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Golda Meir, Astronaut
Agree, No War on the Moon

By Jim Newton

TEL AVIV (BP)--Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and Apollo 15 Astronaut James Irwin agreed here there will be no war on the moon if people ever live on the lunar surface.

During a 45-minute visit, the former astronaut and the top Israeli government leader spent most of their time discussing God, not war or politics.

Only Mrs. Meir commented briefly on the subject of war, and then in general terms. "I hope this madness of war will soon end," she said. "This is senseless.

"I hope when people settle on the moon, there will be no wars," the Prime Minister stated.

"I don't think there will be," the astronaut replied softly.

Irwin, who resigned on Aug. 1 from the Apollo space program to devote full time to sharing his experiences on the moon, told the Prime Minister he felt God's presence so strongly on the moon that he now wants to tell everyone on the earth of that experience.

Mrs. Meir asked Irwin if the experience had really changed his life, or if it had merely strengthened his faith.

"Before the flight, I was really not a religious man," Irwin responded. "I believed in God, but I really had nothing to share. But when I came back from the moon, I felt so strongly that I had something that I wanted to share with others, that I decided to establish High Flight (Irwin's religious foundation) in order to tell all men everywhere that God is alive, not only on earth, but on the moon."

The astronaut told Mrs. Meir he believes his experience with God on the moon was an answer to the prayers of millions of people who prayed for him during the voyage. "I have an obligation to tell people their prayers were answered."

"This is fantastic," responded Mrs. Meir. "Your trip is one thing that unites people all over the world, and there are very few things that really unite all mankind. But during the hours you men are up there, the one thing everyone wants is to see you come home safely."

Turning to Mrs. Irwin, who was present with a group of eight other Baptists travelling with Irwin, Mrs. Meir told Irwin and the group, "I think this lady was as brave as you, sitting down on earth."

At one point during the visit, Irwin compared the physical appearance of the moon to the hills and valleys of the Holy Land. He said it was difficult to realize they were really on the moon, and it only became real when they looked up and saw the earth.

At that moment, "you really feel you are looking at the earth with the eyes of God," Irwin said.

Nodding in agreement, Mrs. Meir noted that "I felt like this at Mt. Sinai," when she went to see the mountain in the desert where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the Law for the Hebrew people.

She compared Irwin's search for moon rocks with archaeological efforts in the Holy Land. "You went to the moon to find something new; yet here you can find things that are thousands of years old, inscribed in Hebrew. It is not something separated from the present, but it is immediately connected with the present," she said.

Irwin quipped in reply that the astronauts dug a lot on the moon, but did not find anything with Hebrew inscriptions.

During the meeting, Irwin presented to Mrs. Meir a large, framed color photograph of himself saluting the American flag on the moon. Beside the photograph was a small Israeli flag which Irwin said had been taken to the moon by the Apollo 15 crew during their 12-day voyage in the late summer of 1971.

At another point during the visit, Bill Rittenhouse, executive director and vice-president of High Flight, presented to the Prime Minister an engraved plaque with a large, raised emblem depicting the High Flight symbol. Rittenhouse is former pastor of Nassau Bay Baptist Church, Houston, where Irwin was a member.

Mrs. Meir asked about the purpose of High Flight, a non-profit foundation, and Irwin explained his desire to create an organization that would enable him to devote full time to sharing both his scientific and spiritual experiences on the moon.

This was his purpose in coming to the Holy Land, he added. Irwin, his family, and party were travelling with a group of 385 persons from the United States, including 250 musicians and singers, organized by the Meier International Study League of Hurst, Tex.

The American choir members, most of them from Texas, Georgia and Arkansas, joined the Protestant Community Choir of Israel on five successive nights. In addition to the presentation of Handel's "Messiah," Irwin spoke concerning his experiences on the moon and narrated a motion picture highlighting the 12-day Apollo 15 flight. On Christmas Eve, the choirs sang, in Manger Square in Bethlehem.

The choirs included the Brewton-Parker College Choir and Hand Bell Ringers of Mt. Vernon, Ga., a Baptist junior college in Georgia; the A Cappella Choir of Baylor University, Waco, Tex.; the Southwestern Singers of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tex.; plus four soloists from the seminary and an orchestra from Baylor University.

