

Episode 224

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the God Questions podcast. Today is an interview I've been looking forward to for quite a while. We had it scheduled earlier in the year and then I think even last year, but due to various details which will make sense here in a second, we were never able to make it happen. So Amir Tsarfati is joining me today and we're going to be talking about Israel and God's plan for Israel and Israel in the end times and answering some of the most frequently asked questions that we receive here at Got Questions about Israel. So Amir, thank you for joining me.

Amir Tsarfati

Hey, you're welcome, Shea. It's an honor to be here. Got Question is one of my favorite websites to go to and you're doing a great job and so it's an honor for me to be with you here.

Shea Houdmann

Thank you for that encouragement as well. So Amir, tell our listeners just a little bit about yourself and a little bit about Behold Israel, the ministry that you started.

Amir Tsarfati

Yeah, so, you know, I'm a Jewish believer in Jesus and Yeshua. I got saved around 17, right after I heard the gospel and following a crisis where I actually wanted to end my life. I served in the Israeli military, ended up as a deputy governor of Jericho and then part of the negotiation team that handed Jericho over to the Palestinians in 1994.

Amir Tsarfati

And later on, I studied in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to become a licensed tour guide because starting from the very end of my military service, I felt called to literally explain Israel to the people outside. There's a great misunderstanding of who we are, what we do, and people have a hard time, even Christians have a hard time connecting the Bible with modern day Israel. So that is exactly why I started hosting tours in Israel.

Amir Tsarfati

And then that led me also to be invited to speak in churches around the world. And that led me also to start Behold Israel as a ministry that is teaching on Israel, Middle East, and mostly from the viewpoint of the prophetic part of the Word of God. So that's what I've been doing. I wrote books, I report news,

I teach mostly prophetic books in the Bible in regards to Israel. And yeah, it's an honor to serve the Lord in these last days.

Shea Houdmann

Amen. We were talking before the interview started, the Got Questions team was on a flight to Jordan to begin a three-day tour of Jordan, followed by a seven-day tour of Israel last October 7th. And that leads me perfectly into the first question I want to ask you. And that October 7th of 2023 was the busiest day ever in the history of Got Questions in terms of traffic to our website. Our articles on what is Israel's role in the end times, what are the signs of the end times? Those articles just had literally hundreds of thousands of views in that one day. And every time there's been an explosion of violence in Israel in our entire 22-year history, we receive a ton of questions about it.

Shea Houdmann

So my question for you, as someone who lives in Israel, someone who loves teaching on and studying Bible prophecy, how can we have the right balance between believing and understanding the end times revolve around Israel and that God's going to fulfill His promises to Israel, at the same time, not having an apocalyptic freak out, so to speak, every time there's something happening in Israel?

Amir Tsarfati

You know, Shea, even Jesus Himself told His disciples that there will be wars and rumors of wars. And yet He said, see that you're not troubled. He actually, He could understand that the human tendency is to become a bit worried and troubled and also sometimes hysterical about this thing. And Jesus said, no, this is not the way to, I'm telling you in advance that in this world, you will have tribulation, that in this world, there will be wars and rumors of wars. But remember not to be troubled.

Amir Tsarfati

So to begin with, let's start with, let's not be troubled, even as we see these things. In fact, the opposite is true. Of course, as an Israeli, I don't think I cheered up and enjoyed seeing the sights of October 7th. But at the same time, everything that goes on around the world and mostly within the Middle East is something that gives me great encouragement that the return of the Lord to take us is soon and that the world is going exactly 100% as the Bible predicted. So if we trust the Bible for the good things, we also need to remember, we need to trust the Bible also for the things that it describes that are not that great and wars and rumors of wars are one of them. And you know, not every war is described in the Bible. October 7th is not described in the Bible, but so is 9-11. It's not described in the Bible and so many other conflicts that are not there, but they are leading towards huge, major biblical

events. And therefore I'm encouraged because I see those things and I know that the return of the Lord is very soon.

Shea Houdmann

Yes. And that's whenever I study Bible prophecy, whenever we talk about it, I love like in 1 Thessalonians to encourage one another with these words. The study of eschatology is to be encouraging, as fun as it is to think about what are the seals and the trumpets and the bowls and the beast and all these different things to get so focused on those types of details rather than being excited, passionate that the Lord is returning soon and will restore all things as he promised them. That's to be ultimately our focus in eschatology. So I definitely appreciate that and I've noticed that a lot in your writings and the books you've written that you always go back to passion for the Lord's, hopefully very soon coming.

