



Noriel Kaplan was crazy. Or so, at first, thought Ana Goren—the woman to whom Kaplan relates his encounters with an unnamed, mysterious man whom he calls “the prophet.” Ana Goren (that’s *Gorén*, with the accent on the last syllable), has a reputation among those in the media as a no-nonsense woman who was not known to suffer fools gladly. But as Kaplan begs her indulgence, her interest is piqued as he begins to reveal how for the past several years he had been directed by God through the prophet to uncover certain harbingers of impending judgment upon America.

So begins author Jonathan Cahn’s intriguing and at times startling exposition of events in America’s history from its founding to the present day, which parallel those of ancient Israel. Although presented in the form of a novel, Cahn states that what the book contains is real. Whether or not Kaplan’s encounters with the “prophet” are as real as the events in America’s history, particularly its founding and those leading up to and following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, we are not told. We will assume that those encounters comprise the fictional aspect of *The Harbinger*, as does Kaplan’s relating of his story to Ana Goren.

Kaplan’s story centers on nine ancient artifacts made of reddish, golden-brown clay, circular and about two inches in diameter. These artifacts he calls seals, similar to those used in ancient times to mark documents as authoritative. It seems he received in the mail the first of these seals, which he shows to Goren. There was no indication on the package from where the seal came, but thus began Kaplan’s years-long encounters with the prophet as Kaplan “just happens” to be in the right places at the right times to interact with him.

The intriguing elements of *The Harbinger* are those that relate to what Kaplan calls “the Isaiah 9:10 Effect,” which are warnings from God to both nations because of their departure from His righteous decrees. These warnings come in the form of nine “harbingers” or omens that are given by God in His mercy to warn the nation to repent or suffer His judgment. According to the New King James Version utilized by Cahn, Isaiah 9:10 states:

The bricks have fallen,
But we will rebuild with hewn stone;
The sycamores have been cut down,
But we will plant cedars in their place.



Cahn states that this Scripture records the defiant attitude of ancient Israel in the face of the initial attacks by the Assyrians which resulted in a breach in the walls of Samaria. The final captivity would take place seven years later. At least that is what Cahn surmises. Neither Scripture nor history is so clear-cut in the sequence of events. One may or may not accept this premise. In any case, Cahn’s clever means of using the novel to convey certain facts that seem far too coincidental to be coincidence will cause readers to think seriously about the precariousness of America’s future as a free and independent nation.

Cahn’s warning of God’s judgment is nothing new. I and many others have been saying for years that this nation’s sins—particularly abortion, sexual perversion, the glorifying of immorality and its turning to false religions—are begging for God’s judgment. But while many are warning of God’s judgment for America’s sins, Cahn goes further by offering some serious evidence that the events leading up to and after 9/11 are harbingers of God’s judgment.

God’s Word warns that the shedding of innocent blood will bring God’s judgment upon any nation, just as it came upon ancient Israel:

Shall the throne of iniquity which legally sanctions mischief have fellowship with You [YHWH]?

They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

But YHWH is my defense, and my God is the rock of my refuge.

And He will bring upon them their own iniquity, and will cut them off in their own wickedness! Yes, YHWH our God will cut them off. (Ps 94:20-25:1)

The psalmist, Israel’s King David, was addressing his persecution by his enemies who had maintained the power of government and were using that power to shed innocent blood while seeking to kill him.

The shedding of innocent blood refers to unjustly killing those who are innocent of crimes deserving of death. It does not specifically or exclusively address abortion. But whose blood is more innocent than that of the unborn child? If God’s judgment is against those who kill innocent men and women, how much more will His judgment be against those who legalize by government decree the killing of innocent children in the womb?

The blood of the tens of millions of innocent babies slaughtered in and out of the womb cries out for judgment. But America says judgment is far from it. The nation's arrogance in the face of today's omens of judgment is increased.

And that is the theme of *The Harbinger*.

With each meeting, the "prophet" gives Kaplan a different seal, all having cryptic etchings on them. It is up to Kaplan to decipher the meaning of each seal in order to understand the unfolding of God's warnings.

The first seal, which the prophet hands to Kaplan in exchange for the one he received in the mail, is inscribed with what looks like a wall with a v-shaped notch in it. This, the prophet explains, represents a wall that has been breached—specifically the wall of Samaria that was breached by the Assyrians several years prior to taking Israel captive. But more than that, it represents for today the destruction of the Twin Towers on 9/11 by those Cahn calls modern Assyrians.

