

# What Is It About Israel?

*Discover why Israel attracts so much fascination, frustration, and fury*

Seven decades after its miraculous rebirth, Israel is a global high-tech leader playing a vital role in the world economy. An innovation powerhouse, it makes life better for millions with stunning advances like incision-free surgery. And when natural disaster strikes, this small nation is one of the first to rush in with life-saving relief and expertise. It's an island of stability and democratic freedom in a region rife with conflict.

And yet the Jewish state remains fixed in the cross-hairs of global controversy.

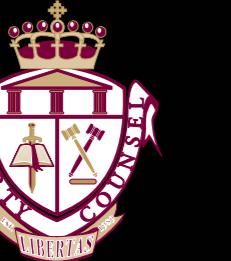
Why? What is it about Israel? What generates so much fascination, frustration, and fury over one small and densely populated nation?

You'll find answers in *Why Israel Matters* by Mat Staver with John Aman. This lavishly illustrated guide to all things Israel reveals why Israel is so significant to the Muslim world, the global economy, America, the church, and you. Most of all, it gives you insight into why Israel matters to God and shares a glimpse of what's ahead for God's still-chosen people.

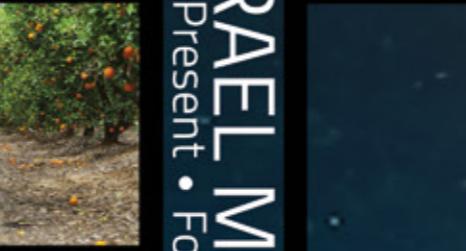
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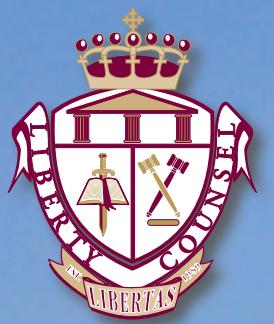


# WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Past • Present • Forever

Mathew D. Staver, Esq.  
with John P. Aman





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1	What Is It About Israel? .....	1
2	From Desolation to Delight .....	7
3	Israel and Islam .....	27
4	Israel Matters to God .....	57
5	Israel Matters to the World .....	85
6	Israel Matters to America.....	117
7	Israel Matters to the Church and to You.....	151
	Epilogue: How You Can Bless Israel .....	181
	Appendix A: A Biblical and Historical Timeline of Israel .....	187
	Appendix B: A Biblical Basis for Israel's Right to the Land .....	191
	About Liberty Counsel and its Family of Ministries .....	197
	About the Authors.....	207
	Endnotes .....	211

## CONTENTS

Panoramic vista of Jerusalem, Israel's capital, as seen from the Mount of Olives.





The Russian Orthodox Church of Mary Magdalene, with its gilded onion domes, on the Mount of Olives.

# CHAPTER 1

## WHAT IS IT ABOUT ISRAEL?

After 1,900 years, it took just 30 minutes. A crowd of 250 Jewish officials and dignitaries, along with a handful of journalists, gathered in the Tel Aviv Museum at 4 pm sharp on May 14, 1948. Fearful of Arab bombs, organizers kept the ceremony's time and place secret. But that didn't stop a huge throng from congregating outside on Rothschild Street, awaiting news under the watch of Haganah soldiers brandishing Sten guns on the rooftop above.

Inside, attendees packed into the museum's cramped hall listened as the future prime minister of Israel, David

*Top:* David Ben-Gurion reads Israel's Statehood Declaration on May 14, 1948 in Tel Aviv.

*Bottom:* Crowd awaits announcement of Israel's Statehood outside Tel Aviv Museum.



Shershel Frank/Israeli Government Press Office

Shershel Frank/Israeli Government Press Office

Beautiful ancient mosaic pavements, as shown, beautified floors in synagogues, churches and other buildings.



**Top Left:** Citizens outside the Tel Aviv Museum cheer Israel's Statehood Declaration on May 14, 1948.

**Bottom Left:** Though much more colorful and ornate than the American Declaration of Independence, the Israeli Declaration of Statehood was likewise forged in the crucible of war.

Ben-Gurion, read Israel's statehood declaration in Hebrew. His voice lifting, he pronounced, "We hereby proclaim the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, to be called the State of Israel." The audience stood and broke into heartfelt applause.

