



Editor's Note: We welcome your feedback. Please send your comments to letters@ifm.org.

Trailing Spouse Syndrome?

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading "Is the Mission Field Right for Adult Missionary Kids," by Larry Sharp (Vol. 23:4, 2006).

Although it was not his main point, this article contained a prime example of some commonly accepted wisdom that needs to be challenged whenever it arises. On page 146 Mr. Sharp wrote:

A generation or more ago, you might have heard a wife say, "missions is my husband's calling and my calling is to be by his side wherever God leads us." This no doubt sounded spiritually motivated, and likely was—in most cases. But today, this would be a red flag to the missions agency... Thankfully, most agencies today take concrete steps to avoid such disasters.

I am well aware that the triangular relationship between husband, wife, and mission calling can, like in any other ministry, become out of balance. This is something Sharp calls the "trailing spouse syndrome." But does he really believe marriages in which the husband's calling takes the leading role should be called a "disaster?" Have "most agencies" really reached such a low point that they have become like some church members who view their pastor's wife as part of a two-for-the-price-of-one deal? I sincerely hope not.

While I have heard statements like this many times over the years, I have yet to have anyone explain to me what is actually wrong with a missionary wife supporting her husband's ministry as her primary calling. But what worries me the most is that such thinking points toward an uncritical acceptance of feminist ideology rather than a biblical theology of male-female relationships.

I have met missionary couples in which the wife sacrificially gave up her own desires to support her husband's calling,

yet felt like a second-class citizen because she did not live up to the avant-garde model of missionary wife. Many such women struggle because they cannot be the super-mom/wife/missionary who leads several ladies' Bible studies, learns two languages simultaneously, plus home-schools her children on the side.

I admire many of the missionary wives I know who fulfill their mission out of a strong, personal sense of calling. But I think we need to give just as much respect to the ones who, like my wife, serve the Lord by simply walking alongside their husband as an indispensable helpmate in his vocation.

In His grace,

Gene Daniels

Mr. Daniels is correct in that I probably erred in creating the impression that all wives "walking alongside their husbands as an indispensable helpmate in his vocation" are a "disaster." I value, as Mr. Daniels does, a helpmate wife. I remain concerned about this issue however, and agencies need to pursue it in the initial pre-field stage and also throughout the couple's career. I believe it is important to see both spouses as full missionaries in their own right, qualified and with a missional vision. The couple then works out between themselves with mission leadership validation, a ministry plan which validates both husband and wife. It should not be assumed that it is all about "his vocation"—it should be about both of their vocations.

Larry W. Sharp, Ph.D., VP, CrossWorld

Messianic Jewish Churches

In Gary Corwin's ten questions ("A Humble Appeal to C5/Insider Movement Muslim Ministry Advocates to Consider Ten Questions," *IJFM* Vol. 24:1, pp. 5-20), he refers in question two to "Messianic Jewish churches." The Messianic Jewish movement is, for the most part, not an insider movement. A Jewish insider is not someone who brings a little Jewish culture into the church, but a Jew who follows Yeshua (Jesus in Hebrew) while remaining in the synagogue community. He or she exemplifies the message of Yeshua in the midst of the traditional community of their people.

They may also assemble on occasion with other Jewish insiders, but they have not left the synagogue.

Rebecca Lewis states on p. 18,

As long as the movement to Christ is staying within networks of families, and is not pulling people out of their networks into new networks (no matter how contextualized, e.g., Messianic mosques), it should be considered an 'insider movement'.

Of those members of the Messianic Jewish movement who are Jewish, very few remain within networks of the Jewish community. Added to this is the fact that most "Messianic Jews" today are not actually Jewish to begin with and have no Jewish family and community networks to remain part of.

There are a few Messianic Jewish "synagogues" which are more Jewish in their expressions and orientation, and which consider themselves to be distinct from Christianity. These would be a better choice for Corwin's comparison to Messianic mosques. But, as Lewis points out, even these are not insider entities.

GK Gefen

Palestinian Gridlock Revisited

To the Editor:

When I began reading your editorial, "What No One is Saying About the Palestinian Gridlock," I kept waiting for the line in which you would reveal that you were writing tongue in cheek, setting up a straw man to be knocked down toward the end of the piece. But it was not there; and I was stunned. I was left wondering, "What happened to all the many passages in Scripture in which God declared that his covenant with Israel is permanent, that even though they would sin and be punished, he would keep his side of the covenant and work out his stated will (Genesis 12:1-3) to bless the nations through Abraham's descendants?"