David Meier, director of Meier International Study League which sponsored the choir trip and handled arrangements through the Baptist Convention of Israel and the Ministry of Tourism, told the Prime Minister the choirs had never performed or rehearsed together as a unit before their first performance, yet sang beautifully in the "Messiah" performances. Meier has for the past four years coordinated arrangements for the Bethlehem Choral Festival on Christmas Eve.

Mrs. Meier told the Prime Minister, on behalf of the students in the choirs, that many of the youth said the trip had changed their lives. They were grateful, she said, for seeing not only the places mentioned in the Bible, but for seeing the spirit of the people. "They will never be the same as a result of it," she said.

The Meier and Irwin children, also present at the meeting, presented to the grandchildren of the Prime Minister a book of photographs of national parks in the United States, and Meier presented to the Prime Minister a Christmas fruit cake in the shape of the state of Texas.

The visit closed with Mrs. Meier's grandchildren shyly asking for the astronaut's autograph, and the Irwin children and party asking for the Prime Minister's autograph.

Immediately following the session with the Prime Minister, the group departed by bus for Jordan, crossing the Allenby Bridge into Amman, Jordan, where they were to be the guests of King Hussein of Jordan.

King Hussein Hears
Astronaut, Baptist Choir

By Jim Newton

AMMAN Jordan (BP)--His Majesty King Hussein and Queen Alia, in their first public appearance since announcement of their marriage, listened intently to a 250-voice Baptist choir present "The Messiah" and to Astronaut James Irwin tell of his religious experiences on the moon.

Not only was it the first public appearance of the king and queen since their marriage, it was also the first time in Jordan that a Baptist choir had presented a concert of Christian music, and the first time that Handel's "Messiah" had been performed here.

The 2,000-seat cultural palace at Sports City here was filled to capacity, and there had been an additional 3,000 requests for invitations, according to Paul Smith, Southern Baptist Missionary in Amman who coordinated the arrangements with Jordanian officials.

"There is no way to describe the long-range effect this will have on Baptist Missions work in Jordan," said Smith following the concert. Smith introduced Irwin and the choirs on behalf of the Jordan Baptist Convention.

Throughout the visit of the astronaut and choir, Jordanian royalty and government officials had given the Baptist group red-carpet treatment.

The day before the concert, Irwin paid a private visit to King Hussein and Queen Alia at their winter palace in Aqaba, Jordan's resort city on the clear blue waters of the Gulf of Aqaba.

They talked for about 30 minutes, with King Hussein inviting the Irwin party to take a brief ride on the royal yacht after their visit.

During the conversation, Queen Alia asked Mrs. Irwin how she felt while her husband was walking on the moon, and if she were worried or afraid.

"No," replied Mrs. Irwin. "I have a deep faith in Jesus Christ and I just turned it all over to Him and knew Jim would be all right."

Irwin told King Hussein that he had a deeply moving spiritual experience on the moon, and that he hoped to share that experience with all the people of Jordan and people all around the world.

King Hussein expressed appreciation for Irwin's presence in Jordan and admiration for his courage and convictions, said William Rittenhouse, executive director and vice president of High Flight, Irwin's religious foundation.

The king and queen were most gracious and cordial, said Rittenhouse, who was present during the private visit.

Irwin, who had played tennis with Baptist missionaries shortly before, was dressed in a blue sport coat, an open neck sport shirt, and tennis shoes.

The following day, in a tuxedo, Irwin told King Hussein and an audience of 2,000 how it felt to walk on the moon, illustrating his message with a 20-minute color film covering highlights of the Apollo 15 flight.

The most impressive thing about the journey to the moon was to look out of the space capsule and see the beautiful earth shrink from the size of a basketball to the size of a marble, Irwin told the crowd.

"You could see the whites of the clouds, the blues of the oceans, the browns and tans of the deserts, and the greens of the forests" he said. "It almost looked like a fragile Christmas tree ornament hanging there in the blackness of space.

"To see it shrink, to look out and see the earth with the eyes of God, has to change a man, and make him realize that God loved us so much that He sent His son Jesus Christ so that man might become like God," Irwin said.

The astronaut, a Baptist layman, said he felt the presence of God closer on the moon than he had ever felt it on earth, and that the experience had changed his life completely.

Irwin said he felt God's presence in three different ways on the moon. First, through the answer to prayer when he encountered problems and received almost instantaneous answers. Second, through the guidance of God in finding the "Genesis rock," the oldest rock ever discovered, sitting on a rock pedestal shaped like an out-reached palm that seemed to say, "here am I, take me." And third, the inspiration of God that caused him to quote Psalm 121 from the lunar surface.