A rabbi, his voice quavering with emotion, offered a benediction, declaring: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hath kept us and sustained us and has brought us unto this time."<sup>1</sup>

Then, in reliance on the "Rock of Israel," the 37 members of the Provisional State Council signed modern Israel's founding document.

Cheers erupted outside the museum and across Tel Aviv. Israelis young and old danced in the streets. After centuries of exile and agony, pogroms and persecutions, and, finally, the killing of six million Jews in the Holocaust, the Jewish people finally had their own independent homeland.

They were also at war.

Israel extended an olive branch to its Arab neighbors in its statehood declaration, proposing "an offer of peace and good

Beautiful burnt orange rock in Judean Desert as seen from Masada.



neighbourliness," and seeking to "establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help." The new Jewish state urged Arabs living inside her boundaries "to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship."<sup>2</sup>

But the Arab world answered with bullets and bombs. Israel declared statehood about 4:30 pm on May 14. Five Arab nations were on the attack that night. "It does not matter how many [Jews] there are," the Arab League's secretary-general promised. "We will sweep them into the sea."<sup>3</sup>

And that is what much of the Muslim world still seeks today.

In the nearly 70 years since statehood, modern Israel has been attacked eight times by enemies pledged to "to uproot it just like a cancer," as Saudi Arabia's King Saud said in 1954.<sup>4</sup>

Israel today lives in what is easily the most toxic neighborhood on earth. Her next-door neighbors in the Gaza Strip and West Bank are ruled by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, both committed to Israel's destruction. Unwilling to make peace with Israel,

**Top:** Saudi Arabia's King Saud called in 1954 for Israel to be removed "just like a cancer."

**Bottom:** Map shows Arab nations' invasion routes during their 1948 war to eliminate Israel.





Majestic view across the Negev in southern Israel.

4

**Top Left:** Iran's supreme Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

**Bottom Left:** Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah

these Palestinian militants use suicide bombs, rocket attacks, and knifings, along with intifadas (uprisings) and international pressure to wage war against Israel.

In Lebanon, the ruling party, Hezbollah, has 45,000 fighters and an estimated stockpile of 120,000 rockets.<sup>5</sup> “Israel is a cancer” charges Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, who says the “ultimate goal should be to remove it.”<sup>6</sup>

On its southern border, Israel faces growing danger from ISIS in Sinai. A menacing recorded message said to be from ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed: “We are getting closer to you day by day. Do not think that we have forgotten about you.”<sup>7</sup>

And to the northeast, Iran is on its way to building a nuclear arsenal and achieving its aim, as the rogue nation’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei put it, “to erase Israel from the map.”<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, Israel “matters” to the Muslim world.

But Israel matters not just because its mere presence provokes Muslim outrage and anger. Israel also matters to the Jewish people. It is a source of pride and security for a nation which spent centuries wandering the world in exile and oppression. And it consolidates Jewish brilliance, which is why Israel, after seven short decades, is already a source of stunning innovations

like incision-free surgery.

A global leader in high-tech, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and military equipment, Israel is improving the lives of millions and is a vital part of the global economy. It is a channel of blessing to the world, just as God promised Abraham nearly 4,000 years ago when He said, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3 NKJV).

And yet Israel remains fixed in the cross-hairs of global controversy. Why? What is it about Israel? Why does this one nation on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean matter so much? What makes it the improbable focus of so much anger and interest?

With a population of just eight million, Israel attracts the attention of the world’s sole superpower, the U.S., like a magnet, and roils our domestic politics. Israel is under near-constant critique and condemnation at the U.N. and is on sometimes stormy terms with the European Union. And almost seven decades after Israel became a nation, its Muslim-majority Arab and Persian neighbors still dream and work for its annihilation.

But why? What generates so much fascination, frustration and fury over one small and densely populated state?

Why does Israel matter? To the Jewish people, to Muslims, to the world, and to you.

Let’s take a look.



Desert rocks near Eilat, Israel's southernmost city.

5



6

Nazi Germany killed almost one million Jews at the grim Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Nearly 2,000 years of Jewish anguish climaxed in the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler's (above) diabolical plan to eliminate God's chosen people.



