in its ranks. It was also a touchy issue in the relations with Israel, which for the most part has declined to have any dealings with the Freedom Party."

And there are other warning signs that speak against Kurz's promise to Israel that most people ignore.

During its presidency of the European Council, Austria set up a mini-museum in the foyer of the European Council building in Brussels with a large depiction of the crown of Charlemagne at

the entrance. (You can read more about this in “Why Is Austria Promoting the Crown of Charlemagne?”)

Charlemagne forged a close alliance with the Catholic Church to form a cultural empire. And he did so by shedding much blood. Many European leaders—including Otto the Great, Charles V and Adolf Hitler—have been inspired by his example.

The crown of the Holy Roman Empire has a bloody history. The many emperors who took possession of it were among the greatest anti-Semites to ever live. They were responsible for furthering the persecution of Jews, even leading the Crusades into Jerusalem.

In 1935, Hitler asserted that Charlemagne’s violent methods were necessary to unite Germany. In 1938, Hitler moved Charlemagne’s crown to Germany. Professor and renowned German medieval researcher Johannes Fried pointed out in an interview with *Die Welt* that Hitler’s statements were “preparing for his own acts of violence, to praise Charles was a strategy of legitimacy.”

Kurz is upholding that history in Brussels even while portraying himself as Israel’s friend. Kurz is also closely allying himself with the Roman Catholic Church. (You can read more about this trend in Mr. Flurry’s article “The Holy Roman Empire Goes Public—Big Time!”) The Catholic Church has had a large part in spreading anti-Semitic propaganda throughout its history. This institution has inspired numerous killing sprees against the Jews.

One simply cannot love the history of the Holy Roman Empire and be a friend of Israel.

The case might be made that loving the Holy Roman Empire doesn’t mean you will repeat its atrocities. But people ignored the warning signs in Hitler’s time, and he was *openly* anti-Semitic. The strongest warning that Kurz’s approach toward Israel is deceitful comes not from history alone but from Bible prophecy. The Bible is specific in its warning, stating that Israel’s enemies will portray themselves as its friends just before betraying it.

Catholic Europe has led many crusades attempting to control the Holy Land. This ambition has never ended.

The Bible describes exactly what we are seeing today and what is ahead of us.

In this end time, Europe is prophesied to be invited into Jerusalem as a peacekeeping force after confronting one of Israel’s enemies. “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south *PUSH* at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon” (Daniel 11:40-41).

Notice that the prophecy states “at the time of the end.” Daniel is a prophetic book *exclusively* for the end time (Daniel 12:9).

Europe is prophesied to once more resurrect the Holy Roman Empire, referred to in Bible prophecy as the king of the north. The Bible reveals Europe will then confront radical Islam led by Iran, represented as the king of the south (the biblical identity of these nations is explained in detail in *The King of the South*).

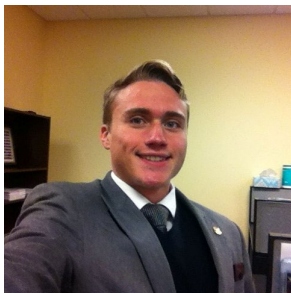
Israel will likely welcome these actions; at which point, this European empire will enter into “the glorious land,” or Jerusalem. The Hebrew word for “enter” points to a peaceful entry, not a military invasion. Israel is prophesied to view the emerging European superpower as its ally (Ezekiel 16), despite the fact that Germany and Austria have committed some of the worst crimes against Jews in history. It “seems the Israelis can trust their worst historical enemy, but they can’t trust God to protect them! And God is their *only* source of help,” Mr. Flurry writes in *Hosea—Reaping the Whirlwind*.

In many ways, Kurz’s policy toward Israel is a forerunner of how the rising German-led Europe will treat the nation in the future. Former German Defense Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg is a strong proponent of a more Israel-friendly policy and a close friend of Sebastian Kurz. The *Watch Jerusalem* has predicted for many years that Guttenberg will likely lead Europe into its prophetic destiny, which includes a two-faced relationship with Israel. Mr. Flurry has warned about this trend for years, stating:

Still, Israel continues to be “lovers” with the Germans. Soon it will go to the Germans in far greater desperation. This will lead to its destruction. It is not the Arabs who are going to destroy it. The friendship between Germany and the biblical nations of Israel is going to lead to one of the biggest double-crosses in human history!