Prior to his address, Irwin presented to King Hussein a framed color photograph of himself standing on the moon beside the Rover 1 moon buggy. A small Jordanian flag was mounted adjacent to the photo. The auditorium resounded with applause as Irwin left the stage and walked to the royal box to give the photo to the king.

Earlier, the cultural palace had resounded with applause to the presentation of Handel's "Messiah" by the 250-voice choir. The group included singers from three Baptist school choirs.

Singing in the combined group were the Brewton-Parker College choir from Mt. Vernon, Ga., the Baylor University A Cappella Choir from Waco, Tex., and the Southwestern Singers from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. An orchestra from Baylor University accompanied the group.

Soloists were Mrs. Joe (Sue) King, soprano, Mrs. John (Virginia) Seelig, alto, James McKinney, bass, all of the music faculty of Southwestern Seminary, and Bill O'Brien, tenor, a Southern Baptist missionary to Indonesia. Conductor was Robert Burton, also of the Southwestern Seminary faculty.

Following the "Messiah" concert, a high school choral group, The Pine Bluff Singers of Pine Bluff, Ark., presented several popular music selections.

The mass choir was organized and sponsored by the Meier International Study League of Hurst, Tex., headed by David Meier. Two months ago, Meier flew to Jordan, visited with King Hussein, and initiated the invitation which resulted in the "command performance."

Throughout the visit in Jordan, Irwin and the Baptist choirs received a royal reception.

A plane load of 50 guests were flown to Aqaba for a day in the sun as the guests of Alia Airlines. Irwin and his party visited the King and flew by helicopter to the ruins of the ancient city of Petra.

Afterwards, the Irwin party was the guest of His Highness Prince Hassan at his royal palace in Amman. The following day, Prince Hassan, Irwin and Baptist Press Assistant Director Jim Newton flew in King Hussein's falcon jet and by helicopter to the Prince Hassan Air Force Base for a special tour. Irwin, Newton and Smith later helicoptered to Ajloun for a brief visit at the Baptist hospital there.

During the banquet at the home of Prince Hassan, a student at Brewton-Parker College expressed appreciation to his highness for the hospitality shown the group by the Jordanian royalty and government.

"You have a beautiful country, and I've fallen in love with it," said Frankie Wiley of Sycamore, Ga., tenor for a folksong group called the "Folk Four" of Brewton-Parker College. "This visit has changed my life, and I'll never be the same," Wiley told the Crown Prince and heir to the throne.

"I believe in music as a means of expressing brotherhood and love," Wiley added. With that, the folksong group began a spirited rendition of the song, "I Believe in Music, I believe in Love."

It could well have been the theme for the entire visit.

Baptist Pastor Recalls
Truman Warmth, Humor

By Toby Druin

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--President Harry S. Truman is remembered by many Americans for being blunt and plain-spoken and for an occasional profanity. But the man who served him as pastor during the years of his presidential administration remembers him for his warmth and kindness--and his humor.

Edward Hughes Pruden, pastor of First Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., from 1936 to 1969, including all the years of Truman's presidency from 1945-1953, mourned the death of the former Chief Executive. Pruden is living here in retirement and serves as minister in residence at Meredith College, North Carolina Baptist college for women.

The former Washington pastor said he knew that much had already been said and written about Truman's blunt mannerisms. "But I appreciated his warm personality," he said. "Behind all that was a gentle, kind man that few people got a chance to know."

President Truman, a Baptist, attended Pruden's church as a senator and vice-president. He came regularly after attaining the presidency, Pruden reported.

"He asked no special favors," Pruden said. "He wanted to be treated like any other member of the congregation."

The President usually walked the approximately eight blocks to the church from the White House and always attended the first of the two morning services.

"I would get a call about 9:30 a.m. from a Secret Service man telling me that the President had left his office for the church," Pruden said.

"He was scrupulously punctual, always participating in the service, and invariably expressed a word of appreciation as he walked with him from the sanctuary to the street when the service had been concluded."

Pruden noted that in the book, *Mr. President*, a quote from Truman's diary states: "I go for a walk and go to church. The preacher always treats me as a church member and not the head of a circus. That is the reason I go to the First Baptist Church. Once I went to another church where the pastor made a real show of the occasion. I will never go back. I do not go to church for show. I dislike headline hunters."