## CHAPTER 2 FROM DESOLATION TO DELIGHT

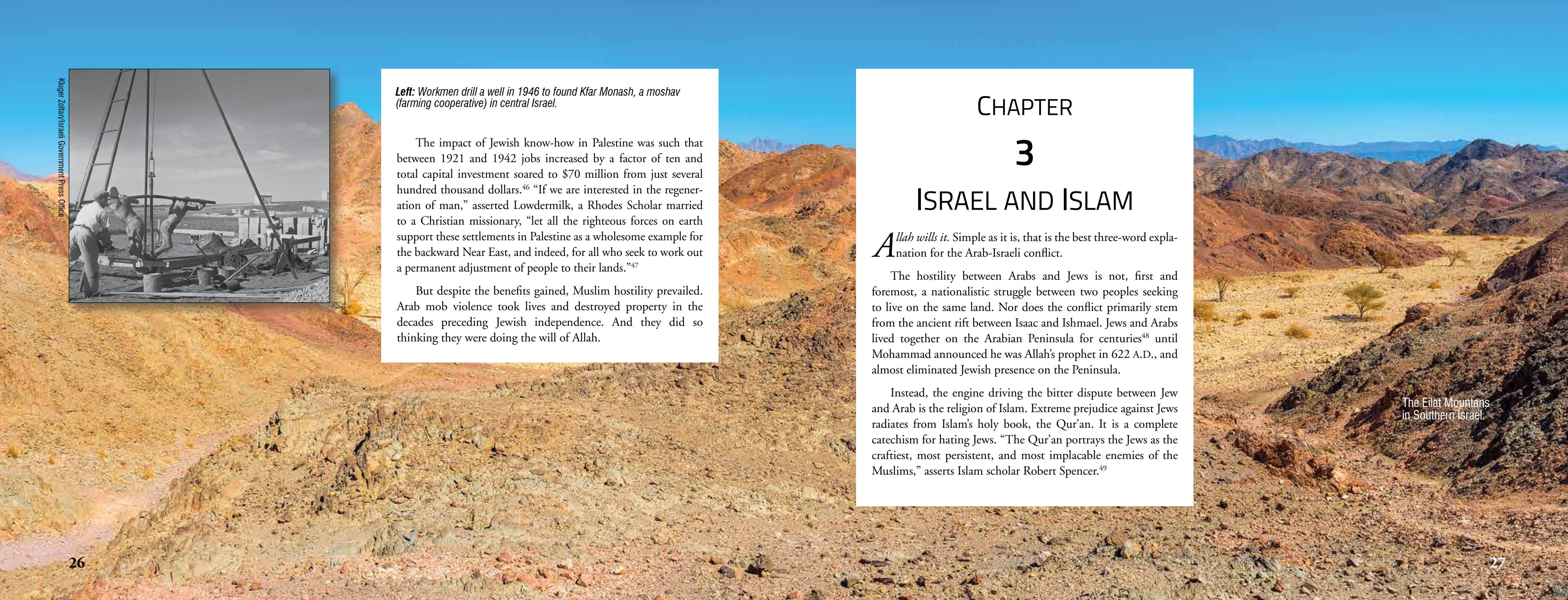
Jewish suffering over the last 2,000 years is beyond comprehension. The litany of terror and grief includes pogroms, persecutions, expulsions, forced conversion, enslavement, massacres, confiscations, mob attacks, mass arrests, public torture, burning at the stake, and genocide. All this has come at the hands of a variety of adversaries, some of whom professed a distorted view of Christianity or who abused it for political purposes. Others were Muslims advancing the cause of jihad, and social Darwinists who wanted to eliminate "undesirable" people in order to evolve a superior human race.

Anti-Semitism has forced the Jewish people to wander over the face of the earth, without rights, except by gracious concession, without a home, and without security; treated at all times,

