

THE MESSAGE FROM JERUSALEM

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American society faces a deep crisis of meaning to which the city, and the idea, of Jerusalem has an answer. It is needed by Jews, and as much or more by Christians.

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In an extraordinary speech a few months ago at the University of Notre Dame, U.S. Attorney General William Barr bluntly addressed the deep malaise affecting large swaths of contemporary American society. Describing a breakdown of epic proportions, he adduced such now-familiar indices as the high incidence of broken families, the soaring suicide rates, the record levels of depression, the army of “angry and alienated young males,” and of course the ever more widespread addiction to opioids and other drugs. American culture, he declared, is descending into “chaos.”



The Tower of David in Jerusalem. Atlantide Phototravel/Corbis/Getty Images.

Speaking at a Catholic university, to an audience that included a large number of religious Christians, Barr characterized this grim reality as both a disaster for untold numbers of American citizens and a genuine crisis for American society at large. What was responsible for it? What had changed?

The founding proposition of the American experiment was that biblical morality—our nation’s bedrock Judeo-Christian inheritance—could form and sustain a citizenry suited for modern liberty and self-government. That proposition would be tested over the ensuing centuries by multiple vicissitudes and even by civil war, yet through it all the American experience would continue to validate the Founders’ faith in the “moral and religious” people for whom alone, as John Adams insisted, “our Constitution was made.”

But no longer. Today, the Judeo-Christian moral system has not so much dribbled away as it has been actively attacked and severely weakened through a deliberate campaign of delegitimization by myriad enemies of religious morality. “Secularists, and their allies among the ‘progressives,’” as Barr put it,

have marshaled all the forces of mass communications, popular culture, the entertainment industry, and academia in an unremitting assault on religion and traditional values. These instruments are used not only affirmatively to promote secular orthodoxy but also to drown out and silence opposing voices. . . . Those who defy the creed risk a figurative burning at the stake.

Under way for a half-century and now accelerating at social-media speed, this liberation project has yielded the opposite of an increase in human happiness. Indeed, as today’s toll of victims attests, the new religion of irreligion has “brought with it immense suffering, wreckage, and misery.”

In the face of this social crisis—this moral, cultural, and existential crisis—what is to be done? In the past, noted Barr,

societies—like the human body—seem to have had a self-healing mechanism: a self-correcting mechanism that gets things back on course if things go too far. . . . This is the idea of the pendulum. We have all thought that after a while the “pendulum will swing back.”

But today, he maintains, it is no longer possible to rely on the pendulum effect. The destruction has been too thorough—and it has been greatly abetted by the “unprecedented degree of distraction” afforded by all the instruments of “digital stimulation” that divert us from real love, friendship, and communal responsibility, and by the “almost limitless ways of indulging all of our physical appetites.”

And when social life degenerates and decays—when the negative civic consequences of this moral breakdown assert themselves—we look to the nanny state as the new savior. Or, as Barr put it, “in the face of all the increasing pathologies—instead of addressing the underlying cause, we have the state in the role of alleviator of bad consequences.” Instead of curbing the pornographic degradation of love, we protect sexual license and turn a blind eye to its brutalizing effects especially on the young; instead of curbing the use of drugs, we legalize them and then demand “safe injection sites” for a new generation of addicts. Yet despite all of this human wreckage, the new secularist faith itself—the idea that freedom from the traditional moral order is our new birthright—is never questioned, let alone reconsidered, by its adherents. Quite the opposite: progressivism’s religious rivals—America’s traditionalist synagogues and churches, traditional schools and communities of faith—are targeted as public threats to the new “woke” morality.

An expert in law, Barr catalogued the various ways in which the secularist campaign has, with notable success, exploited (and distorted) aspects of the American legal order to infiltrate its dogmas into public policy, into our major corporations, and most ominously into the curricula

and governing ethos of American public schools. He also described how progressive courts and regulators have simultaneously worked to *hobble* religious institutions and religiously-affiliated private education. And he concluded with a clarion call to “fight for the most cherished of our liberties: the freedom to live according to our faith.” For only in a political order that preserves religious freedom will the great project of Judeo-Christian renewal—and thus American renewal—truly have a chance.

