

Spiritual Insight For The Week

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

Evangelicals Shocked by a Rabbi's Revelation



One Shabbat morning in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Talpiot, I encountered a group of evangelical Christians. Their tour guide was showing them the interior of the synagogue where I was praying. The guide asked if I had a few minutes to address the group and answer their questions.

As I spoke with the group, I emphasized that Judaism is a highly spiritual religion, and along with my fellow Jews we have a personal relationship with God. I then expressed my appreciation for Christian support of Israel and the Jewish people. However, any attempts to convert Jews, especially when deceptive tactics are used, are unacceptable. Furthermore, these efforts are an insult that essentially delegitimizes Judaism. From the nodding of heads, I could see that most of the group agreed with me, and some denounced groups like Jews for Jesus.

Then, someone asked if I had ever experienced a revelation of God. I responded “absolutely.”

I clarified my answer by referring to the verse in Isaiah with which most evangelicals are familiar with. The prophet Isaiah rhetorically asks, *“To whom has the arm of God been revealed?”* (Isaiah 53:1). To appreciate the meaning of this verse, it is crucial to understand the meaning of the phrase *“arm of God.”*

In this week’s Torah portion, *Ki Tavo* (Deuteronomy 26:1–29:8), we are reminded that the Jewish people cried out to God concerning their affliction. In response, God took the Jews *“out of Egypt with an outstretched arm”* (Deuteronomy 26:8).

From this verse and others, such as Psalms 136:12, we see that the Bible uses the metaphor of God’s *“arm”* to describe God’s power to redeem the Jewish people.

In context, when Isaiah asks, *“To whom has the arm of God been revealed?”* he is referring to the nations of the world who will be eyewitnesses when God redeems the Jews. In Isaiah’s words, he declares, *“God will bare [reveal] His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God”* (Isaiah 52:10).

Isaiah also explains that when the nations witness the redemption of the Jews, they will be surprised and *“shocked”* since *“that which had not been told them shall they see”* (Isaiah 52:15). The redemption will contradict their previous belief that the Jews were *“despised and rejected”* and *“stricken by God”* (Isaiah 53:3-4).

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Faced with this new reality, the nations will be left with one question. Since the Jews were not rejected by God, why did they suffer so much?

Isaiah tells us that the nations will admit that the Jews suffered “*from*” [because of] the unjustified and excessive mistreatment the nations inflicted on the Jewish people. As the verse states, “*He [the Jewish remnant of Israel] was wounded from our [the nations’] transgressions*” (Isaiah 53:5).

Christian bibles distort the meaning of this verse by mistranslating the Hebrew prefix “*ל-^lmem*” as “for” rather than “from.” This mistranslation gives the impression that someone “died for our sins.” They also mistakenly claim that the verse cannot be speaking about Israel because it uses the singular “*he was wounded.*”

This claim is absurd, because throughout the Jewish Bible the nation of Israel is referred to as a single person. Most striking is the statement, “*All the people assembled as one man*” (Judges 20:8, Nehemiah 8:1). Other examples include, “*Israel is My son*” (Exodus 4:22) and “*Israel is My servant*” (Isaiah 41:8).

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When read in context, the straightforward understanding of Isaiah is that the prophet is speaking about the future redemption of the Jewish people who suffered unjustly at the hand of the nations of the world.

In our lifetime, we have witnessed nations admit to mistreating the Jews. We have also witnessed a redemptive revelation of God when the outnumbered Jewish people defeated their enemies in the numerous wars against the State of Israel.

This is the ongoing miraculous story of Jewish survival against countless powerful enemies who tried to destroy us. The survival of the Jewish people against these seemingly insurmountable odds is a revelation of God’s love for the Jewish people and proof that God has not abandoned us.

We have all experienced this Godly revelation; we need only to recognize it. May this Shabbos provide many more opportunities to experience Godly revelations, as well as the truth of the Torah and the beauty of Judaism.

Shabbat Shalom,

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