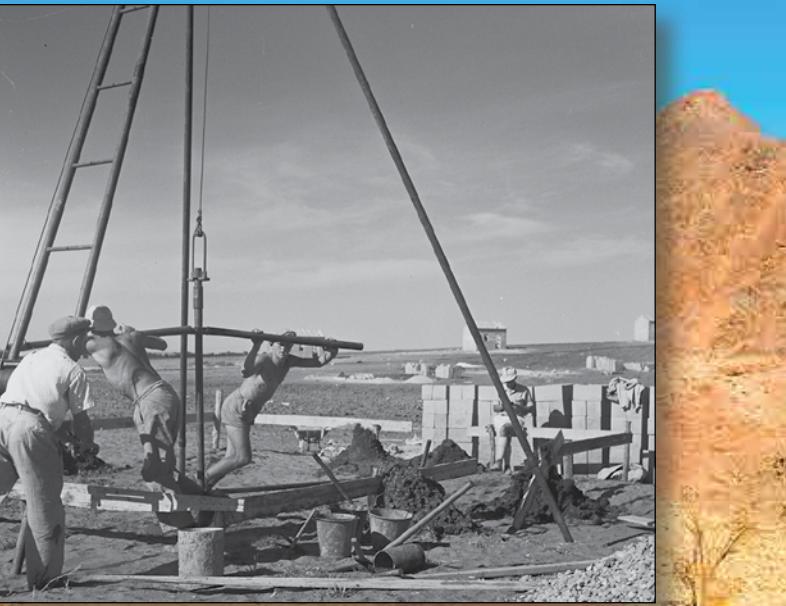


The ruins of Masada, a cliff-top fortress in the Judean Desert where Jewish rebels made their last stand against Rome in 73 A.D.

7



Kluger Zoltan/Israeli Government Press Office



*Left: Workmen drill a well in 1946 to found Kfar Monash, a moshav (farming cooperative) in central Israel.*

The impact of Jewish know-how in Palestine was such that between 1921 and 1942 jobs increased by a factor of ten and total capital investment soared to \$70 million from just several hundred thousand dollars.<sup>46</sup> “If we are interested in the regeneration of man,” asserted Lowdermilk, a Rhodes Scholar married to a Christian missionary, “let all the righteous forces on earth support these settlements in Palestine as a wholesome example for the backward Near East, and indeed, for all who seek to work out a permanent adjustment of people to their lands.”<sup>47</sup>

But despite the benefits gained, Muslim hostility prevailed. Arab mob violence took lives and destroyed property in the decades preceding Jewish independence. And they did so thinking they were doing the will of Allah.

## CHAPTER 3 ISRAEL AND ISLAM

*Allah wills it.* Simple as it is, that is the best three-word explanation for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The hostility between Arabs and Jews is not, first and foremost, a nationalistic struggle between two peoples seeking to live on the same land. Nor does the conflict primarily stem from the ancient rift between Isaac and Ishmael. Jews and Arabs lived together on the Arabian Peninsula for centuries<sup>48</sup> until Mohammad announced he was Allah’s prophet in 622 A.D., and almost eliminated Jewish presence on the Peninsula.

Instead, the engine driving the bitter dispute between Jew and Arab is the religion of Islam. Extreme prejudice against Jews radiates from Islam’s holy book, the Qur’an. It is a complete catechism for hating Jews. “The Qur’an portrays the Jews as the craftiest, most persistent, and most implacable enemies of the Muslims,” asserts Islam scholar Robert Spencer.<sup>49</sup>



The Eilat Mountains in Southern Israel.



A gorgeous sunrise seen from Masada with the Dead Sea in the distance.



Rugged mountains in Israel's south, near Eilat.

Israel has a friend in high places. Whatever Allah may say, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a friend and champion to the Jews. While He scattered them nearly 2,000 years ago, He has now regathered them. And He has great plans ahead for His still chosen people.

## CHAPTER 4

### ISRAEL MATTERS TO GOD

Like any romance, God's relationship with Israel is passionate, emotionally complex and mercurial. It's a love story filled with soaring highs and crashing lows—with stormy confrontations and tearful embraces.

It bears the promise of great joy and blessing for Israel and the world. And yet it has so often been a one-sided affair ... a matter of unrequited and spurned affection, of anger and betrayal.

