maoz·israel REPORT

February 2018 Shevat - Adar 5778 Since 1976 Founded by Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram

Full length feature film relates the story of Yacov Damkani, once a local gangster who became a pioneer Messianic evangelist on the streets of Israel.

ISRAEL'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL FILM: "A NEW SPIRIT"

By Shira Sorko-Ram

For the first time in the history of modern Israel, a faith-based film on Yeshua the Messiah has been produced and premiered in theaters across Israel. "A New Spirit" tells the true story of Yacov Damkani, once a local gangster from a poverty-stricken town in Israel, who fled to the United States and was introduced to Yeshua as his Messiah.

Damkani was discipled in singer Keith Green's community in the 70's and his life was turned completely upside down. He returned home and became Israel's pioneer messenger on the

By Mail:
Maoz Ministries
P.O Box 535788
Grand Prairie, TX 75053-5788

By Phone:
U.S. 800-856-7060
CAN. 866-712-0188
U.K. 020 3740 5794

By Email:
maozusa@maozisrael.org
maozcanada@maozisrael.org
maozuk@maozisrael.org

Online:
www.maozisrael.org
www.istandwithisrael.com

Follow:
maozisrael1
@maozisrael

streets of Israel, boldly preaching the Good News to curious onlookers and furious ultra-Orthodox Jews…and does so to this day.

The movie premiered in December 2017 at the famous Tel Aviv Cinematheque to an audience of hundreds of enthusiastic movie-goers. Many billboards and posters displaying "A New Spirit" were plastered on the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and surrounding cities. In addition, the most popular Israeli evening news program dedicated over 13 minutes of prime time to cover the movie.

The film has already won Best Actor and Cinematography awards in the Boston International Festival and Best Actor in the Madrid Film Festival—each with about 200 film entries. The Israel Press Council gave the film an "inspirational acting" award.

Doron Eran, who produced and directed the movie, is a well-known Israeli filmmaker in the business for 25 years. He has made some sixty films, including features, TV dramas, and documentaries.

FILM MAKER MEETS EVANGELIST

Three years ago, he met Yacov Damkani when asked to do a forty-minute documentary on the Messianic Community in Israel. He interviewed ten Israelis, and one of them was Yacov. The interview lasted only a few minutes, but then Yacov gave him the book of his life story called "Why Me?" When Doron read it, he said to himself, "This is a Hollywood movie!"

Doron admits he did not anticipate the strong backlash he would receive from fellow Israelis. He explains that he has always made films of a controversial nature.

"I am used to dealing with tough subjects. I want to wake up society. One of the most-viewed movies I made was about the circumcision of girls in the Israeli Bedouin community. In fact, most of my films deal with social subjects. Many are afraid to say anything—even when they see blatant injustice."

But this film about Yacov's discovery of Yeshua is a plunge into controversy deeper than anything this film producer had ever done. "When people on the street recognize me," says Doron, "they are extremely critical of this film. They tell me that the film is great—but that's the problem! It is dangerous for Jewish people to see," he relates.

OUR NATION HAS BEEN BRAINWASHED BY ULTRA-ORTHODOX RULERS

Doron continues, "They shout at me, 'you are not a Jew anymore! You are a Christian! You are a missionary! You have betrayed your own people!' When I answer them that Yeshua was a Jew, they don't like it at all," he says.

"This has been the weirdest experience I have ever had." He explains, "Our present government has been very wise in dealing with all the diplomatic and military traps set to bring our nation down." "But," he says, "internally I have watched the government allow the Haredim (ultra-Orthodox) to take control of the soul of our nation. I feel the dictatorship of the Haredim."

"It is a religious dictatorship. They are brainwashing our nation. Now I am called a missionary. I am no longer a Jew. It is scary and I am disappointed. I was born a Jew and I will die a Jew."

"ISRAEL NEEDS TEN FILMS ABOUT YESHUA!"

Instead of letting the rejection discourage him, he shows his strength of character by looking into the future. "Israel is going to need ten films about Yeshua before they begin to absorb the truth!" he concludes.