I. Jerusalem Calling

Still, the defense of religious liberty, by itself, is only a precondition for renewal, not yet the restoration of our broken culture. “What is it,” Barr rightly asks, “that can fill the spiritual void in the hearts of the individual person? And what is a system of values that can sustain human social life?”

Some Christians have an answer to that question. To halt the dangerous decline into post-Christian chaos, they have concluded that they need to recover a certain *pre-Christian* understanding of human life and human nature. That is, they need to return—morally, spiritually, politically—to the Hebrew Bible, and through it, especially, to the message of the city of Jerusalem: the Jerusalem of old and, no less, the Jerusalem, and the Israel, that now miraculously live again.

Indeed, consider this: at any gathering of religious Christians in America today, the loudest applause is often reserved for causes and events related to Zion: for the moving of the American embassy to Jerusalem, for formal U.S. recognition of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, for popular American support of our friend and ally, the Jewish state.

Why does the city of Jerusalem, and why does the state of Israel, stir so many Christian souls with such spirited resolve? Answers abound, both theological and political.

Theologically, many (though not all) evangelical Christians believe the return of the Jewish people to Zion is a crucial step on the road to ultimate redemption. Politically, many Christians see modern Israelis as the “fighting front line” in defending the Western world—the Judeo-Christian world—against radical Islam. More recently, many Christians have been appalled to see how a maligned and grotesquely caricatured Israel has been pressed into service as a favored target of certain radical secularists, mainly in Europe and Latin America but also in the U.S., for whom the Jewish state can be held up as the world’s most offensive example of ethno-religious nationalism. For these Christians, standing up for Israel is a way of standing up against the most aggressive wing of the modern progressive project.

Yet these reasons for the modern Christian’s enthusiasm for Israel do not quite get to the heart of the matter. The Christian yearns for Jerusalem because the Christian world itself is in a moral—indeed a metaphysical—crisis. While the cathedrals of Europe lie largely empty, and while

Christianity in the United States, under siege by energized secularists, has been weakened internally by crippling scandals and waves of disaffection, Jerusalem, the ancient holy city reborn, stands for many as the city of hope, *the* spiritual center of a Western renewal anchored in the Hebraic moral system. In dark times—and religious Christians, of whom William Barr is one, surely believe we are living in dark moral times—Jerusalem renews and rekindles the spirit.

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I witnessed the Christian passion for Zion firsthand when recently asked to speak to a few hundred religious Christians at the YMCA in Jerusalem, across the street from the King David Hotel. A century ago or more, only a novelist (like George Eliot), a visionary (like Moses Hess), or a prophet (like Theodor Herzl) could have pictured such a scene. Me: a religious Jew. The audience: conservative Catholics and evangelicals, on a spiritual pilgrimage, eager to hear from one of their “elder brothers in faith.” The setting: a YMCA in an Israel restored, in a city governed again by the long-exiled Jewish people, in a nation brimming with Jewish life. As it says in Ezekiel: “This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.”

Today’s Christians are hardly the first to look to Jerusalem, incubator and carrier of the message of the Hebrew Bible, for courage and inspiration. Many figures in history, both ancient and modern, have tried to grasp the deeper meaning of the human story during visits to “the city of righteousness, the faithful city,” where the human drama reveals itself most vividly.

What exactly is it that they see there? In 1949—in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and in the midst of the austere but euphoric beginnings of modern Israel—the Canadian Jewish poet and journalist A.M. Klein visited the country and, two years later, published a strange short novel, now largely forgotten, called *The Second Scroll*. Klein was on a quest to understand the transcendent significance of that specific place and time, with the gas chambers of Auschwitz still fresh in men’s minds and the resurrection of Israel happening before his eyes.