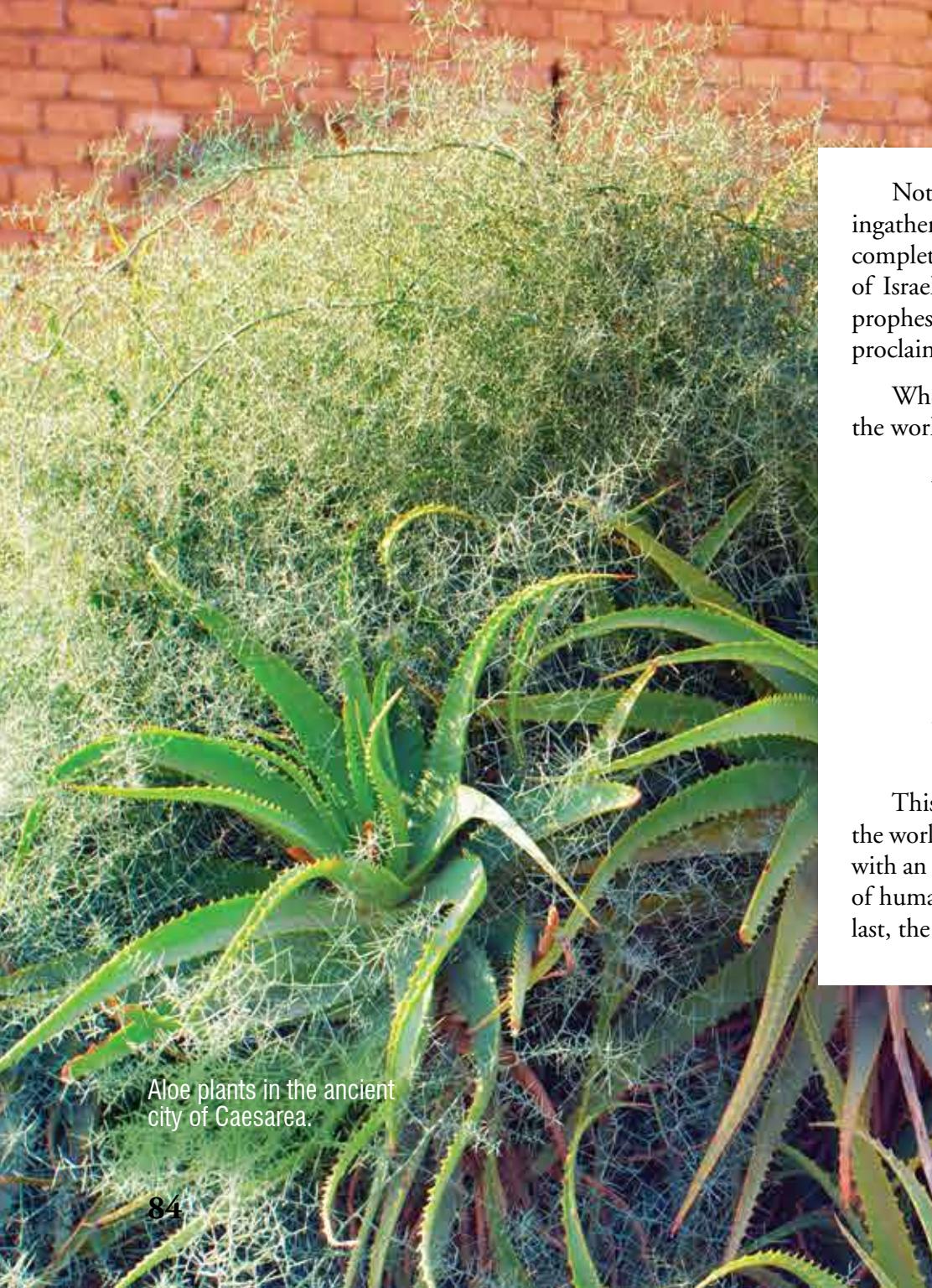
God is remarkably frank about how it all began. In a text not suitable for Sunday school, He speaks of His love for Israel using images drawn from the marital suite:

Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares





View from Masada fortress  
to Dead Sea and Jordan's  
mountains.



Aloe plants in the ancient city of Caesarea.



Not only has he not discarded His people, a great spiritual ingathering is to come. God will bring salvation to the Jews, completing the process He began with their return to the land of Israel by giving them a “new heart” and a “new spirit,” as prophesied by Ezekiel. “And so all Israel will be saved,” as Paul proclaims in Romans 11:25.

When that happens, it will bring extraordinary blessing to the world. It will be, Paul writes, “life from the dead”:

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! ... For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11:11-12, 15)

This promise remains in the future, but Israel is already blessing the world. It is making life better, easier, and healthier for millions with an explosion of scientific innovation across almost every field of human endeavor. It’s a foretaste of what’s ahead when, at long last, the Jewish people embrace their Jewish Messiah.



