RELIANCE ON WEAPONS?
Talks were held in Geneva last week to address concerns that Iran’s uranium enrichment program could result in that country’s development of atomic or nuclear weapons. Many believe that Iran might use such weapons against Israel. Western powers hope that the talks, which will resume next month, will convince Iran to abandon any such program. Hardliners within Iran are resisting, however, still wanting to eliminate the state of Israel. For its part, Israel is widely believed to have developed a nuclear arsenal a means to ensure their nation’s continued existence through deterrence. Israelis point to God’s promise to the patriarchs as justification for the existence of their state in Palestine.

RELIANCE ON GOD!
In a dream, God reiterated to Jacob the promise given to Abraham and Isaac: their descendants would possess the land. Jacob’s response was to change the name Luz, where he was spending the night, to Bethel, which means “the house of God”; he further designated the place to be “the gate of heaven.” Struggles over that area of land from then until now seem to have conspired to make hollow Jacob’s double-pronouncement.
1. Are negotiations to restrict the development of nuclear arsenals more important in the area of the Middle East than such efforts elsewhere? Why, or why not?
2. Why have events throughout history made the area of Palestine seem like something other than “the gate of heaven?”
4. Should Christians follow Jacob’s lead in making vows to God? Why, or why not?
5. Should Christians honor specific places as “the house of God,” or do passages such as 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20 negate such thinking? Explain your answer.

—Charles R. Boatman