The novel takes Klein’s protagonist—a Jewish Odysseus of the spirit—on a great metaphysical adventure from the ghettos of the Old World to the Sistine Chapel, and from Communism to Nazism. Seeking truth, enduring evil, he finally lands in Israel restored. There, on the lookout for a new revelation of God’s purpose in the world—a “second scroll”—he turns at first to the otherworldly visions of redemption penned by Jewish mystics and poets. But then he has the true revelation: the revelation of the *miracle* of everyday Jewish life, reborn in the now-living-again language of the Hebrew Bible:

In the streets, in the shops, everywhere about me I had looked but had not seen. It was all there all the time—the fashioning folk, anonymous and unobserved, creating word by word, phrase by phrase, the total work that when completed would stand as the epic revealed.

They were not members of literary societies, the men who were giving new life to the antique speech, but merchants, tradesmen, day laborers. In their daily activity, and without pose or flourish, they showed it to be alive again, the shaping Hebrew imagination. . . . There were dozens, there were hundreds of instances of such metamorphosis and rejuvenation. Nameless authorship flourished in the streets.

It was as if I was spectator to the healing of torn flesh, or heard a broken bone come together, set, and grow again. . . . And this discovered poetry, scattered though it was, had its one obsessive theme. It was obsessed by the miraculous.

This, for Klein, *was* the miracle: everyday Jewish existence, saturated and sanctified in the holy Hebrew language. The holiness of regular people, not merely the poets and mystics but mortal men and women creatively meeting their needs and tending their gardens. The poetry of life as the only true answer to the politics of death. The resurrection of God's chosen people—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—working and singing and raising their children, living normal lives in the land of their forefathers.

But Klein also pointed to a deeper truth, and one still true today. For the Jews of Jerusalem, the miracle of normalcy was and is *not* normal. In Jerusalem, normalcy is *awe-inspiring*, a resurrection that reminds one of God's hand in the world (for in no other way could one explain the inexplicable survival and return of the Jews); but it is also *haunted*, a normalcy secured and preserved at great human cost out of the ashes of the Shoah and then in war after war. And, in Jerusalem, normalcy is *ever-threatened*: there are still many who seek to grind Jewish bones into nothingness, and they are armed with missiles pointed right at the holy city.

For the Jews of Jerusalem, the miracle of normalcy was and is *not* normal. In Jerusalem, normalcy is awe-inspiring—but also haunted.

Here, then, lies the doubly paradoxical message of Jerusalem and the Jewish people understood as a light unto a troubled humanity. Normal life is an *everyday* miracle, revealed in the warm embrace of mother and child, in the sweet songs of praise (*Hallel*) sung on festival days, at a family meal in the sukkah, in bride and groom under the wedding canopy. And yet, for Jews as ultimately for all human beings, normal life is a *fragile* miracle, one whose preservation requires a more-than-normal spirit, a more-than-normal courage, a more-than-normal faith.

At a Jewish wedding, in blessing “the King of the universe Who created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride,” Jews still today continue to pray for ultimate restoration, for the day when there might again be heard “in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sounds of joy and gladness, of bridegroom and bride, . . . of young people at their song-filled feasts.” And then our everyday, normal bridegroom breaks a glass—to commemorate the destruction of the ancient Temple and as a reminder of the pain, evil, and uncertainty that have repeatedly befallen the Jewish people in the past and whose mortal reality the joyful couple must accept, endure,

and overcome. This is the human condition, on display in vivid Jewish colors for all the world to see, in the ancient capital of the ancient Israelite nation reborn.

If this is indeed a true revelation of the human condition, that Hebraic vision did not come to an end with the destruction of the Temple and exile from the land in the late 1st century CE, only to be brought back from the grave in the second half of the 20th century. To the contrary: what would come to be called the “rabbinic way of life,” largely conceived and enacted in exile, persisted through time, often in harsh conditions, by being centered theologically in the holiness of everyday human existence, protected and preserved by a tough-minded code of law that structured every aspect of Jewish existence. The most animal functions—our natural needs and drives—were governed by commandments intended to restrain the commanded from the temptations of reckless pleasure-seeking, to remind them through innumerable formulas of blessing and gratitude of the unmerited gift of life that can so easily be taken for granted, and to elevate prosaic bodily existence to the plane of transcendent purpose.