Shea Houdmann

So let me ask you this, in all that's going on in Israel right now, do you see any specific things that to you at least seem like the fulfillment of prophecy or the soon coming fulfillment of prophecy?

Amir Tsarfati

Absolutely, absolutely. I think and I've been teaching that throughout all the years of this ministry that, you know, the return of the Jewish people back to their land after 2,000 years and the birth of the independent state of Israel, this is probably the biggest end time sign of our lifetime. In the Bible, it describes as the victory that comes back to life and there's an interesting way to describe that generation that is seeing that victory coming back to life.

Amir Tsarfati

So I think that the return of Israel, but also we know that Israel at some point will be strong, safe, prosperous and secure. And then comes a major war that will include several countries that are, you know, they're not Hamas or Hezbollah. They're big countries such as Iran, Turkey and mostly, of course, Russia.

Amir Tsarfati

So when you think about where we are today, we're right there where we're already a strong and prosperous country in the Middle East. The victory is blooming. We have returned back to the land, but we're at the very eve of that big war where once again, God is going to show His great mighty hand of protection over Israel. And at the same time, it will also set a pseudo messianic era where a lot of the Jewish people will be fooled by a new emerging world leader to think that he might be the Messiah and others, of course, will be fooled to think that he is the ultimate world leader for our lifetime. So we are right there. I mean, we can smell it, we can hear, we can

see that as the Bible says, we can see the day approaching. And so, you know, I wouldn't want to live in any other time period. This, you know, this is it.

Shea Houdmann

Like come Lord Jesus. I've been to Israel twice, aiming for three, but obviously the third one was blocked. We're praying that we'll have an opportunity to come back sometime soon. And I love the nation of Israel. I love being able to walk the streets that Jesus and the other and the disciples and Paul and even some Old Testament figures walked and seeing the same sites and see a Galilee, still probably my favorite because you get out in the middle of the lake and it's like, this doesn't look probably very much different than it did 2000 years ago. So those sorts of things, love the nation of Israel. And every time, even in my relatively short lifetime, there's been an explosion of violence. My heart goes out. I see the way that Israel is treated in comparison to every other nation in the world.

Shea Houdmann

And I don't want this to be a political question, because obviously, as you know, even here in the United States, views on Israel can be widely divergent. But what has always confused me is the way that Israel is treated in terms of when an attack occurs, whether it's from Hamas or Hezbollah or some other group, whether it's from Gaza, whether it's from the West Bank, whether it's from Iran, whatever, Israel is told, well, restrain yourselves. Don't fight back. Don't stir up any conflict. And any other nation in the world suffering those same sort of attacks would retaliate, would seek to defeat the enemies, prevent them from doing that. Israel is told to restrain itself. And honestly, in my opinion, the only thing that makes any sense is this is a spiritual issue. This is a satanic deception that trying to keep Israel vulnerable, keep it open to further and further attacks. I mean, am I on the right track here? Or in your mind, your experience, what makes sense to you is why Israel is viewed so differently than basically any other nation in the world?

Amir Tsarfati

Shea, it takes a spiritual person to see that it's a spiritual matter. And this is exactly why you get to see that. The world is too blind to see that because the world is not spiritual. The world is not seeing the things as we do. But there's absolutely no other explanation than the fact that it is a spiritual battle. Because how else can you explain the fact that no army in history has ever been put to standards like the ones that they're asking for?

Amir Tsarfati

In fact, the interesting thing is that every don't that they tell us prolongs the war, prolongs the suffering, prolongs what they call injustice. So on one hand, they're tying our hands behind our back. On the other hand, they're

complaining that there is an ongoing war in the Middle East. So there's definitely a satanic, diabolic, demonic spirit here that is calling the bad good and the good bad. The evil is accepted and those that fight evil are now the villains.

Amir Tsarfati

And it's frustrating to those Jewish people and to the Israelis that are not seeing it through the lens that we can. It frustrates everyone, of course, but when you understand that you're encountering a spiritual warfare, then it's easier to identify the injustice as something that is to be expected. Whereas the rest of the nation of Israel is very frustrated and angry and sad and confused as how can the world not see what we see? So and again, just as you said, it is spiritual and it is as dark as it can be.