Editor's Note:

First of all, the land is now actually in the hands of Abraham's descendants plus a few remaining Christians, not Astoreth-worshipping Philistines. But even if you narrow the promise down to Jacob's descendants the question remains, Is this His timing? Why has God more than once removed the

children of Israel/Jacob from the land in the past and why has century after century rolled past with them somewhere else and why precisely now, and precisely why should these particular Jews (mainly secular) crash in right now and take it over?

I suggest that you read what Christopher J. H. Wright has to say about the land which God said he was giving to the Israelites as a “special possession,” in his book *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2004).

I am well acquainted with not only this earlier work of his but also with his latest, ponderous *The Mission of God*, and I have no argument with how he interprets the Bible. But do all those verses lead to the conclusion that the land will be turned over in 1948? I do not question the “whether” but the “when.”

Pat Robertson has a TV “ministry” that is large and far-reaching, and no doubt does good in the lives of some of the people it reaches. However, one wonders, in the light of various comments he has made publicly on his program in response to world events, if he has too much time to talk and falls into the snare of commenting on things outside the range of his expertise. He has embarrassed evangelicals and given free ammunition to liberal media people who enjoy finding fault with Christians. I wonder if, in his organization, there is anyone to whom he is accountable who could help him avoid the gaffes.

I live amidst a whole community of staff members with whom I continually share my thoughts. One of them has gone to great lengths to refute my comments in this vein, and those were published in full in IJFM last fall (23:4). But I feel that both he and you have misunderstood my motives and attitude. You will not find anyone more favorable than I am to the Jews and their magnificent record of doing God’s will down through history. One letter I received said, “I know you are a Jew hater.”

You have the Journal, and I wonder if you too have anyone you can run your editorials (and replies to letters) by to get input before publication. I hope your opinion on Israel’s land does not get into the media.

Don’t worry, I get lots of input before publication. As for the media, how could an earnest if hypothetical suggestion about a way out of ghastly 50-year trouble for the Israelis be harmful if it got into the media? I say hypothetical because I assume that for the Israelis to escape their present and virtually hopeless bondage would take the kind of miracles that allowed them to escape Egypt—so as to return some day in what could be God’s far better timing. Why should anyone feel strongly that a European self-serving decision to consign them to the horror of the last 50 years was God’s idea? Their presence in Palestine at this time in history, if it is a gift from God, does not seem to be very kindly.

Furthermore, both Isa. 49:6 and Jer. 29:7 put a higher priority on the importance of His people being a saving force *away from their homeland* than on an urgency of their return to their land. Note that in Isa. 49:6 “I want my salvation to go to the ends of the earth” refers to the termination of the earthen plane where they were at that time languishing in captivity and wanting to return to their land. I am deeply impressed that the historical testimony of the Jews in American society has extensively been a magnificent record of service, selfless service, great achievements, and the advancement of confidence in the Bible and its message. God chose them, as He has also chosen us, not just to save us but to use us in His service. Paraphrasing Jesus, “Whenever a person or a nation is more concerned to save itself it will lose out. Only if it will lose itself in serving me can it be saved” (Luke 9:24). That applies to the USA as well—are we, too, being frightened into a more of a survival and defensive posture than a saving role? Our super defensive, “preemptive” strike in Iraq has worked out no better than Israel’s meddling in the West Bank.

Your article was critical of the European nations which made decisions about the land so that the Israelites got a homeland. But are you not, with your suggestion that the Israelites move from Israel to Australia, or to Kansas, doing the same thing? Who are you,

as an individual with even less power than those nations, to suggest a move to Australia or Kansas? Have you checked that out with Prime Minister Howard or the governor of Kansas?

I did not suggest a gift. What I wrote would assume that if anyone wanted to buy property in Australia or Kansas that they would indeed need to follow the local procedures. I certainly did not suggest for an instant what the UN and E. Stanley Jones suggested, namely a gift. That is the opposite of my suggestion.