In exile, these rules preserved the spirit of Jerusalem from extinction. The secular Zionist Hess, writing in the 1870s, described rabbinic Judaism as the hard shell that protected the Jewish body from assimilation and destruction. As many keen observers (like Mark Twain) have noted, the most powerful empires—with their animal gods and wild ecstasies, and with the Jewish remnant often under their dictatorial thumb—ultimately collapsed. Yet the Israelites remained, as both people and idea, their sacred purpose still miraculously intact.

In today’s Jerusalem reborn, as so many Christians bear inspired witness, the Hebraic vision of the commanded life has now transformed the revived holy land into the moral capital of the West. Which is also why the enemies of Judeo-Christian civilization—both secularist and Islamist—now target Israel as enemy number one.

II. The Hebraic Spirit

Cheering for Jerusalem at church revivals and CPAC conferences, religious Christians seem to grasp almost instinctively that Jews are the clearest evidence and starkest reminder of the Western world’s fighting Hebraic spirit. In an age threatened by radical secularism and radical Islam, by cultural decadence and a pagan view of human life as the unbridled pursuit of personal pleasure, they share with Jews a common origin in Abraham, a common scripture in the Hebrew Bible, a common moral challenge—and a common civilizational purpose.

The covenant of Abraham began, after all, as a response to the moral and political crisis of universal man, when God concluded that the way to instruct mankind in the good was to instruct a particular people—the Israelites; and that the way to remind mankind of the fragility yet indestructibility of the good was the miracle of Jewish survival from exile to redemption as the ever-dying people that never dies.

The Hebrew Bible revealed to human beings the guiding truths of existence: that the world was created by a Being more powerful than nature; that human beings were created in the image of God; that human life is sacred and child sacrifice abhorrent; that human kings are answerable to an ultimate Judge; that eating and sex are morally significant activities, governed by laws that separate the sacred from the profane; that death is real but not final; that rearing children is life's greatest blessing and most important commandment; and that despite the horrible realities of history, human life is not tragic but redemptive, not the eternal recurrence of the same but a providential story in which the Israelites have been chosen to play a special role as a "light unto the nations" whose improbable existence through time depends always and ultimately on God.

Pilgrims—and the Christian moral imagination in general—have now returned to Jerusalem, looking to the Hebraic way of life for guidance and inspiration.

The Christian version of this moral and theological vision sprang from Judaism; and while the Christian branches and leaves have sometimes tried to suck the life out of the Jewish root, the armies of Christian pilgrims—and the Christian moral imagination in general—have now returned to Jerusalem looking to the Jews for guidance and inspiration. The new Christians seem to recognize that our fates—and the fate of the Judeo-Christian moral system itself—are now bound together.

Grave threats to the Hebraic way of life have always been with us—as the Bible itself describes, our ancient forebears had their Canaanite, Egyptian, and Babylonian rivals. But the modern age, as Barr eloquently explains, seems different. Paganism and terrorism are now aided and facilitated by the uncontrollable fruits of human rationalism. The crooked spirit of man is now armed with mankind's novel technological powers—be they genetic engineering, transgender surgery, and Internet pornography on demand or chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons proliferated on a mass scale. Human lust, you might say, has teamed up with the lab scientists.

Admittedly, defending and embodying the Hebraic way of life, with its governing strictures on human conduct and human relations, has always been hard. It demands the moral training of both body and soul, and it requires endurance: all the harder when society constantly invites us to let go, to give in, to adopt the apparently easier but ultimately dehumanizing path.