Amir Tsarfati

I mean, the things that have been done on October 7th are so diabolic that any person alive that can justify them is as diabolic as the perpetrators themselves. So for anyone to suggest that this is a rightful thing to do and that Israel has no right to exist or has no right to retaliate on all of this, that Israel deserved all of that, it's diabolic. It's diabolic and the sooner we get to that point, the better it is for us. Because again, when you don't see that way, then you are actually pointing your finger at God and you are asking God those hard questions. How can you allow that? But when the Lord himself has been repeatedly telling us that we live in such an evil world where the prince of this world, all he wants is kill, steal, and destroy, it's easier to understand things.

Shea Houdmann

That's what I have to keep going back to when we're asked questions about Israel and the way it's treated and viewed differently than any other nation in the world. It doesn't make any sense. I look at some of these nations who criticize Israel harshly, and they view attacks on their nation very, very differently. And that hypocrisy is just rampant to the point that there's got a spiritual deception going on here that obviously most people in the world, like you said, are blind to. They don't see it. They don't understand it. But that's truly when you look at the incredible hypocrisy, the differences, it's no other explanation. As we're kind of going through different questions that are common, I've got questions about the nation of Israel.

Amir Tsarfati

Do you mind if I add one more thing? Of course, please. Following what you just said, even if you call yourself a spiritual person, a believer and a follower of Christ, it takes a lot of courage to publicly say the right thing in the face of a great, great attacks. Unfortunately, and I will say that without feeling embarrassed even, the church is failing in this thing. This is why I appreciate

your ministry, that website, and the work that you guys are doing, because unfortunately, the church as a whole is taking a much more worldly view rather than worthy or the Word of God's view. And the church lacks the courage, the backbone to stand and say, I don't care about public pressure. I don't care about what the people say or think. We care about what the Word of God says, and that's our guiding light. And again, so that's why a lot of people may see that it's a spiritual thing, but they don't have the guts, they don't have the courage to stand up and come against it. And so again, I want to thank you for doing that.

Shea Houdmann

I've been in theological schools, I attended and all been strongly supportive of Israel. I entirely agree, there are brothers and sisters in Christ who hold different views on the end times, different views on dispensationalism versus covenant theology and all of that. But support for Israel as God's chosen nation, God's chosen people through whom He will fulfill all of His promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, et cetera, that's non-negotiable for me and always will be.

Shea Houdmann

So a question we've been receiving quite a bit lately is related to should Christians support the nation of Israel? And that fits well with what you were talking about in churches giving into this deception or at least not having the backbone. Kind of a side question related to it is just the fact that in the nation of Israel right now, Christians are a minority, very small percentage of the population. And then we hear news reports of Christians being persecuted, especially any Jewish person who converts to Christianity. And so some Christians here are like, why should we support a nation that is openly hostile to the Christian faith? So I wanted to ask you, to what degree is that accurate? And in response, what should our reactions be as Christians to see a nation? The Bible seems to indicate we should be supporting it, but they also seem hostile to the gospel, to the thing we hold most dear.

Amir Tsarfati

So I'll divide my answer into three parts. The first part is these are fake news. I am a Jewish believer. I don't suffer from any persecution. Yeah. Orthodox Jews don't appreciate me believing in someone whom they think started a new religion. Yes, they lack the understanding and they have this, you know, veil on their eyes. But I don't have any persecution. My kids don't have persecution. My family doesn't have persecution. We openly meet every Saturday in a church in a city where everybody respects each other.

Amir Tsarfati

Look, 99% there's nothing. If there is 1% that something happens, everybody loves to concentrate on it as if this is how everything is so they can paint us as a nation that is intolerant. In fact, if you, if you ask where is it that Christians, the Christian community did not shrink, but actually grew over the past years, it's in Israel where all around us, all around us in the Arab world and Middle East, Christian communities vanishes, basically disappears, even in Gaza and the West Bank, by the way, in Israel, it flourishes. And that's my point is this, these are fake news.

Amir Tsarfati

Now, the second thing that I want to tell you is that there is no verse in the Bible that says that you should love Israel, support Israel only if there is no condition here. The Lord is talking about if you bless them or even Paul himself, when he was so brutally persecuted by some of the Jewish brothers and sisters that he had, he himself in the last chapter of the book of Acts said, not that I have anything for which I can accuse my nation, he said, because he understood it's a spiritual blindness.

Amir Tsarfati

And the third, and that leads me to the third thing. The Bible tells us that blindness in Romans 11, blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles have come and then all Israel will be saved. The Bible doesn't say wait for Israel to be saved and then love them and support them. No, the Bible is giving us a commandment to bless and never ever to curse the nation that God chose.