Shortly after I became a Christian before my sophomore year of high school a retired Methodist missionary couple who had worked for 40 years in India spoke at my home church, and I felt a call to missions. My high school basketball coach gave me a copy of E. Stanley Jones’s book *The Christ of the Indian Road*, and I later bought Jones’s little devotional books *The Way* and *Abundant Living*. All of these were very helpful to me as a new Christian in a non-Christian home, as were some of his other books in later years. As a student at Asbury College, his alma mater, I heard him speak in chapel on “Jesus is Lord.”

What you have suggested the Israelites do reminds me of something that Jones did more than half a century ago. When Japan was making noises before WW II about invading other nations, with the excuse that it needed more land for its people, Jones suggested that they be given New Guinea. He simply had no right to suggest that, and back then he, along with most other people, knew very little about New Guinea. Japan later invaded parts of both Dutch New Guinea to the west and the former German and British parts of the eastern half of the island. In a number of places in the east they executed Christian pastors, and had they succeeded in taking over the island it would probably have eliminated the fruit of decades of dedicated missionary work. In recent years some Papua New Guinean Christians have begun to take up missionary work in other countries, including, ironically, a family who are soon to begin working in India under the IBM.

My point is this: as a missionary to India and the author of a number of helpful

books, E. Stanley Jones did well. But as a would-be arbiter in international affairs, he was well out of his depth.

Yours in Christ,

George E. MacDonald

While what I wrote was totally hypothetical, nevertheless, it is precisely the lack of a "right" to give away someone else's property that I was pointing out, not another instance of it. Read me again. I not only did not suggest that any property anywhere be given to the Israelis, I agreed with you that no one had a "right" to give them the property they (in hindsight) unwisely occupied.

I feel sure, looking back, that no one in either the UN or Israel would have in their right mind done it that way. The catastrophe might have been predicted, but it wasn't. The very idea that 700,000 Palestinians would be removed from their homes in the first five months (and thousands killed), and that the entire West Bank (which was never "given" to the Israelis) would later be blanketed with hundreds of Israeli armed settlements and that roads all across the West Bank would (seemingly) have to be barricaded, throwing 60% of the Palestinians out of work in that "non-given" territory—this was not what anyone had in mind.

The difficulty of seeing this whole thing objectively is highlighted by Jimmy Carter's eminently even-handed book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. Probably no senior politician in the world is better informed about the entire history and both sides. But, as usual, in a polarized situation any attempt to be fair to both sides is instantly condemned by both sides!

Shortly after Carter's book came out an Israeli professor, Ilan Pappé, in the University of Haifa (in Israel) published a book entitled, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (IJFM 23:4), which was able to draw on some very detailed and specific government records unavailable to Carter. Every army has its bully boys, including ours in Iraq. Many high-minded Israelis are as distant from their army's doings as you and I are from Iraq. RDW **IJFM**

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Jat People of India and Pakistan



India's countryside is very productive, largely thanks to Jat farmers.

Are the Jats the most feared people in South Asia? It is possible. They tend to be larger in stature than other people groups in that part of the world, and the fact that they own agricultural land gives them power.

But the peoples of South Asia can also thank these competent people for the large grain harvests they have enjoyed since the Green Revolution began 35 years ago. Jats teamed up with Western scientists to multiply the amount of rice and wheat harvested to feed a Subcontinent that was once on the brink of starvation.

Others may fear the Jats because they have traditionally been a key military community in India. They are one of the three main military groups in South Asia, the others being the Gurkhas and the Rajputs.

The 30 million Jat people are divided into three religions. Those who live in Pakistan are Muslim. Those in India are either Hindu or Sikh. There are some Jats living in other parts of the world, but Jats avoid social contact with other communities. Few have been able to hear and respond to the gospel of Christ.



Pray that God will speak directly to Jat leaders, be they Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, and that entire Jat extended families will soon embrace Christ.—KC

Genesis 14:18

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High."

What a delight to Abraham to discover that the priest/king of Salem (later Jerusalem) was a worshiper of the Most High God! God had given Abraham the commission to bless all nations. Yet He Himself had already touched the heart of a Canaanite priest/king. The conversation between these two men of God confirms for us the fact that God is Lord over all of the earth (Genesis 14:19, 22) and that knowledge of Him was not confined during this era just to Abraham and his family. History is full of stories telling how people groups have responded to the gospel in amazing ways because they already had an idea of the true God deeply imbedded in their culture! But, how will they know the Lord in a life-changing way unless someone tells them?



Lord, give us hearts to pray that missionaries will find those whose hearts you have touched.

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