Watch Jerusalem is warning of this coming double-cross. We can expect Europe to display an increasingly favorable view of Israel. But the Bible warns a betrayal is coming. Request a free copy of *Hosea—Reaping the Whirlwind*, by Gerald Flurry, to understand these prophecies in detail.

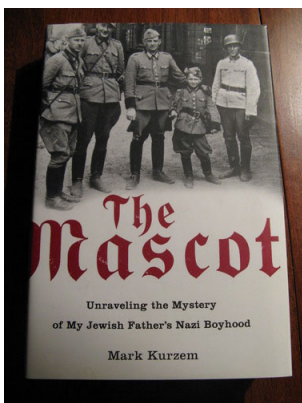
Watch Jerusalem July 6



Josué Michels

The Mascot

Part thriller, part psychological drama, part puzzle with a strange twist, "The Mascot" is one of the most astonishing stories to emerge from the second World War. A stunning, emotionally cataclysmic and poignant story as a son (author Kurzem) bit by bit uncovers his father's truly extraordinary story. Was his father a traitor? Or was he just a very lost little boy? Told with exquisite tenderness and suspense by a son about a father he never knew, it is a grim fairy tale that illuminates the timeless problems of complicity, identity, and memory. A brutally honest look at what we do to survive and what that survival can do to us.



The Fauda Effect

Israeli Active Defense on the Screen

By Asaf Romirowsky



Lior Raz and Doron Ben David in Fauda, screenshot from YouTube video

Strategically, Israel’s fundamental military premise is defensive but its tactics are offensive—a result of its geography and absence of territorial depth. Israeli decision-making has always been driven by the active defense ethos, and this is reflected in Israeli filmmaking and TV-making.

The Israeli concept of “active defense” has long been used by the film industry as a tool with which to showcase the Israeli perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Col. David “Mickey” Marcus, as portrayed in the film *Cast a Giant Shadow* by Kirk Douglas, is given the line, “The olive branch hasn’t worked around here since Noah ran the ark into a mountain.” The iconic character Ari Ben Canaan in the film *Exodus*, portrayed by Paul Newman, expressed the same idea: “Each person on board this ship is a soldier. The only weapon we have to fight with is our willingness to die.” Generations of American Jews were raised on these images and messages. They personalized the conflict and stoked the collective emotional attachment of American Jews to Israel in the

early years of the State. This was particularly true after WWII, when Jewish identity and Israel went hand in hand.

The relationship has changed a great deal in the decades since the war. Biblical Israel serves as a touchstone from which to be either attached or removed. Modern Israel is either a chimera to be slain or a mythical comrade to be supported. The art of film has attempted to capture these visions, but they are inconsistent. Some break with the past in order to control the future and others are shaped and constrained by the past.

Recent attempts, such as Nancy Spielberg's documentary "Above and Beyond: The Creation of the Israeli Air Force," focused on another aspect of Jewish identity: the 1947-48 efforts by Jewish mobsters led by Meyer Lansky to raise money to help the Hagana obtain weapons in the face of an international arms embargo. Spielberg defines the movie, correctly, as "not just a Jewish story but an American one."

While Israelis have embraced American pop culture in all its aspects, Israeli movies have not really penetrated the American psyche. This is mainly because their appeal to American audiences is so often diminished by their attention to inaccessible aspects of Israeli culture. For example, the 1986 *Two Fingers from Sidon* dealt with Israel during the first Lebanon War in 1982. It captured what Israelis felt while serving on Israel's borders, but its message didn't penetrate American Jewish sensibilities. Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman's 2008 animated documentary *Waltz with Bashir* about Israel's invasion of Lebanon and his own subsequent struggle with PTSD was more successful. *Waltz with Bashir* was more psychological than historical, and its historical elisions were especially prominent with regard to Sabra and Shatila—an event that has been coopted by Arab-Palestinian propaganda as a tool with which to blame and shame Israel.

The Arab-Israeli conflict does continue to interest and attract fans worldwide, as can be seen in the great success of the Netflix hit series *Fauda* (Arabic for "chaos"). *Fauda* is Israeli active defense at its best. It showcases the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, provides a voice to both Jewish and Palestinian characters, and shows the multiculturalism of the Middle

East and Israel that is so often overlooked. In contrast to Leon Uris's *Exodus*, about which David Ben-Gurion said that "as a piece of propaganda, it's the greatest thing ever written about Israel," *Fauda* is not hasbara but a slice of cold reality.