"I got a call from someone who saw the film, and he told me, 'You are before your time,'" Doron remarked. Nevertheless, he believes this movie must be seen by Israelis. "Everyone who views this film will have the opportunity to see things from a completely different point of view. They just have to see it!"

Yacov Damkani, whose life story is told in "A New Spirit."

Before he met Yacov, Doron acknowledges he didn't know anything about Yeshua. In school he did learn Yeshua was born a Jew, but that was it. Doron explains, "I didn't know that He lived as a Jew and died as a Jew. I was told He was a Christian. We didn't talk about him as 'our Yeshua the Jew,' but 'their (the gentiles) Jesus Christ.'"

"It has been for me a three-year process. I am reading the New Testament; I am going deep into the learning process. I'm a student!" Doron confirms.

I reminded him that in Hebrew the word *student* is *talmid*. Talmid [pronounced talMEED] is the word Yeshua used for his followers. In the New Testament *talmid* is the word for *disciple*.

SOME ULTRA-ORTHODOX BELIEVE THEIR RABBI HAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD

Doron related a conversation he encountered the day before in a thirty-minute radio interview: "They asked me, 'Why did you need to make a film about Yeshua? Why put him in our religious mix?'"

"My answer was this: The Habad movement around the world is very popular. They are ultra-Orthodox Jews who are usually happy and kind, and they offer a lot of humanitarian help to Jews around the world. They are well thought of.

"Yet when their Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, died in 1994, they buried him in a grave in Queens, New York. The site is visited by some 50,000 Jews a year. However, many of his followers absolutely believe he is not in that grave. His body is no longer there. One day, they say, he will come 'back to Israel and reign as messiah'—even though his feet never touched the Holy Land while he was alive.

"This is a very strange belief for most Israelis, but it's OK, they think. But when it comes to Yeshua, there is a total double standard. They declare you cannot be a Jew and believe in Yeshua."

Even the actors in the film have had lengthy conversations with each other and with Doron. They said to him, "Didn't you know that people would be angry with you?"

The lead actor, Imri Biton, has also found himself in an unusual position. He is often verbally attacked, and queried if he is now a Christian. He responds, "Look what Yeshua did for Yacov. He was a gangster. When he believed in Yeshua, he became a new person. These Messianic Jews are telling their own Truth. As a professional actor, I can join them."

Imri added that as a professional actor he was ready to do the film because he believed in the integrity of the people he was working with. He believed in Doron his producer, and in Yacov Damkani.

"I BELIEVE FILM CAN CHANGE PEOPLE'S THINKING."

Doron admits many Israelis see him as naïve. "But," he responds, "I am a director who deeply believes that film is the most powerful instrument invented in the last 100 years and is able to change the world's thinking."

"Hollywood changed everything," he says. "They can sell anything. I want to utilize this medium to change peoples' thinking." He continues, "One day I was walking down Dizzengoff Street (in Tel Aviv) and a couple of owners of a coffee house came out and said, 'We have been talking about this film for three days!' This is what I want to hear!"

"I have followed the fights on Facebook as a result of this movie. I estimate 70% of the posts are negative and

Doron Eran, Producer and Director of "A New Spirit."

30% positive. Again, my aim is to convince people to think."

YESHUA CHALLENGED CORRUPTION

Doron truly laments the corruption and greed for power that he sees everywhere. "As I study the New Testament, I think about the Jerusalem of Yeshua's time on earth. The politicians were corrupt. The religious leaders were corrupt. Yeshua was determined to challenge that corruption.

"Today it is the same. If Yeshua were in Jerusalem today, he would be confronting the evil that exists with our leaders."

Doron speaks of the original goals of the early pioneers who came to Israel to build an honest and principled new nation. "My father was one of two people who established Kibbutz Manara on the Lebanese border. He would never have dreamed that in this new state for Jewish people, the Prime Minister would one day be imprisoned for corruption. A President would be imprisoned for rape. The Minister of Finance would go to jail for stealing money that belonged to Holocaust survivors. The Communications Minister would also be put in jail for thievery.