Here the parallel suffers somewhat. Osama bin Laden, as well as 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks were not Assyrians; they were Arabs, specifically from Saudi Arabia. Although ancient Assyria did gain control of portions of Arabia for a time, they were never considered Arabians. The Assyrians were from the Sumero-Akkadian civilization that emerged in Mesopotamia long before the birth of Ishmael to Abraham. Ishmael was the progenitor of the Arabs.

Although Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldees and is called a Syrian (Dt 26:5), the Arabs are far removed from the Assyrians ethnically and culturally; until the conquests by Islam they were also linguistically diverse. To say the Arabs are Assyrian would be the same as saying the Jews are Syrians. Loosely defined, that may be so, but no one today would link the two.

As the story of *The Harbinger* unfolds we learn that subsequent seals reveal the other harbingers, all of which parallel the captivity of Israel and the impending judgment of America.

What is more significant than the harbingers, however, is the response of America's leaders to the initial destruction. That response is "the Isaiah 9:10 Effect." We learn that three of the most powerful men in America appealed to Isaiah 9:10 at different times in their response to the attacks by America's enemies: Barack Obama (representing the office of president); Sen. Tom Daschle, Senate Majority Leader; Sen. John Edwards as Democrat candidate for vice president.

Each of these men quoted Isaiah 9:10, ignorant of its prelude to curses upon the land as testified by the verses that follow:

Therefore the LORD shall set up
The adversaries of Rezin against him,
And spur his enemies on,
The Syrians before and the Philistines behind;
And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. (Isa
9:11-12 [NKJV])

More curses follow upon these in the succeeding verses and chapters.

It is natural for men to want to rebuild what has been destroyed. But it is folly to think of doing so without first

acknowledging the hand of God upon the destruction and then turning to Him in repentance and humility, asking His blessing upon the rebuilding. Such has been woefully lacking, particularly among the leaders of this nation.

Does Cahn overstep his bounds in paralleling the U.S. with Israel, particularly when he states that America was founded upon a covenant with God to begin with? Or that the founders of the Republic looked to the God of the Bible for His providence and guidance?

It is a certainty that the United States of America has been without equal throughout history in terms of prosperity for its average citizens—at least until recently. It is a certainty that the Word of God played a large part in forming the jurisprudence and in crafting the laws of the land. It is a certainty that Christianity has been America's primary religion from its inception even to the present day.

All of this is true even if many (or most) of the founders of the nation and its citizens have been nominal Christians at best. As long as the nation adhered to the biblical ethic upon which it was founded God has been pleased to bless it. Ever since the nation began to decree laws that shed innocent blood and that legislated acceptance of immorality in every form including sexual perversion—ever since it began to legislate against the Word of God and has pushed the God of the Bible out of government institutions and public life—it has been suffering severe economic, social, military, and political setbacks.

This is the basis for *The Harbinger*, and with that I find no fault.

Yet I did find a few aspects of the book which concern me. The mysterious "prophet" is truly an enigma. From where does he come—Heaven or earth? Is he a man, an angel of God, or God Himself?

Toward the end of the story the prophet declares to Kaplan the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. But Kaplan never really comes to believe in Jesus as his Savior. Yet we are told that God has chosen him to be His messenger to the nation.

The question arises: why would God choose an unbeliever such as Nouriel Kaplan to deliver God's message to the nation? Although God has used unbelievers to convey minor prophecies for a given moment, they were never used to voice correction or warning of God's judgment. That has always been reserved for God's faithful believers. And before He warns a nation He warns His own people. There is no warning to the Body of Christ in *The Harbinger*; the warning is to come to an unbelieving nation by the mouth of an unbelieving Jew.

In another contrived "coincidence" the prophet informs Kaplan that the prophet Jeremiah's scribe was named Baruch ben Neriah, from which the name Nouriel derives. It turns out that Kaplan's real (self-rejected) first name is actually Baruch. Thus, Kaplan has the same name as Jeremiah's scribe, and just as Baruch's father's name Neriah means "the light of God," Kaplan's middle name Nouriel means "the flame of God." He, says the prophet, is the *sofer*—"the one called to record, to declare, to make know, to make a record of what you've seen and heard, to write down the prophetic word, to reveal the mysteries that

they might hear it, that a nation might hear it, and that those who will listen could be saved.”

And here comes the kicker: Kaplan tells Ana Goren about being appointed by the prophet as the *sofer* of God’s Word to America, to which she suggests that he communicate his message as a narrative—a story—in order to get as many people as possible to read it and accept it. Kaplan would be the narrator of the story, changing the names of the characters.