In the age of infotainment, the danger is when entertainment completely rewrites both reality and history. Today's American Jewry is fragmented and conflicted in its relationship to Israel. Film and television can be useful tools in changing the trajectory of American Jewish identity and easing its confusion and discomfort about Israel.



Asaf Romirowsky is executive director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME), a senior non-resident fellow at the BESA Center, and a Fellow at the Middle East Forum.

BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 1,535, April 19, 2020



**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

The Night Archer

Michael Oren published a book of short stories. He's more worried about the future of literature than democracy.

By Ben Sales



Michael Oren speaks at Bar-Ilan University in Israel in 2014. (Yoni Reif)

You may know Michael Oren as a cable news commentator on Israel and the Middle East.

You may know him as the Israeli ambassador to the United States during Barack Obama's first term, when he had the fraught task of managing a rocky American-Israeli relationship, or later as a member of Israel's Knesset. Perhaps you're acquainted with Oren as the author of three bestselling history books.

What you may not have known is that he also writes fiction. At least I didn't. I've interviewed Oren several times and read his nonfiction, and I had no idea that the American-born Israeli author and politician was a novelist and writer of short stories until this year.

Oren, 65, has just come out with his third work of fiction, a collection of short stories called "The Night Archer." It's a change from his better-known works, which were authoritative and deep Middle East histories or, in one case, a controversial diplomatic memoir. "The Night Archer" spans historical eras and settings, sometimes crossing into fantasy. Many of the stories have nothing explicitly to do with Judaism or Israel.

He's been out of government service for more than a year following a decade spent mostly as a

public official. Oren lives not in Jerusalem, Washington, D.C., or New York City, but in Jaffa, the ancient sister city to Tel Aviv. He still writes op-eds and comments on the news, but in a recent phone interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, he sounded relatively relaxed amid the dismal COVID-19 news in Israel.

After this book, his next project is another work of fiction, a novel set in a Jewish suburb in the early 1970s, when he grew up.

With success as a historian, ambassador and politician, is Oren now hoping to make his name as a novelist?

"People want to pigeonhole somebody in a career path, say this guy's a historian or this man's a diplomat," he said. "At the risk of wanting too much, I'd like to be known for myself. This is who I am, without characterizing it."

Oren did say that publishing fiction feels liberating in an era when, as the cliché goes, the truth is often stranger. He wrote many of these stories in the mornings during his term in Knesset, from 2015 to 2019, before heading to work as a member of a centrist party that no longer exists. Knesset members are not allowed to publish books while in office, so he had to hold onto the stories until he left public service.

If anything, Oren said nonfiction has become difficult to write in an era when facts are continually called into question. His gripe with the literary world, he said, is that the published word has become too policed. Like other thinkers and writers who advocate a broad exchange of ideas and criticize a supposed narrowing of the scope of acceptable discourse, Oren chafes at the notion that authors can only write novels based on their personal experiences and identities.

"The lines have been blurred," he said. "I feel it more as a nonfiction writer, someone who's trying to write, for example, op-eds. That makes it very difficult."

He added, "Writing is about freedom, is about imagination. Today there is tremendous pressure to limit that freedom, to say you can only write about exactly who you are and nobody else, lest you be accused of, among other things, cultural appropriation."

One thing he's less stressed about, he said, is the current political situation — despite a renewed lockdown in Israel that has raised concerns over limits to the freedom of assembly and the turbulence surrounding the upcoming American presidential election.

“I think democracy is being challenged in many different ways; I don't think it's on the verge of collapse,” he said. “I think democratic institutions are stronger than that.”

He added, “I have a historical perspective that leads me to be calmer about these things. Where I am not calm is the threat from public opinion as it is driven by social media. In Israel and the United States, it's not the government clamping down on artists, it's social media, and that threat is very real.”

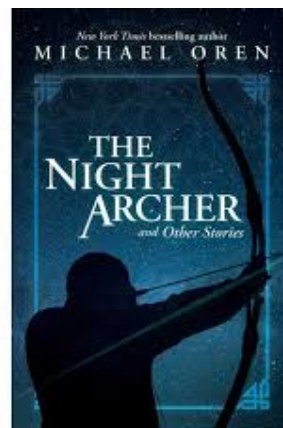
“The Night Archer” offers a rebuttal to the claim that authors can write only about who they are. The stories' protagonists range from an aide to a Spanish conquistador to a Protestant preacher's wife to a pair of lesbian schoolteachers vacationing on a beach. (In a wink at readers, the teachers reminisce about a promising but mischievous former student named “Horenstein,” two letters away from Oren's original last name, Bornstein.)