"Even today," this filmmaker says softly, "our government is buried in corruption investigations. It's the same as it was in Yeshua's time on earth."

There is no mistake in acknowledging that Doron Eran is Israel's most unusual film producer/director in Israel today. And he is certainly the most courageous voice among those in the Israeli film industry—by far. ■

WHY GUATEMALA SAID "YES" TO JERUSALEM

By Shira Sorko-Ram

Guatemala is a little paradise where the weather is always pleasant and the larger cities lie in charming mountain ranges. If that were not enough, this petite nation offers delightful beaches on both the Caribbean side and the Pacific Ocean.

But Guatemala is also a corridor between Honduras and Mexico for drug trafficking. Guatemala's unpatrolled coastline and sparsely-populated jungles have made popular landing points for boats and planes carrying drugs from South America.

Crime and corruption always bring misery to a nation's people and Guatemala has had her share. Events completely beyond Guatemala's control, such as Castro's Marxist revolution in 1959 in nearby Cuba, or a devastating earthquake in 1976, which left more than 20,000 people dead and 1,000,000 homeless, plus the present poverty of over half its 17,000,000 citizens—breeding more crime—have challenged every leader of this nation for more than a century.

The nation's citizens suffered a 36-year-long civil war with "good" and bad dictators, and over 200,000 casualties. On the other hand, the leaders of Guatemala's governments faced formidable guerrilla opposition until, finally, peace accords were signed in 1996.

President Jimmy Morales waves to the crowd with his wife First Lady Hilda Marroquin after he was sworn in on January 14, 2016. The evangelical TV comic and and newcomer to politics is governing over a Central American nation beset by entrenched poverty, corruption and violent criminal gangs. Christians are praying.

A COUNTER-MOVEMENT BY GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

At the same time, another tidal wave of change was taking place. In the mostly Catholic country, the message of the Gospel, bringing multitudes to personal salvation through Jesus, spread across the land. People began to pray for the healing of their nation.

A new constitution, bringing greater emphasis to human rights guarantees, was approved in May 1985, resulting in the first election of a civilian president in Guatemala in fifteen years.

But with the dictators and their strong military arm gone, various bands of Marxist guerrillas and criminal gangs found new opportunity to unify in their insurgency. As instability swept through most of Central America, Guatemala's military again took the reins until 1996.

Nevertheless, with all the ups and downs, the Body of believers continued to expand, and now it is estimated that 40 percent of Guatemalans are born-again evangelicals. According to the Evangelical Alliance, there are about 27,000 evangelical churches in Guatemala!

It is with this background that Guatemala chose Jimmy Morales, an evangelical, as president in the 2016 election.

PRESIDENTS MORALES AND TRUMP

The parallels between the two presidents are amazing. President Morales was well-known as a media personality, actor, producer, and businessman.

He is an evangelical—and not just in name. His primary and secondary studies were conducted at the Evangelical Latin American Institute. He also studied theology at the Baptist Theological Seminary and audiovisual production at the Radio Television Espanola in Madrid, Spain.

Though he came from a very poor background, selling bananas on the street, he has earned degrees in a wide variety of subjects, been a university professor, and founded several businesses.

Like President Trump, he heads a right-wing party and preaches conservative values. He identifies as a nationalist, and opposes abortion, same-sex marriage and legalized drugs.

No one took him very seriously at first, as he had never held a political position. But like Trump, Morales, the dark horse and under-funded candidate, came from behind in a field of fourteen aspirants to lead in the first round, and demolished a former first lady in the presidential race.

He rode a wave of public disgust with the political elite and a "rigged" system. Running as an outsider with no connection to the discredited political class, Mr. Morales won 67 percent of the vote in a run-off that October.

Morales' success was viewed as a sign of the distrust of many Guatemalans towards the political elite that ruled the country for decades. The last president resigned because of corruption. In fact, at least ten parliamentarians are under investigation at the moment.

Although no one accuses Mr. Morales of enriching himself, this year his son and brother were charged with corruption, and there is an investigation by the UN claiming he failed to disclose some contributions to his presidential campaign.