In a letter to Pruden, the President wrote: "I get a lot of pleasure out of coming to church. I don't want you ever to feel that you are in any way handicapped on your freedom of speech and expression just because I happen to be there. I want to be treated like every other citizen and every other good Baptist."

"One of the things I am one hundred per cent for is freedom of expression as long as it is within the bounds of reason and decency."

Nevertheless, Pruden said he felt their relationship was somewhat strained by Truman's announcement he would appoint Gen. Mark Clark as his personal envoy to the Vatican. Pruden and other Protestant and Jewish leaders in the capital voiced their opposition.

Pruden said that he tried to make it clear that his opposition was to the appointment and not directed at Truman himself. "I honestly felt that he was under the impression that it would be best for the country. The cold war had begun and apparently he felt that he could get information from the Vatican foreign office that was unavailable elsewhere."

Clark resolved the controversy by withdrawing from consideration from the post, but Pruden said President Truman stopped attending church services.

The Clark controversy almost coincided with an attempt on the President's life by Puerto Rican gunmen, however, and Pruden said the church was ruled off limits for the President for

security reasons. The pastor said he would rather believe the attempt on the President's life was what stopped his church-going and not any lingering ill-feeling over the Clark episode.

"I visited him several times after that and corresponded with him and always found him cordial," Pruden said.

The President had his humorous side. Pruden recalled that once when the Sunday morning offering was being counted, a \$5 bill was found with Truman's signature written across it.

Attached to the bill was a note on White House stationery that read, "The deacon who finds this bill can keep it as a souvenir if he puts two like it in its place."

And once the President came to the church to attend a meeting of the Baptist World Alliance. He arrived in the Presidential limousine and Pruden said that as the President stepped out of the car he removed his overcoat and handed it to a secret service man with the admonition: "Keep your eye on this; there are a lot of Baptists around here."

"In personal conversations with him, I found him to be warm, cordial and unusually thoughtful," Pruden said. "He was the kind of person anyone would enjoy having for a next door neighbor.

"This is the Truman I remember."

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European Baptist Press
Service Moves to Paris

1/3/73

PARIS, France (BP)--European Baptist Press Service, based at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, since its beginning in July, 1961, will henceforth operate from a suburb of this French capital.

John M. Wilkes, Southern Baptist Convention foreign missionary working in Paris, is the new director of EBPS, now based in Massy, France. He succeeded Miss Louè Gray of Richmond, Va., interim director June, 1971 through December, 1972.

EBPS serves the European Baptist Federation providing news about Baptist life in Europe.

The director has always been a missionary appointee or employe of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, selected with the approval of the Federation. Predominant financial support of the press service also comes from the mission board.

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Texas Begins Search
For New Executive Secretary

1/3/73

DALLAS (BP)--The executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas has set up machinery to replace T.A. Patterson, retiring Executive Secretary of the 1.9 million member convention.

Patterson, who will step down Dec. 31, 1973, after 13 years as top Texas Baptist executive, submitted his formal resignation to the 192-person board which operates business of the convention between annual sessions. He had announced his retirement earlier at the 1972 convention in Abilene.

The executive board authorized formation of a 15-person committee which will be named to seek Patterson's successor during the coming year.

Executive board chairman Travis Berry, a former Southern Baptist foreign missionary and now a pastor in Plano, Tex., gave a progress report on Texas Baptist efforts to assist earthquake victims in Nicaragua and urged board members to lead other churches to join in.

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Broadman Commentary
Rates Top 1972 Story

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Philadelphia convention's refusal to ask complete recall of Broadman Bible Commentary rates as the No. 1 Southern Baptist Convention news event of 1972, according to a Baptist Press news service poll.

Taken among about 40 editors of Baptist state papers and Baptist Press bureaus, the poll reveals new attention and emphasis on laymen's role in SBC life ranks as second most important development.

Statistical projections for 1972, which include the probability that SBC churches baptized a record number of converts, were accorded third place in news prominence.

In a year when "women's lib" scored headlines in secular magazines and newspapers, the denomination's own encounter with women wanting to serve as ministers and pastors won enough votes to place it as fourth most important denominational news item.

Baptism and other doctrinal issues arising during annual fall sessions of Baptist state conventions received fifth place in news prominence for 1972.