There are a handful of Jewish and Israeli stories in the mix, as well as others that speak to Oren's background: In one, an aging and underappreciated Israeli archaeologist contemplates a dilemma. Another is told from the perspective of a bored teenager at an American Passover Seder, and another centers on a social-climbing couple in D.C. There's one featuring an Israeli politician.

One story narrates the life of a Holocaust survivor with unkempt hair who became an iconic writer about the Shoah in America after a period living in France. Oren said that despite the similarities in biography and appearance, it is not about Elie Wiesel specifically, but rather “a composite of several Holocaust survivors I've known.”

Although they cover a broad spectrum of historical eras and settings, the stories share a motif of characters attempting to escape an oppressive situation — domestic unhappiness, a saintly public persona or the hostile estate of a foreign ruler.

Oren told JTA that he did not view his fiction writing as an escape from his public duties. He was glad to serve in those positions and to be able to write on his own time. But now, after years of speaking for a prime minister or a party, he has written a book that, at its core, is about trying to escape the bonds that limit us.



“All human beings have secrets, and all people feel constrained in certain ways,” he said. “The major theme of the whole book is freedom and it's about people seeking freedom, seeking liberation and learning that freedom itself is an objective to which you can strive, but it's always going to be challenged.”

JTA, September 5, 2020

Michael Bornstein Oren is an American-born Israeli historian, author, politician, former ambassador to the United States, and former member of the Knesset for the Kulanu party and a former Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office. [Wikipedia](#)



Ben Sales covers anti-Semitism as well as American Jewish affairs for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Previously, he was JTA's Israel correspondent, based in Tel Aviv. He has reported from 10 countries. He is a former editor of New Voices magazine, and a native of Chicagoland.

The World as They Found It

How the midcentury modernism of J.D. Salinger and George Segal reflected an American Jewish generation.

By Frances Brent



Photo illustration: Kurt Hoffman

Haimishkeit—longing for the world as we found it. Looking at the images of contagion teams dressed in what seem to be pastel-colored spacesuits or remembering New York’s beautiful and dystopic 7 o’clock clapping, horns, and pot-banging, I wonder if there could ever have been a time when I’d be more in mourning for the vanished world of my childhood.

I was born in Chicago in 1950, exactly mid-20th century. Modernism, intended to deflect the mistakes and calamities of the past, was overlaid onto the zigzagging split-levels starkly plunked into the suburb where my family lived. Midcentury modernism brought Formica and glitter laminate into our kitchens, my friends drank out of colored aluminum tumblers, and our parents stamped out their cigarettes on the spotted surfaces of copper enamel ashtrays. When I was a child, I didn’t like the whacky style of the era which I understood subliminally as a deflection against the invisible, broken world that drifted around us but seldom touched down. After all, it was only seven years before I was born

when my grandfather received a personal message from the International Red Cross, concerning two cousins, their spouses, an aged aunt, an elderly uncle, and the uncle’s “large family, previously from Kezmarok, Slovakia” but now in “the General Government, previously Poland.” And it was two years after that when my father, onboard a naval ship in Okinawa heard about a superbomb and the surrender but, as he said, “no one believed it.”

When my kids were young, I didn’t feel nostalgia for midcentury or for the cat-eye sunglasses and vintage chiffon party dresses which were beginning to find their way into high-end resale stores. In fact, I associated them with unexplored trauma and intolerance which my generation had confronted in the 1960s and early ’70s when we were trying to find another way forward. But we become specialists in what, by chance, we’ve lived with. Over the past decade I’ve found myself writing often about those things that were hidden in plain sight during my childhood.

Artistically, Jewish designers, sculptors, painters, composers, and writers were often in the forefront, perhaps because they were carriers of culture from the vanished world or voices for those who perished in the European tragedy. On the one hand, Jewish émigrés were a direct link to a heritage that drew strength from skepticism and experimentation and these were now requirements for honest reinvention. On the other hand, American Jews, whose parents or grandparents had been immigrants, often straddled two worlds and the uneasy tension made them natural conduits for dynamic energy so badly needed after the war.