## CHAPTER 5 ISRAEL MATTERS TO THE WORLD

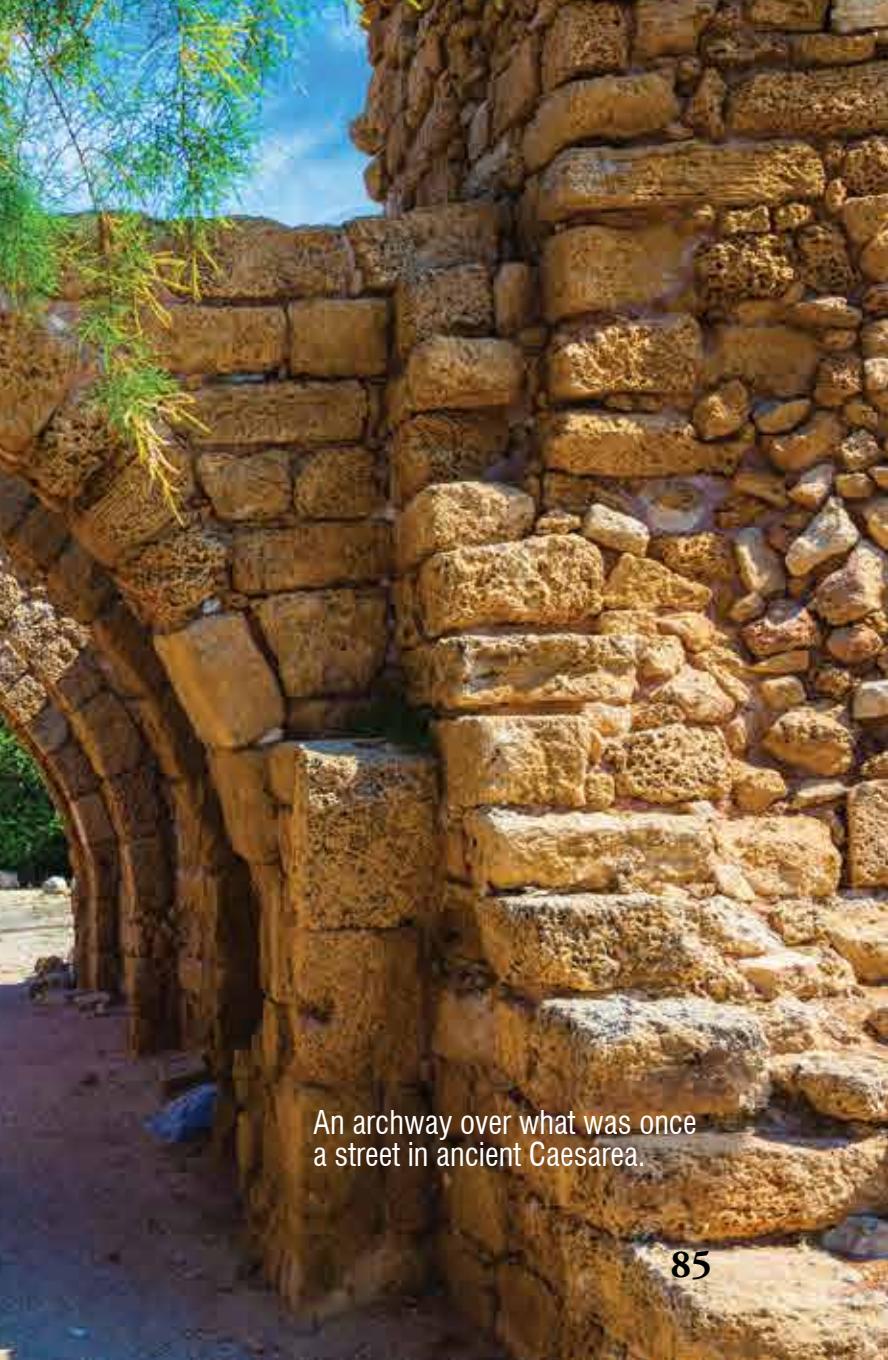
Less than 10 years ago, Israel was drying up. Literally. Facing the region’s most severe drought in the last nine centuries, authorities aired TV spots urging Israelis to conserve. The ads featured celebrities discussing the water shortage as their features began to crack and peel, but haven’t been seen in years.