Amir Tsarfati

And again, not a single verse in the Bible tells us that Israel was a perfect nation. No, everything they did in the desert, even before they entered the land, the promised land could have already been enough for God to say, that's it. But God did not say that's it. Why should we say that's it? So again, I don't think it's a conditional love here. And I think we need to understand the big picture and regarding what's going on today, these are mostly fake news.

Shea Houdmann

That's extremely helpful. I'm obviously watching a video. I've been around enough to know that, okay, what is portrayed in the video seems to have actually happened, but is that an extremely rare incident or is that something that's common? And you get that in the news here as well. So eyes wide open on those types of things.

Amir Tsarfati

And I also think that there was a video that is circulating, not long after October 7th, that someone came to the streets of Tel Aviv, tried to tell them about Jesus and they were not that pleased. The nation was grieving. If

there's anything that October 7th did is cause Jewish people to run back to Judaism because they realized they want to kill me. They don't even care if I love Palestinians, if I support them, if I'm on the side that wants them to have a state. They killed everybody because they were Jews. So a lot of Jewish people thought, you know what? I want to know why they want to, I want to be more active in my Jewish life. And so in that very sensitive moment, when Jews fled from hedonism, materialism and secularism back to Judaism, then somebody shows up and says, Oh, you need to believe in Jesus. Imagine how they felt.

Amir Tsarfati

And so I, and again, and if you really have a heart for them, you don't film it and then post it and showing the world how evil they are. If you have a heart for them, then just drop the camera and share the gospel with them. That's what you need to do. Don't put it on camera so you can later on use it against them. That's not a heart for the nation of Israel. That's a heart for likes and clicks and followers. That's all it is.

Shea Houdmann

Well said. So Amir, let me, final question before I get into like the question of how we could be praying for you, how can we be praying for Israel and Christians in Israel and so forth. Question we've received fairly often recently, especially since October 7th is, so Christians support the nation of Israel, believe in the nation of Israel, know that Israel has a place in God's plan, that end times revolve around Israel, Israel will be restored, all of those things. To what degree does that mean we are supposed to agree with all of the actions the current modern national Israeli government takes? How can we as Christians say, I'm not, I don't support this particular action, but that doesn't actually impact my love and support for the nation as a whole? How do you find that right balance?

Amir Tsarfati

Well, you have to ask yourself which action you're talking about. If it's an action of self-defense in light of an attempt to annihilate us, then you need to ask yourself, what would your nation would have done in cases like that, and then come and judge us for that. If it's a question of political things, everyone has its own convictions and you don't have to agree. I don't agree with my government on many things. I don't agree with stuff that my Supreme Court rules and that doesn't mean that I'm against my country and that I don't see myself as a part of this country. I'm sure that there's a lot of Americans or people around the world that don't agree with their government's actions. It doesn't make them people that hate their country and not patriotic enough.

Amir Tsarfati

So, but again, I suspect that a lot of the things that people were asking about in your case has to do with the brainwashing that they received to portray Israel's current government as a genocidal one, as someone that kills people without, and this is unfortunately not true. Probably one of the most moral militaries on planet earth. I don't think there is any, any government or military that is begging civilian population to leave before we are striking terrorist targets. We do that in text messages and emails and phone calls. We are even sending empty shells just to scare people before we strike. We cancel strikes so many times, but you have to understand when you are dealing with an enemy that is fighting behind civilians, there's two things left. Either they shoot the rocket or you eliminate the rocket before it's being shot. And I'm asking you guys, those that judge us, what would you have done? And that's, that's the, you know, that's why we need to apply the pressure on perpetrators, on the terrorists. And the more they tell us don't, the longer this thing goes on and the longer the suffering and all of that. So again, ask yourself all the time, what would your government have done? What would you have done in cases like that? The most important thing is do not fall into the enemy's plan for you to be on the wrong side of history when it comes to Israel.

Shea Houdmann

Amen. I mean, like you said earlier, God blesses those who bless Israel. God curses those who curse Israel. And Israel has my full support, whether I'm not, I've never served in the military. So that part of the thing I can't speak to. I have no firsthand experience, but the way the different news networks here in the United States portray it, easy to understand how people are led astray, but looking at it from the full picture, what would you do in that situation? How would you respond to an attack like that? And I don't know that enough people are really thinking through these things before they criticize. And yes, loving the nation of Israel doesn't mean agreeing with everything the nation does, but at the same time, spiritually speaking, Christians are to support Israel unconditionally.