But today, for all the reasons expounded by Barr, the current moral challenge seems particularly difficult and dramatic. Anti-biblical civilization is now on the offensive, with its leaders well-entrenched in the commanding heights of modern culture: the universities, the media, the schools, and now even the corporations. And these progressive prophets, in their secular temples, are armed with some very seductive arguments: that modern science has embarrassed the truth-claims of biblical religion, and that religious morality is oppressive, judgmental, and unnecessarily prohibitive. A new form of compassion has thus become the dominant ethos of our age, and a well-policed moral relativism is now our dominant ideology. In this vision, every way of life is seen as equally good, including a variety of lifestyles that were once taboo; to think

otherwise would make other people suffer under the weight of moral standards (and scarlet letters) that supposedly dehumanize and imprison them.

But not quite *every* way of life is tolerated. From the rainbow menu of moral pluralism, only the biblical vision, propped up by harsh and archaic laws that restrict human freedom, is excluded. In the new progressive mind, traditional religious morality is now treated as a form of bigotry to be utterly restricted, rejected, and suffocated. In this, as Barr argued at Notre Dame, today's relativists show themselves to be draconian absolutists, ready to consign any who dissent from their dogmas to "a figurative burning at the stake."

Of course, the arguments of the new secularists can be readily answered, both in theory and in practice. One need only point to the myriad abandoned and damaged children from marriages with no inter-generational commitment to the family; the relations between men and women living without any hard-won traditional guidance about their distinctive roles in human life; the collapsing birthrates in the most advanced civilizations; the fruits of secular radicalism in the last century's Stalinist and Hitlerite nightmares, checked only by the warrior courage of believing Christians and Jews in battlefields military, political, diplomatic, and cultural.

The history of Judeo-Christian civilization itself is surely stained by many errors and sins—including the Christian mistreatment and persecution of Jews. But past errors and excesses are not grounds for present surrender to the new tyranny of moral liberationism. The Judeo-Christian moral vision is not always "nice" (to use the term that the late Allan Bloom identified as the moral credo of generations of his students, blissfully ignorant that the miracle of freedom is an unmerited gift, a hard-won achievement, and a condition in need of defense). Rearing children, facing death, preserving justice in the face of criminality—niceness alone is not enough, and niceness wrongly understood will only lead us astray. Our age needs moral toughness, not amoral niceness. The Hebrew Bible understood this from the very beginning.

For Western civilization to flourish, Judeo-Christian moral disarmament, or moral surrender, must come to an end. Traditional Jews and Christians must forcefully reassert that the Hebraic way of life—with its vision of sanctified normalcy, governed by the Hebrew Bible's moral code, and courageously defended—is good and true. They—we—should never be embarrassed by traditional Judaism or Christianity, and should never give up on our sacred moral heritage.

III. The Same Moral Challenge

While Jews and Christians now face the same moral challenge, the Jewish people and the Christian faithful are differently situated with respect to it.

To begin with the Jews: Jerusalem may be the moral capital of the West, but Jews remain the ever-threatened people, with only a few million of them in the world and myriad grave perils to their very existence.

In Europe, the Jews who remain are threatened by new waves of anti-Jewish terrorism. Parties of the left and the right blame Jews (yet again!) as the cause of Europe's woes, with the most unceasing attacks coming from those claiming that the Jewish mistreatment of Palestinians is what stands in the way of Europe's Kantian dream of perpetual peace. Many Jews in Europe—perhaps most Jews in Europe—are now thinking about whether, or when, or how to leave. An old nightmare may be returning.

In America, anti-Jewish prejudice is on the rise, with the most outwardly visible Jews being targeted for mayhem or slaughter in synagogues, kosher markets, and rabbis' homes. The progressive campaign targeting Israel and friends of Israel as racist occupiers is doing tremendous damage on university campuses across the country. At the same time, among a large percentage of non-Orthodox Jews, the warm embrace of American liberty has gradually dissolved any strong sense of Jewish identity and weakened the rituals, obligations, and institutions that preserve and protect that identity. The new progressive culture is now more antithetical to traditional Jewish morality than ever before, and the new progressive legal agenda increasingly threatens to restrict or ostracize traditional Jewish practice. The secular Jew is often only faintly Jewish in his or her core life commitments, and the traditional Jew is potentially becoming less free.