Because of Guatemala's difficult history, its democracy is still fragile. But many Christian leaders would credit prayer with helping the country navigate through its latest crisis without major violence or a breakdown of the constitutional process.

As Morales took office, Christians knew there would be a lot at stake and a lot riding on Morales' shoulders. Many in the Congress are tainted with links to Guatemala's vast underworld. More than two-thirds of the cocaine that enters the United States passes through the country. Crime and insecurity—fueled by gangs, extortion, and drug trafficking—are off the charts. The economy is in tatters. So Christians have taken seriously the Lord's command to pray for their leaders.

ENTER RABBI YOSEF GARMON

The Rabbi of Guatemala, Yosef Garmon, is an unusually charismatic and much-loved rabbi by both Jews and Christians. Born and educated in Israel, he is also a brilliant scholar and writer. His warmth and genuine love for his fellow man have gained him strong ties with Guatemala's evangelical leaders. So although there are only about 900 Jewish Guatemalans, Rabbi Garmon has had exceptional favor and respect in this country.

Because Guatemala has always exhibited an especially warm heart for Israel, Rabbi Garmon has had many opportunities to represent Israel's interests and advise officials in the government. In Guatemala, as in other Latin American countries, there is an official group of parliamentarians supporting Israel's causes.

A few months ago, Rabbi Garmon began to encourage more members of parliament to join this group, and within a short time, fifty lawmakers joined the League of Friends of Israel in the parliament.

THE UN VOTES TO PROCLAIM JERUSALEM AS PALESTINIAN

On November 30, 2017 the UN General Assembly, led by the Islamic states, voted 151 to six, with nine abstentions asserting that Jerusalem had nothing to do with Israel. Guatemala was one of the 151.

From left: Cash Luna, pastor of 30,000 member Casa de Dios in Guatemala City; Rabbi of Guatemala Yosef Garmon; Ari Sorko-Ram; Robert Morris, pastor of 36,000-member Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas.

However, immediately Christian pastors loudly complained, protesting the president's vote against Israel. The Christian churches together with the fifty parliamentarians lead by Rabbi Garmon and the Mayor of Guatemala City all pushed for the President of Guatemala to support Israel. As a result, Guatemala made a "correction" in its vote and re-voted to reject the UN measure.

On December 6, 2017, when President Trump announced the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel, Guatemala was watching. Two weeks later, the Rabbi found that in Peru, a group of parliamentarians were preparing to ask the President of Peru to move their embassy to Jerusalem. He then shared the news with the League of Friends of Israel in the Guatemala parliament, and they decided to do the same.

These fifty parliamentarians, together with the Mayor of Guatemala City, and Christian pastors, asked the President of Guatemala to move the Embassy of Guatemala to Jerusalem.

On Christmas Eve, Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke with President Morales, entreating him to follow President Trump by announcing that he, too, would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. That evening, he did exactly that.

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS WORKING TOGETHER BROUGHT VICTORY

"We are grateful to our president for making this move," a Guatemalan Christian businessman emailed us, "but it happened because of the pressure of all the Christian pastors, the Rabbi and the League of Friendship in the parliament that he finally took the decision to move the Embassy of Guatemala to Jerusalem."

The government spokesperson said the decision was made without any pressure or overture from the United States. It was their own decision to be the second nation in the world to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital!

"Our president is receiving the kudos, but he is also having to stand up against tremendous pressure from Arab governments, Palestinian leaders and European nations to rescind the decision," wrote our friend who has many contacts in the government and with church leaders.

Of course, Israel is thrilled. The Jerusalem Post front page raved: "While it was courageous of U.S. President Donald Trump to deviate from the 'international community' consensus and do what is right, for Guatemala it was beyond gutsy. And we here in the Jewish state are truly grateful. Viva Guatemala!" ■

ISTANDWITHISRAEL.COM:

AT WORK HELPING ISRAEL'S MESSIANIC JEWISH BELIEVERS OVERCOME

"We are Caren and Klaas, and are blessed with one daughter and two sons. As longtime believers in Messiah Yeshua, we feel called to living in the Promised Land; Caren made aliya with her parents over twenty years ago and Klaas more than eleven years ago. We met while Klaas was visiting Israel through Athletes in Action from the Netherlands.

