



Book Excerpt

God, Israel, & Shiloh: Returning to the Land by David Rubin

Introduction

Blood was gushing out of my leg like an open fire hydrant in an inner-city neighborhood. The car had gone totally dead and we were rolling down the road. I turned the ignition and it didn't start, and they were still shooting!

A scene from a horror movie perhaps? No, this was a real-life experience that I could never have foreseen or even dreamed about just twenty years earlier, while I was still living in the United States.

Many people living in America have their own moments of frightening experiences, but one who moves to Israel soon comes to realize that life in Israel is like no other place in the world. From the constant threat of war and terrorism to the often unstable economy in which salaries never seem to rise; from the constant security checks to the prayer services in crowded bus stations, life is clearly experienced on another plane. Then again, the Nation of Israel is like no other nation.

What other nation has been enslaved, then after a miraculous escape, been given the Bible, which has become the all-time bestseller; established its nation in a Land that God sent it to, been driven from its Land and scattered around the world for almost 2,000 years, eventually returning to that tiny territory to re-establish a sovereign nation once again, all exactly as forecast by the Prophets of the Bible? Is this a normal nation?

“But you Israel are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My beloved” (Isaiah 41:8).

It's clearly no exaggeration to say that Israel is in the news far more than most nations, and way out of proportion to its size. Is this just by some chance of nature? Some would insist that it's a natural consequence of Israel's so-called abuse of the rights of the Palestinians. Others would say that it's somehow a result of anti-Semitism, and therefore, Israeli actions are, quite unfairly, always under a microscope. There are certainly other theories on this question, which we will discuss in this book, but there is no disputing the disproportionate attention that Israel receives in the world media.

The terms “West Bank,” “Palestine,” and “Settlements” have all become practically household terms in homes across the United States and in many other countries, but I would venture to say that most people have no clue where the terms actually come from, what they represent, and the history behind them. Semantics often seems a fascinating linguistic game played by editors and journalists, but in the Middle East, it is also a dangerous game which frequently touches on life and death issues.

In Israel especially, the power of words cannot be underestimated. As a transplanted American Jew who wasn't born or raised in Israel, but decided to live there on my own, and personally experienced the pain of terrorism along with my three-year-old son, all of these questions have deep meaning to me. In fact, there is virtually no issue in Israel that doesn't stir heated debate.

Perhaps, it's a consequence of being a nation whose very existence, or at least right to exist, is questioned every day, but the intensity of daily discussions about current events can often be quite fierce. Many tourists riding the local buses in Israeli cities for the first time, are surprised every top of the hour to hear the volume of the news reports turned way up for all riders to hear, as if all passengers need to immediately know the latest event. But it's all a reflection of the ever-present feeling in Israel of the precarious but meaningful nature of life.

In Israel, hardly a day goes by without peace plans discussed in the news. At the same time, hardly a day goes by without at least an attempted terror attack.

Let's create a hypothetical situation in which a creature from a distant planet comes down to Earth and settles down in Israel. I am convinced that he would be totally perplexed by this strange country. From the daily news reports, one hears about the frantic diplomatic activity and peace summits, while simultaneously, rockets are falling on Israeli cities, teenagers are being shot at while standing at bus stops, and there is internal confusion as to how to respond. Is this a normal people? And does it make any sense?

My intention in this book is to shed new light on the role of the Jewish people in history, traveling through time with this often stubborn, but resilient and creative people.

We will explore from Biblical times to the present, and will focus on the implications of past and present events in Israel for the future of Israel and the world. As you may have expected, I will tell this story from a perspective which is not often heard in the mainstream press, but which has great significance for the current conflicts in Israel and the free world.

From my hilltop home on a street overlooking the ruins of the ancient city of Shiloh, I often gaze into the scenic valley of Shiloh, and when I do, I see its ancient history coming to life in the present-day life of its people. In the midst of its tranquility, I relive its many Biblical stories and the rich history of this Land that I call home, for without the Biblical and historical context, we are simply walking in circles, with no real sense of direction.

There is more to life than simply "living for the moment," as any Israeli in touch with his roots will tell you. When viewed in the proper context, the abnormality of the Jewish People makes perfect sense, as does the media obsession with Israel.

Let's explore the amazing history of this peculiar nation called Israel, sharing in its glory and tragedy of the past, its painful conflicts in the present, and its vision of hope for the future. Its relationships, both with the world and with its God are relationships that have relevance and implications for all of us. Let's read ...