In Israel, by contrast, Jewish life shines brightest. Like any normal nation, Israel has its share of corruption, imperfection, fecklessness, and internal division. No one is claiming that modern Israel is—or ever will be—a moral utopia. But the eternal ethos of Jerusalem once again shapes Jewish communities throughout the holy land. In their calendar, language, holidays, and landscape, Israeli Jews live in direct continuity with their biblical past. And alone among the advanced nations of the West, Israel has a high birthrate: a deep sign of cultural vitality connecting past, present, and future. This is exactly the reality of normal life resurrected that the poet Klein recognized as a divine miracle. And yet, in Israel, the physical dangers to Jewish existence are grave—the venomous hatred persists, while the missiles remain pointed at Zion from north and south and east and west.

This should remind us of another mark of distinction. The Hebraic vision is not only a spiritual or moral vision. In Jewish thought and in the Jewish liturgy, it is also a *political* vision, a vision of the ingathering of the Jews, of the literal rebuilding of Jerusalem, of the restoration of the kingdom of David. In this vision, an underlying unity marries spiritual steadfastness with political sovereignty and strength.

In the current age, Jews will regularly be assigned a twisted role in history, as they always have been—accused of everything from greedily engineering and living off of Western civilization's moral decline, to traducing American interests at the behest of a malign Zionist cabal, to either heedlessly pressing the case for a dangerously utopian universalism or, contrarily, refusing to take the lesson of their own near-extirpation by Hitlerite nationalism and incorrigibly clinging to their clannish and exclusivist attachments. The Jews will always be blamed for whatever may be thought to ail the body politic or used as fuel to energize other people's ideologies. But the real Jew stands for something else and something other: for the sanctification

of normal life, shaped and governed by the commandments, combined with the political realism necessary to preserve normal life in the face of abnormally obsessed enemies.

Even as there are ample grounds for worry about the precarious state of the Jews, there may be ampler grounds for worry about the precarious state of Christians.

Jerusalem is thus the sacred city with the political (and military) will to defend itself—the fortified desert capital of Jewish exceptionalism. That God may be with us, after all, does not mean that God can achieve His purposes without us. Political leaders like Moses, Joshua, and Esther—or Theodor Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, and Menachem Begin—would surely never qualify as cuddly universalists. Without them, Jewish brides and grooms would never have had a safe canopy in Jerusalem under which to raise their voices in songs of joy to the Creator of the universe, Who may reward them with children just as He rewarded the longings of Sarah, Rebecca, and Hannah.

If this is the light going forth from Jerusalem, from generation to generation, it is also a stark reminder that even as there are ample grounds for worrying about the precarious state of the Jews, there may be ampler grounds for worrying (as Barr does) about the precarious state of Christian civilization.

Unlike Christian Scripture, Hebrew Scripture grappled in realistic terms, from the beginning, with man's "political-theological" problem. The books of Exodus, Joshua, Samuel, Esther—these are, among much else, master works of political realism. The founding of ancient Israel was precisely a story about preserving and defending holiness in a world marshaled against it.

And yet, for thousands of years after the destruction of the Temple, Jews, unlike Christians, compiled no real record of actually governing cities, states, or empires. By contrast, Christians did compile such a record, and with it there inevitably has come the legacy of past errors, including the abuse of Christian power by Christian kings and the unjust persecution of accused heretics by Christian tribunals. The descent into post-Christian chaos and anomie is largely driven by a misguided effort to correct for those errors: that is, by rescinding (once and for all) any biblical claims on the human soul and the human city in a kind of cleansing or atonement.