Is Cahn telling us that Nouriel Kaplan is Cahn himself? Did Cahn encounter a mysterious prophet of God who instructed him to tell this story to us? Is *The Harbinger*, then, a prophetic Word of God in narrative form?

We aren’t told so, but many readers might draw that conclusion.

The bio on the back cover tells us that Jonathan Cahn’s teachings “are seen on television and radio throughout the nation and are known for their prophetic significance and their revealing of deep mysteries of God’s Word.”

Sounds intriguing.

Yet every true expositor of Scripture is a revealer of the deep mysteries of God’s Word. Every truth of God’s Word is a deep mystery to the unbeliever. But to the believer in Christ, God opens His Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Some teachers may have a deeper understanding of God’s Word in some areas, but that doesn’t mean that they are especially endowed by God with supernatural understanding unavailable to any other believer in Christ. The truths of Scripture are revealed through diligent study of His Word; the Holy Spirit gives understanding through diligent study by those whose hearts are toward God. The more we study, the more we understand.

There might sometimes be an advantage to a Jew who may have knowledge of Hebrew and the traditions of the faith of Moses. But there may also be pitfalls for Jewish Christians whose traditions in rabbinical Judaism prior to coming to Christ may tend toward “mystery” and the melding of Kabbalah with the faith.

I’m not saying this is true of Cahn. But his teachings are largely promoted along the lines of revealing mysteries of God heretofore unknown. It’s almost as if we need him to initiate us into a higher understanding of Scripture in order to truly be able to serve the Lord. He certainly fits the role for the new apostolic and prophetic reformation. Perhaps this is why his book carries the endorsements of men like Pat Robertson, Sid Roth and John Paul Jackson (formerly of the Kansas City prophets infamy). John Paul Jackson states, “Jonathan Cahn’s book, *The Harbinger*, is far more than a prophetic warning to the United States; it is an unveiling of the ways of God.”

Really? So *The Harbinger* is actually a book of prophecy? It was inspired by the Lord as a prophetic warning to America? Or might it be more accurate to say that it is an interesting if flawed fiction written by someone who wants to use it to warn America that God’s judgment is about to be unleashed upon us?

I do not claim that *Media Spotlight* is a prophetic journal. Yet I do believe that our writings carry important warnings based upon what we know of God’s righteousness and His Word.

Endorsements such as that offered by Jackson, Robertson and Roth (who is fascinated by the bizarre and sensational) call into question the legitimacy of true prophetic standing for Cahn and his book. A true prophet of God would recognize the spiritual errors propagated by such men and would have nothing to do with their endorsements.

Yet Cahn’s investigation of the historic and scriptural parallels of ancient Israel and the United States is impressive. He reveals that just as the towers suffered the same destruction as ancient Israel, so, too, the sycamore tree that stood on the grounds of St. Paul’s Chapel at Ground Zero was replaced with an evergreen in the cedar family. (“The sycamores have been cut down, but we will plant cedars in their place.”) Granted, he admits they are not exactly the same trees as those found in ancient Israel, but he allows that they are related somewhat.

Cahn reveals that St. Paul’s Chapel in New York City is where George Washington led the first Congress in prayer to dedicate the nation to God. (New York, not Washington, D.C., was the capital of the United States at that time.) The Twin Towers stood on ground that at one time was part of St. Paul’s property. Thus, the nation that once declared its allegiance to the God of the Bible has been breached upon the same ground of dedication. This is a harbinger from God that He is not pleased with the nation, and is about to bring severe judgment.

No argument there, but Cahn’s startling revelations may be attributed more to diligent research into American history combined with a good knowledge of Isaiah’s account of Israel’s defiance, than upon supernatural prophetic impetus.

Cahn’s story-telling isn’t the best. Some of the too-wordy dialogue among the characters caused me to ask, “Who talks like that?” Still, the warnings are justified. And the information contained in the book may be worth the read for those discerning enough not to be taken in by the alleged “prophetic” movement afoot today. Just be careful not to believe everything you read. It is, after all, a book of fiction. ❖

IS THIS REALLY A GOOD IDEA?

The One World Trade Center being erected next to the site where the Twin Towers once stood is meant to be a message to America’s enemies that the nation will come back stronger than before.

It’s said that the central concrete core of the building will make it more resistant to the type of attack suffered by the Twin Towers.

We can only pray that it not end up a tempting target for indefatigable terrorists.