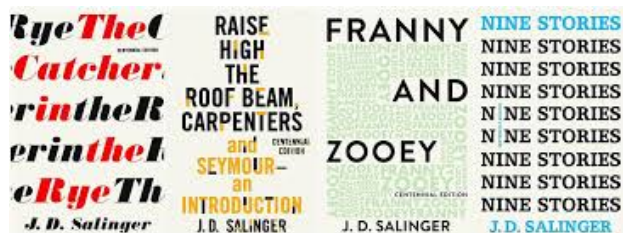
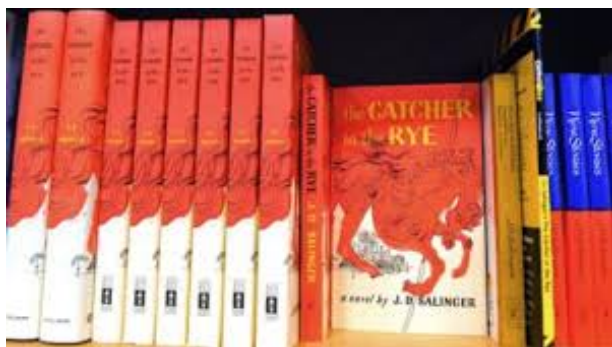
In December, before stay-at-home orders or the NY PAUSE were conceivable, I found myself strolling through two art exhibitions that bracketed the modernism of my childhood. New York Public Library had put together a J.D. Salinger exhibit, a small collection on loan from the Salinger Literary Trust, marking what would have been the author’s 100th birthday. And the Jewish Museum in New York was presenting the sculptor George Segal’s *Personas: George Segal’s Abraham and Isaac*, an adaptation of the biblical story to commemorate the tragic shootings at Kent State.

Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, his first book, was published when I was a 1-year-old and the Kent State shooting happened when I was halfway through college. From the vantage point of midcentury, Salinger's stories and novellas, haunted by the war, told us how we had gotten where we were and who we were before we got there. Segal's bandage-wrapped figures—metaphors for the dead who were ceremonially preserved or the injured whose wounds had been dressed and protected—provided closure to the howling pain.

The Salinger show, curated by the library's director of special collections along with the author's son and widow, delicately navigated some troubling biographical issues (his habit, for instance, of excising people from his life, such as the many members of his father's extended family, his first wife whom he married in Germany, his daughter Margaret, as well as the writer Joyce Maynard with whom he initiated a relationship when she was a freshman at Yale and he was 53). Nonetheless, the memorabilia offered some insight into the man who had held a mirror up to his generation, for better or for worse.

Tablet, August 31, 2020

Frances Brent was the co-translator of *Beyond the Limit: Poems by Irina Ratushinskaya*. Her book of poetry, *The Beautiful Lesson of the I*, was the winner of the *May Swenson Award*. She lives in New Haven, Connecticut.



Rudolf Steiner Mysticism or science

By Petar Podolski

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) is a founder of Antroposophia after separated from Theosophical Society and a founder of Goetheanum Free University of Spiritual Science in Dornah, near Basel. Antroposophia or wisdom of man do not impose boundaries. She awakes and develops man metaphysical ability with which he complements knowledge gain by sensory observation.

Steiner studied mathematics, physics, chemistry and natural history at a Technical University of Vienna. He also attended lectures of philosophers Robert Zimmermann and Franz Bretano at University in Vienna. In 1891 he got his PhD at the University of Rostock. His thesis title was "The basic question of epistemology, especially of relation to Fichte's philosophy of science". Further reading in quote is from foreword from Yugoslavian edition from 1987 of Steiner's lecturers "Philosophy, Cosmology and Religion" "Modern civilization with its boundaries push people activities in sphere of specialization, with that man loses feelings of non dividing unique nature of himself. Start point of that unification is in the core of his consciousness and his I. This core is the highest principle of his being and element which gives him inner unity. With this knowledge not only that man is one unity but that this man unity is reflection of Universe unity." Hidden metaphysical nature modern man do not know, no it he observe it, nor it he gives her a name. Because of that Steiner description of phenomenon of human nature is important for which they are beyond our grasp. Steiner includes medicine, pedagogy, agriculture in his observation of the man and world."

In this trilogy of Philosophy, Cosmology and Religion unity is establishes when

1. Wisdom is gain throughout clairvoyants and clear knowledge of ether body.
2. Man feels that he is part of the Cosmos where harmony reviles in his self by understanding man astral being.