How many Western Christians, having learned the wrong lessons from their past, have become unwilling or unable to defend themselves and their civilization against the moral, cultural, and political forces that assault that civilization? How many Christians have falsely concluded that Christian imperfection somehow invalidates the truths of the Judeo-Christian moral vision? At its best, the Christian West has spread the biblical vision of man to billions of God-seeking people around the globe; and so if Christianity forever neuters itself in a misdirected form of penitence—or "liberation"—then Judeo-Christian civilization is doomed. Contemporary Europe, alas, is exhibit A in this tragic story-in-progress.

That is emphatically *not* the message of, or from, Jerusalem.

IV. Brothers in Faith

The ultimate theological differences between Jews and Christians will never be resolved, and their respective places in human history can never—and should never—be the same. But as Jews and Christians, we share a vision of the human person shaped by the moral passion of Abraham, the law of Moses, the spiritual yearnings of David, and Hannah’s longing for a child.

For too long, the prophets of anti-biblical civilization have tried to discredit the Judeo-Christian way of preserving a dignified way of life in the face of human frailty and evil.

For too long, the prophets of anti-biblical civilization have tried to discredit the Judeo-Christian way of preserving and perpetuating a dignified way of life in the face of human frailty and human evil. Our frailty and vices they have instead fed and encouraged, while to human evil they have naively or perniciously given a free pass and opened the gates of the city. In the absence of religious faith and religious morality, just as the great Catholic writer Flannery O’Connor warned decades ago, “we govern by tenderness”; and when such tenderness is detached from its ultimate source in a just and almighty God, “its logical outcome is terror. It ends in forced labor camps and in the fumes of the gas chamber.” Seduced and paralyzed by our supposedly more compassionate form of relativism, virtue retreats as evil advances. This is the nightmare that Barr described in his Notre Dame speech, and that social observers like Charles Murray, Leon Kass, and Yuval Levin have been diagnosing for decades.

The challenge for traditional Jews and Christians is to regain the moral high ground of Judeo-Christian civilization by repudiating and fighting back against its enemies, by rekindling our own moral self-confidence, and by proclaiming and demonstrating that the Hebraic commandments are humanity’s truest guide to the best way of life. We need to restore religious liberty, promote religious schools, reclaim the biblical foundation of America and of the West, and protect modern Israel as a fragile miracle that should inspire Jews, Christians, and God-seeking people around the world.

That emphatically *is* the message of, and from, Jerusalem.

In 2000, Pope John Paul II visited Jerusalem for the first time. He prayed at the Western Wall and delivered a speech at Yad Vashem—a memorial museum whose story ends not with the destruction of the Jews but with the rebirth of Israel. In his speech, he declared:

My own personal memories are of all that happened when the Nazis occupied Poland during the war. I remember my Jewish friends and neighbors, some of whom perished, while others survived. I have come to Yad Vashem to pay homage to the

millions of Jewish people who, stripped of everything, especially of human dignity, were murdered in the Holocaust.

We wish to remember. But we wish to remember for *a purpose* [emphasis added], namely, to ensure that never again will evil prevail, as it did for the millions of innocent victims of Nazism. Out of the depths of pain and sorrow, the believer's heart cries out: "I trust in You, O Lord: I say, 'You are my God'" (Psalms 31:14).

The improbable Jewish story—the resurrection of Jerusalem, a "broken bone come together, set, and grow[ing] again"—provides perhaps the most compelling grounds for believing that good, in the end, will indeed ultimately triumph over evil. For without God's election of the Jews, the biblical vision of human life as sanctified normalcy, under commandment, courageously defended, might never have come into being. The Jews are the divine message in the bottle.

Like his fellow Christian pilgrims in their multitudes, the pope came to Jerusalem not to crusade or to conquer but to draw inspiration from the chosen people in the holy land. He came to pray with and for his "elder brothers in faith." Jerusalem, forever the Jews' city of hope and once again the West's, is now the emblem of our shared purpose: to work with faith, political will, and moral resolve to rescue and defend our shared heritage from destruction and decay.