Shea Houdmann

Now, politically, that's a different question. Obviously, everyone here understands having different political beliefs and disagreeing with your political leaders. So, but support for the nation of Israel, the right to defend themselves, the right to exist, the right to be in the land that they are, those are, in my opinion, unconditional things that all Christians are called to do. So, that segues really nicely into my final question is how can we be praying for you, for Behold Israel, for the nation of Israel right now? What are some of the key things we need to know and be praying for?

Amir Tsarfati

Well, first of all, thank you for even asking this because I value prayer. It's the secret weapon of believers, and it's way more effective than anything you can do. We need a lot of strength, both mental, physical, and spiritual, of course. We also need people to share that which we are trying to convey, the message that we're trying to convey. You know, at a little test about a year and a half ago on Facebook, I just asked people on a video, would you do me a favor and just press share on this short few seconds long video? Because I want to see that you guys know how to do it, and let's see if it's effective. It was one of the most viewed videos, and it had no content in it but the request for them to share. And then I realized everything else that I saw less views was because nobody shared.

Amir Tsarfati

So, we are here to bring a message. The message is the plan of God for the nation of Israel, but also the plan of God for the whole world when it comes to salvation. All we need is pray for us not only to be able to communicate it, but also for the message to effectively be disseminated to the whole world. And the enemy wants to kill, steal, and destroy, so we need a lot of prayer for protection.

Amir Tsarfati

And as far as the Jewish people, I want to tell you something, half of the staff that is working for me now, they're non-believers. These are all professionals in the media world, and they are in awe at what we do. And we need to pray that this crisis will cause many to ask the questions, and to eventually, as 2 Corinthians 3 says, once they turn to the Lord, then the veil is taken immediately away. Only when you turn to the Lord, the veil can be taken away. So, to spare them from the great tribulation, for them to already have the veil taken away, they need to turn to the Lord. So, we want to be not only a message of hope to the world and of truth about Israel, but we also want to bring that message of hope to Israel.

Shea Houdmann

Amen. Let's know that we are here praying for the peace of Jerusalem, and praying for protection, praying for wisdom, praying for open hearts, for veils to be lifted, all of those things. So, let's close with, I know you've published several books in recent years on what's going on, what's new at Behold Israel. And of course, I'll include links in the show notes at podcast.gotquestions.org, and also in the description YouTube when this video goes live. What's something new that you've got going on that people should be aware of?

Amir Tsarfati

You know, a couple of years ago, the Lord really put them—I mean, I was praying, God, what other way to communicate Your plan and Your Word can I find? And then I already wrote several teaching books about Israel, the Middle East, about the Bible prophecy. And then I realized there's a lot of people that may not walk into a Christian bookstore, but they are interested in what's going on, and they would love to understand the connection. So, we started, I started with, together with Steve Young, we started writing a series of thrillers, of fiction thrillers that are based on true events, and they're all part of the effort for us to describe the war of Ezekiel 38 and the preparation for it. So, we are now about to launch in a couple of months the fourth one which is about Turkey. And it called, The Sick Man's Rage. The first one was about the Arabian Peninsula, the second Iran, the third about Russia, and this one is about Turkey. And it's probably one of the best we've ever written. And also we predicted assassination in Turan, which happened. And we are also predicting another assassination elsewhere that may happen also. But again all based on true events such as October 7th but also with predictive way of how things can probably move forward. So this is it.

Shea Houdmann

That's fantastic. I truly wish I had more time to read fiction like that but I know in stories like this fiction is closer to the truth than a lot of non fiction books out there. I will definitely add these to my list. We will include some links to other people who would be interested in reading this sort of thing. Could pick up these books and learn in a creative way.

Shea Houdmann

So Amir, thank you so much for joining me today. I truly enjoyed our conversation. Just know that at Got Questions we receive a lot of questions about Israel and our goal is to always point people towards God's Word for the answers but towards a love and support for the people and the nation of Israel.

Amir Tsarfati

I'm always here at your disposal if you have any questions. I'm here. Thank you.

Shea Houdmann

I will take you up on that. So this has been the Got Questions podcast with Amir Tsarfati discussing some of the most common questions about Israel with a focus on Christians supporting the nation of Israel because that's a big matter of debate especially here among American Christians. Shouldn't be a debate but it is so we want to address it. Amir, thank you again for joining me. This has been the Got Questions podcast. Got questions? The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.