3. Is in contact with divine world from which he is coming in which he goes back with clear sense of human I.

This trilogy might look as pure abstraction if we see human nature only in the boundaries of physical body. So if we want to try to understand this we should see spirit as reality. Enlarging of three abilities, thinking, feeling and will, soul goes to three higher consciousness: imaginative, inspiring and intuitive. Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition enlarge human consciousness where today man features. They can be gained when we have stronger consciousness, when we from physical body go in the world of spirit.

As we see through history of philosophy there are examples of this thought which was not still shaped. Especially we can find it in Early Renaissance Thought where there was struggle of authorities from traditional church dogma to revival of ancient words. There are re-presenters like Pico Della Mirandola or Paracelsus. We can surely see that also in science where Nicola Kuzanski sees man as microcosms and picture of universe.

Recently, I saw film at the Free zone documentary film festival: "The Pearl Button" by Patricio Guzman, Chilean documentarian who lives in France. In his movie he describes Chilean Indians who lived in Patagonia. There were five tribes and they were all connected with Pacific Ocean either it was their way of transport by canoe or it was they gathered or source of food. What is interesting that Rudolf Steiner often mentions ancient humans and their direct contact with universe and divine spirit. I could not resist of impression that this 10,000 old Indians tribe in Chile, who does not know the God but see their dead connected to the Cosmos and the stars, have strong sense of Universe and unity of man and Cosmos.

Then on the other side on north of Chile we have large observatory where astrophysics and astronomers are looking with hundred of devices the Cosmos and yes man was always attracted to Universe, looking to that missing link.

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Ana Stjelja

Tali Cohen Shabtai: *The Femme Fatale* of the contemporary Hebrew poetry

Tali Cohen Shabtai is a young and talented poet born in Jerusalem. Despite of having her home in one of the most ancient cities in the world she is a traveler. Very inquisitive one and always ready for the new adventures. She has been living in Norway and the United States for a couple of years, so her cosmopolitan vision and spirit is very obvious in her writings.

And all that experience conjoined with her dreams and hopes are merged into her poetic work that could be described as "genuine poetry of high aesthetic reach". Her poetic style is a very modern and goes straight to the point. It is completely devoid of any poetic and stylistic embellishments. She tells a story of her own. She is self-conscious young woman who is aware of her advantages and disadvantages, her virtues and flaws. Her poetry is raw, but vibrant artistic content that directly communicates with readers without any equivocation. Tali's poems express spiritual and physical exile. She is especially interested in exploring her exile and freedom paradox. In her poems we can also find the traces of feminist thinking and ideas for her poems are challenging the femininity and the position of the women in the modern society.



Tali Cohen Shabtai

In one of her poems she says:

*I write
 in the female first person plural
 so as not to sound
 as one who sins with pretension
 as an individual woman,
 however
 I do not have many female friends for this journey
 and those who have already passed
 through a station or two
 according to
 the
 fixed
 rules
 of society*

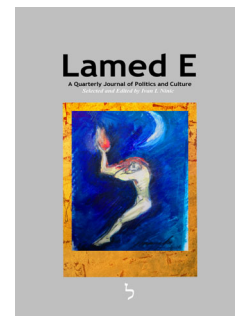
The glimpse of her feminist poetics can be seen in these verses as well:

*Femme Fatale
 I enjoy being this kind Of Femme Fatale
 To “masturbate” over a poem
 And not over a man
 On my way I do not leave any traces Of my
 virginal womb
 Behind
 They wonder If I behave
 The way I live
 My poetry
 Much more Maiko
 I show them things that
 You'd only show to Eunuchs
 They want
 To learn Hebrew
 And taste
 My poetry First*

At times she is a rebellious poet and fearless young woman who is ready to raise up her voice against any oppression. The poetry is her spiritual weapon, and the quill is her sword. She is the modern Amazon, a poetic warrior ready to break any boundaries. Very brave and enthusiastic one. So far Tali has published three poetry books: *Purple Diluted in a Black's Thick*, (bilingual 2007), *Protest* (bilingual 2012) and *Nine Years Away From*. By 2020, her fourth book of poetry will be published both in Israel and Norway. Her literary works have been translated into many languages which is placing her among the most promising young poetesses.

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Lamed E

*Selected and Edited by
 Ivan L Ninic*

**Shlomo Hamelech 6/21
 4226803 Netanya, Israel
 Phone: +972 9 882 6114
 e-mail: ninic@bezeqint.net**

<https://listzaradoznale.wixsite.com/lamed>

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