From sixth to tenth places, the following stories finish out the elite "top 10" SBC stories of 1972 in the ballot:

--Apollo 15 astronaut James Irwin's resignation from the space program, and his subsequent evangelism activity.

--Baptist stands on tax matters in Congress that would affect parochial schooling and tax exemptions for church gifts and property.

--Proposals to restructure, or in one case, abolish SBC agencies.

--Controversy over the denominational periodical, "Becoming."

--President Nixon's visit to the Baptist church in Moscow, and Russian Baptists' visit to Washington.

Nine ballots were not received by the deadline to be counted. Of 31 ballots cast, 27 named the debate in the denomination over the Broadman Bible Commentary among "top 10" stories of 1972. But only six votes rank it first place.

Still the commentary story won more first place ballots than any other of more than 20 events votes on. Voting was widely scattered, with 12 stories getting at least one first-place vote.

At Philadelphia last June, the convention was asked to order recall of the Commentary in its present form, on grounds it "is out of harmony with the spirit and letter of the Statement of Baptist Faith and Message adopted by this convention."

Messengers, by about a 4 to 1 margin, declined to ask for withdrawal and rewriting of the 12-volume commentary, produced by the convention's Sunday school board.

More active lay involvement in SBC affairs captured four first-place votes and got named on 25 ballots. A new lay ministries department is being created by the SBC Brotherhood Commission, under its new executive director, Glendon McCullough, Memphis. More lay involvement in Baptist affairs has been a major theme of SBC President Owen Cooper, a Yazoo City, Mississippi industrialist.

Third, fourth, and fifth place stories are closely grouped and the margin of votes separating all three is narrow.

Southern Baptists encountered women's efforts to serve as ministers, even as pastors, on at least four different occasions in 1972. This continuing story received one first-place vote, named on 23 ballots.

While several Baptist bodies in America and in other countries accept women as pastors, Southern Baptist churches have traditionally refused to call women as pastors.

In addition to showing a record number of converts baptized in 1972, statistics for the year are expected to push Southern Baptists--the world's largest Baptist body and the largest Protestant group in the US--past 12 million. Four first place votes; mentioned on 20 ballots.

Baptism questions before state conventions last fall centered mainly on alien immersion or non-immersion. Among other things, it involved the practice of some churches which receive members from other denominations who have not been baptized by immersion. One first-place vote; marked on 23 ballots.

James Irwin, a Southern Baptist, resigned from the space program and set up an evangelistic ministry named "High Flight." He travelled widely over the world during the year meeting heads of government and speaking about his religious convictions. At year's end he was touring with a Baptist music group and appearing in Israel and Jordan. Three first-place votes; checked on 20 ballots.

The SBC "Committee of 15" recommended restructure changes for two SBC commissions. Its recommendation to abolish the Stewardship Commission was voted down at the Philadelphia convention. Two first place votes; indicated on 16 ballots.

Baptists announced they oppose proposals in Congress for tax credits for students attending parochial schools. They also oppose efforts to withdraw tax exemptions for church property and tax deductions for church gifts. Three "firsts;" mentioned on 18 ballots.

Those taking part in selecting the "top 10" stories designated in order of preference, from 1 to 10, what they consider the most important Baptist news events of the year.

Ballots are scored by giving first-place votes 10 points, second-place votes 9 points, and so on, with tenth-place votes getting only 1 point.

The "top 10" showed up this way in tabular form:

| <u>Place</u> | <u>Story</u> | <u>First Place Votes</u> | <u>No. Ballots</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Commentary | 6 | 27 | 202 |
| 2 | Lay Involvement | 4 | 25 | 161 |
| 3 | 1972 Statistics | 4 | 20 | 133 |
| 4 | Women Pastors | 1 | 23 | 130 |
| 5 | Baptism Issues | 1 | 23 | 126 |
| 6 | James Irwin | 3 | 20 | 116 |
| 7 | Tax Credits, Exemptions | 3 | 18 | 97 1/2 |
| 8 | Structural Changes | 2 | 16 | 96 |
| 9 | "Becoming" Magazine | 2 | 12 | 84 |
| 10 | Nixon-Russian Baptists | 2 | 16 | 70 |

Three first-place votes went to stories which did not receive enough other support to rank it in the "top 10." The half-point occurred when an editor split his vote among two stories, and the total points were divided equally.