"When our eldest, Netaley, was ten months old, a huge brain tumor was discovered, which was removed a few days later during emergency surgery. God was with us every step of the way. Prof. Constantini, one of the top surgeons in this field worldwide, was available and willing to perform the operation. Netaley barely survived due to massive loss of blood and Prof. Constantini indicated afterwards this was one of the most difficult surgeries he had ever performed. We were told later that only he could have pulled it off.

"Due to complications, Netaley lost control over the right side of her body a few days after the surgery. Since then, she has received lots of physiotherapy to help her regain control over her right side. She has had many other treatments, including chemotherapy, to deal with all the other side effects of the operation. Thankfully, a few years later Netaley regained enough control over her right leg to allow her to walk with the help of splints.

"Because of the difficulties Netaley was having with walking, we were forced to move from our third-floor apartment to a home on the ground floor, doubling our monthly housing expenses.

The Bakker Family

"One of the reasons we moved into this home is that it has an enclosed patio, which we use as a playroom for Netaley and the boys. Additionally, Caren uses it as a teaching room for her English lessons to Israeli children, so she can help with extra income (and be a light to the children and their parents).

"We soon ran into some serious problems with the home. We learned that half of the patio was extended without a proper foundation. The first half, closest to the home, was built on stone during construction; the second was added after construction and built on sand—and I think we all know what Scripture says about building on sand. To ensure we could safely continue using the patio we needed to have it repaired, which would cost over $20,000. Unfortunately, we could not recover these extra expenses from the previous owners.

"We are so grateful for the gift we received from IstandwithIsrael to help get this done. It kept us out of a potential downward financial spiral. Thanks to generous Maoz contributors to IstandwithIsrael, we are able to continue focusing on our family and the wonderful people in our neighborhood, including those who are searching for the Light of the World!" ■

A TESTIMONY OF THE TRUTH OF GOD'S PROMISES

My wife and I have led Living Waters church since 2009. We have always supported Israel as a couple, so one of our goals has been to lead our congregation into a greater understanding and appreciation for our Jewish roots as believers.

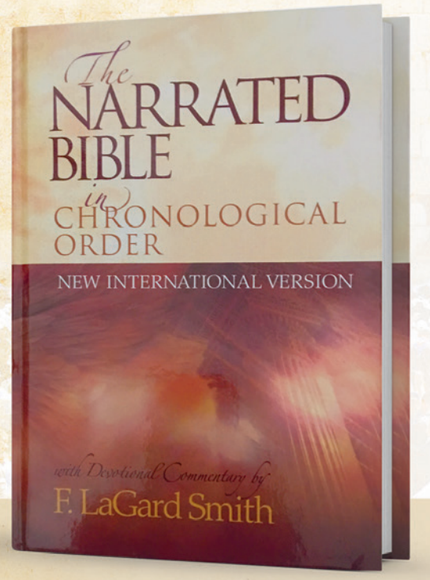
Right from the beginning God has blessed us in so many ways. However, three years ago a shift took place when we made the decision to give the first fruit of our financial giving to Israel. Since then we have grown exponentially!

In addition to this new level of numeric growth, we have also been blessed financially. But most of all we have been blessed with a constant and abiding manifestation of Jesus' presence and power.

We have no doubt that one of the major reasons why we are experiencing God's blessing at this level is because we have chosen to honour God's Word by blessing Israel.

Tony Williams

Senior Pastor—Living Waters Church, Paignton, Devon, England



A WONDERFUL ANSWER TO A DIFFICULT CHALLENGE

The Dead Sea Scrolls have proven categorically that the Biblical Scrolls of the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures) of Yeshua's day are the same as the Hebrew Bible in existence today.