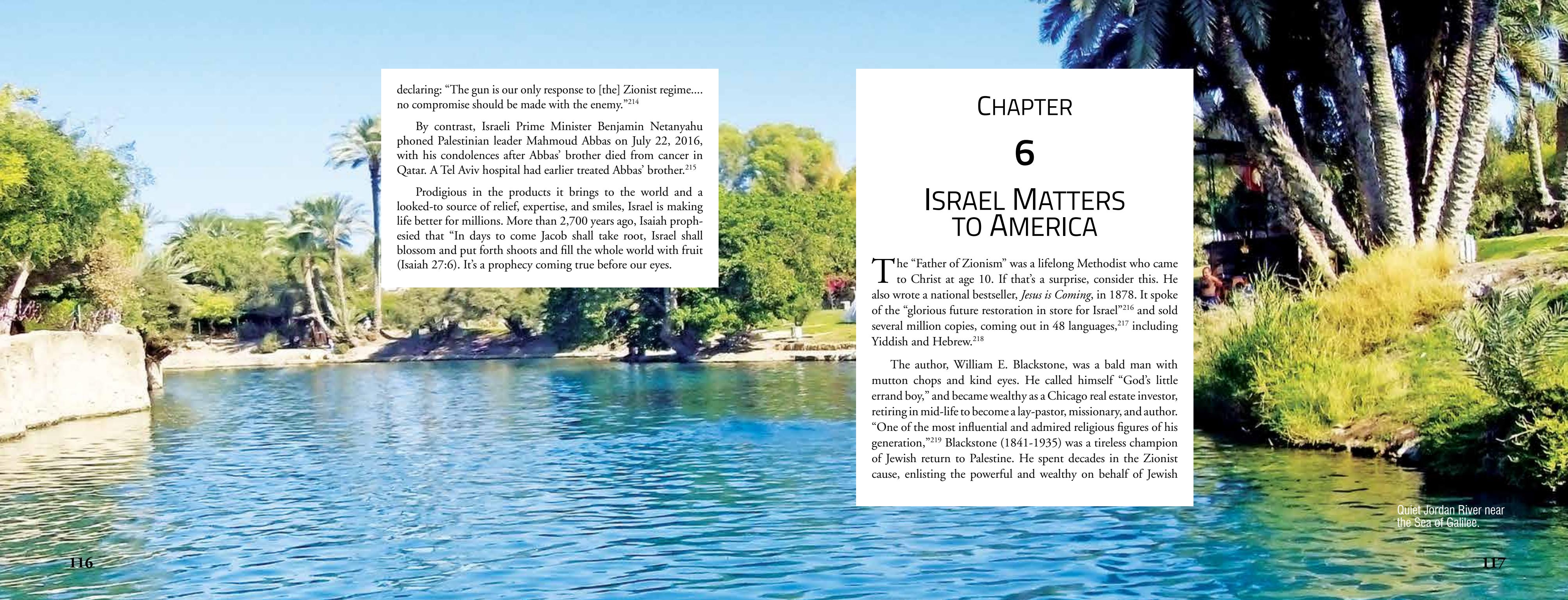
For good reason. Despite a semi-arid climate and a land mass 60 percent desert, Israel now has more water than it needs—and exports water to its neighbors. Parched farmland in Syria turned soil to dust and sent thousands of unhappy and out-of-work farmers to cities, a factor in the Syrian civil war. But Israeli farmers are still exporting fruit and vegetables to Europe and beyond.

Israel’s newfound water security stems, in part, from conservation and the reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation. Israel reclaims and purifies 86 percent of its sewage to irrigate crops, far



An archway over what was once a street in ancient Caesarea.





declaring: “The gun is our only response to [the] Zionist regime.... no compromise should be made with the enemy.”<sup>214</sup>

By contrast, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu phoned Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas on July 22, 2016, with his condolences after Abbas’ brother died from cancer in Qatar. A Tel Aviv hospital had earlier treated Abbas’ brother.<sup>215</sup>

Prodigious in the products it brings to the world and a looked-to source of relief, expertise, and smiles, Israel is making life better for millions. More than 2,700 years ago, Isaiah prophesied that “In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit (Isaiah 27:6). It’s a prophecy coming true before our eyes.