The problem is that this ancient Hebrew is not understandable to today's modern Hebrew reader (excluding a few scholars and teachers). To give you just a hint of the difficulty an Israeli has in reading the Hebrew Bible, here are a few lines of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales written about 600 years ago in what is described as "Middle English":

Ye seken lond and see for your wynnynges,
As wise folk ye knowen all th'estaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tydynges
And tales, bothe of pees and of debaat.
(The Man of Law's Tale)

(Translation)

You seek land and sea for your winnings,
As wise folk you know all the estate
Of kingdoms; you be fathers of tidings,
And tales, both of peace and of debate.

As you can see, the origins, even of the English language, are challenging. Now consider the Hebrew Bible that was written in an archaic language spoken some 2,500 to 3,000 years ago. Israelis across the board will tell you the Hebrew Bible is difficult—if not near-impossible—for the average person to understand.

Over these 3,000 years, the Old Testament Scriptures have stayed exactly the same. No scribe has ever dared to change one letter, and if there seems to be a copying error, generations of scribes have always copied the mistake as is and then noted at the end of the page what they believe would be the correct spelling or word.

The result is that few Israelis read the Hebrew Scriptures (except ultra-Orthodox who do read the Five Books of Moses and the Psalms). Fewer, of course, read the New Testament, although it has been translated into modern Hebrew from ancient Greek.

What can we do to help our Jewish people who might be interested in reading the Bible—both the Old and New Testaments?

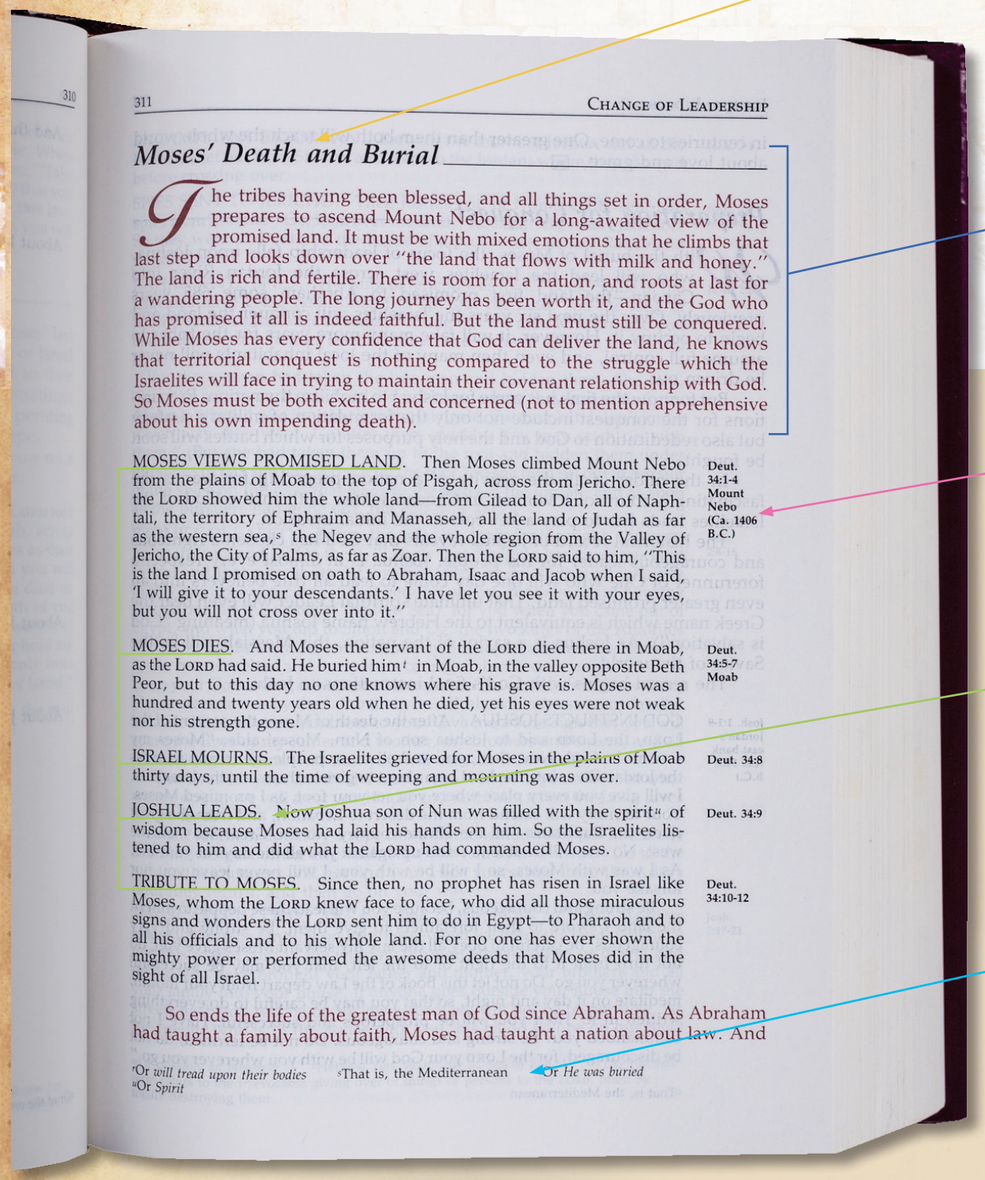
We believe we have an answer—*The Narrated Bible in Chronological Order.*