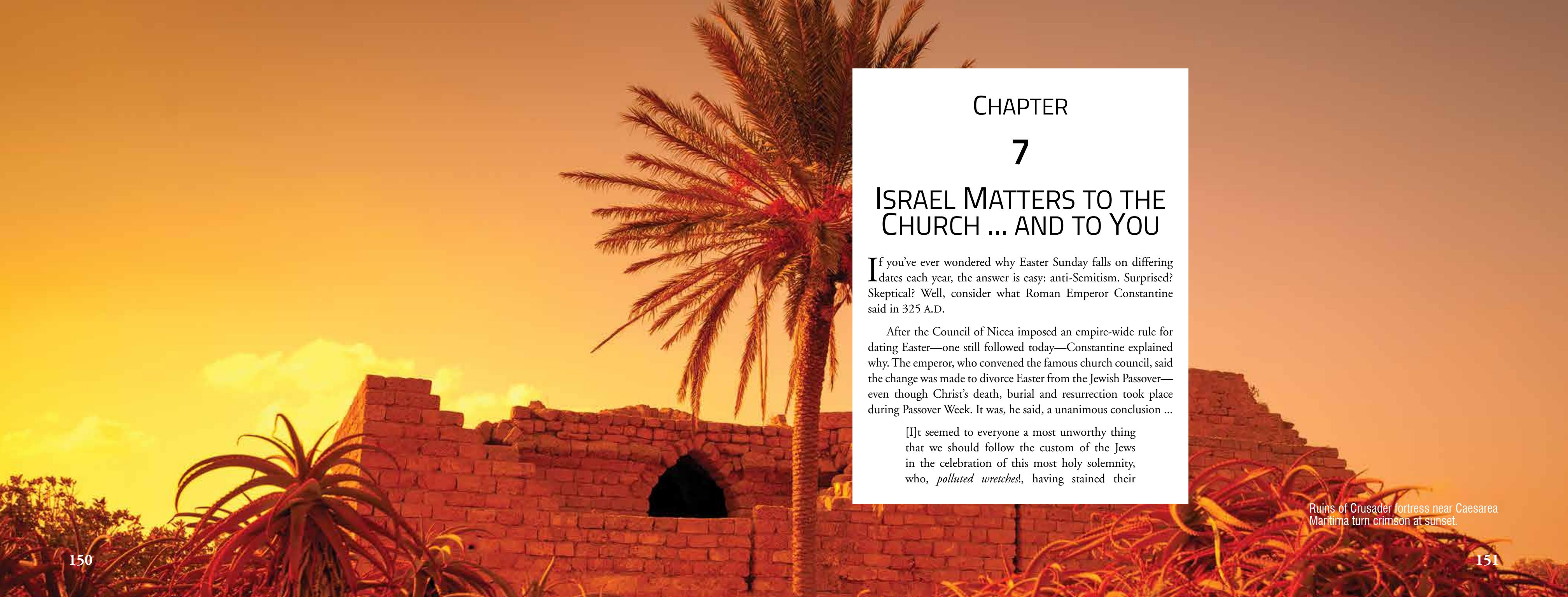
## CHAPTER 6

# ISRAEL MATTERS TO AMERICA

The “Father of Zionism” was a lifelong Methodist who came to Christ at age 10. If that’s a surprise, consider this. He also wrote a national bestseller, *Jesus is Coming*, in 1878. It spoke of the “glorious future restoration in store for Israel”<sup>216</sup> and sold several million copies, coming out in 48 languages,<sup>217</sup> including Yiddish and Hebrew.<sup>218</sup>

The author, William E. Blackstone, was a bald man with mutton chops and kind eyes. He called himself “God’s little errand boy,” and became wealthy as a Chicago real estate investor, retiring in mid-life to become a lay-pastor, missionary, and author. “One of the most influential and admired religious figures of his generation,”<sup>219</sup> Blackstone (1841-1935) was a tireless champion of Jewish return to Palestine. He spent decades in the Zionist cause, enlisting the powerful and wealthy on behalf of Jewish

Quiet Jordan River near  
the Sea of Galilee.



## CHAPTER 7

### ISRAEL MATTERS TO THE CHURCH ... AND TO YOU

If you've ever wondered why Easter Sunday falls on differing dates each year, the answer is easy: anti-Semitism. Surprised? Skeptical? Well, consider what Roman Emperor Constantine said in 325 A.D.

After the Council of Nicea imposed an empire-wide rule for dating Easter—one still followed today—Constantine explained why. The emperor, who convened the famous church council, said the change was made to divorce Easter from the Jewish Passover—even though Christ's death, burial and resurrection took place during Passover Week. It was, he said, a unanimous conclusion ...

[I]t seemed to everyone a most unworthy thing that we should follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this most holy solemnity, who, *polluted wretches!*, having stained their

Ruins of Crusader fortress near Caesarea Maritima turn crimson at sunset.

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