In the Hebrew version we are now working on, the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures will remain in the same ancient Hebrew language. But a flowing, beautiful introductory narration to each section, plus subtitles for every few verses, will give context and clarity to the message of the Scriptures.

The modern Hebrew New Testament, also in chronological order, beautifully brings together the four Gospels into one single story of the Son of Man becoming the sacrificed Lamb of God and the resurrected Savior.

With our "spiritual eyes" we see many Israelis understanding and accepting God's Word for the first time, and thereby receiving Eternal Life.

We welcome you to help us in this effort to bring the Sacred Scriptures back to the descendants of those who were divinely inspired to write them!



And I saw heaven opened:
and behold, a white horse, and He who
sat upon it is called Faithful and True
and His name is called the Word of God.

Revelation 19:11,13

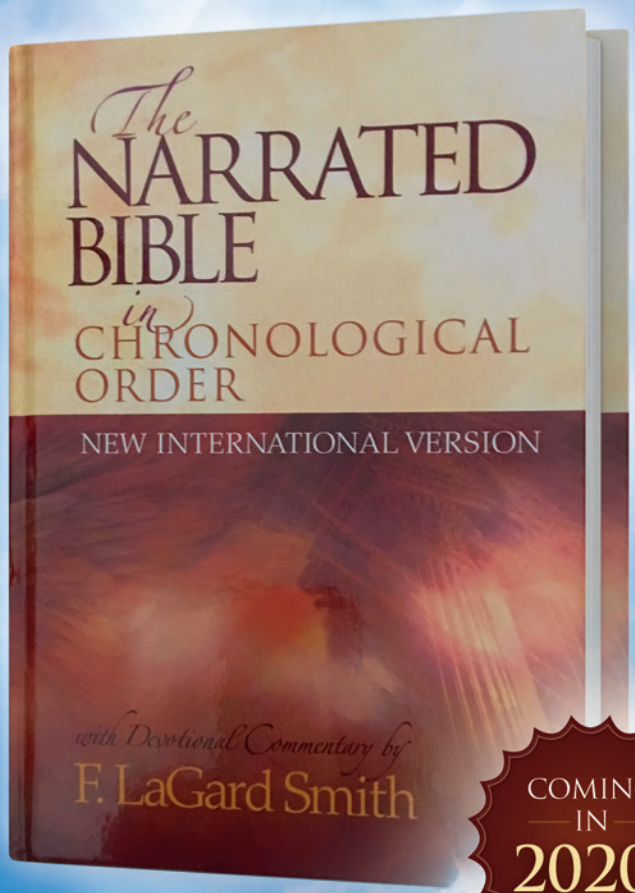
Bringing Yeshua,

THE WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH, TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

The Hebrew translation of this Bible is moving ahead at full speed! Invest with us to bring the Hebrew Bible back to the Jewish people!

You can sponsor one or more pages of this Bible in Hebrew for **$250** per page. **(£195, €210, CAN $315)**

maoz israel



COMING IN 2020!