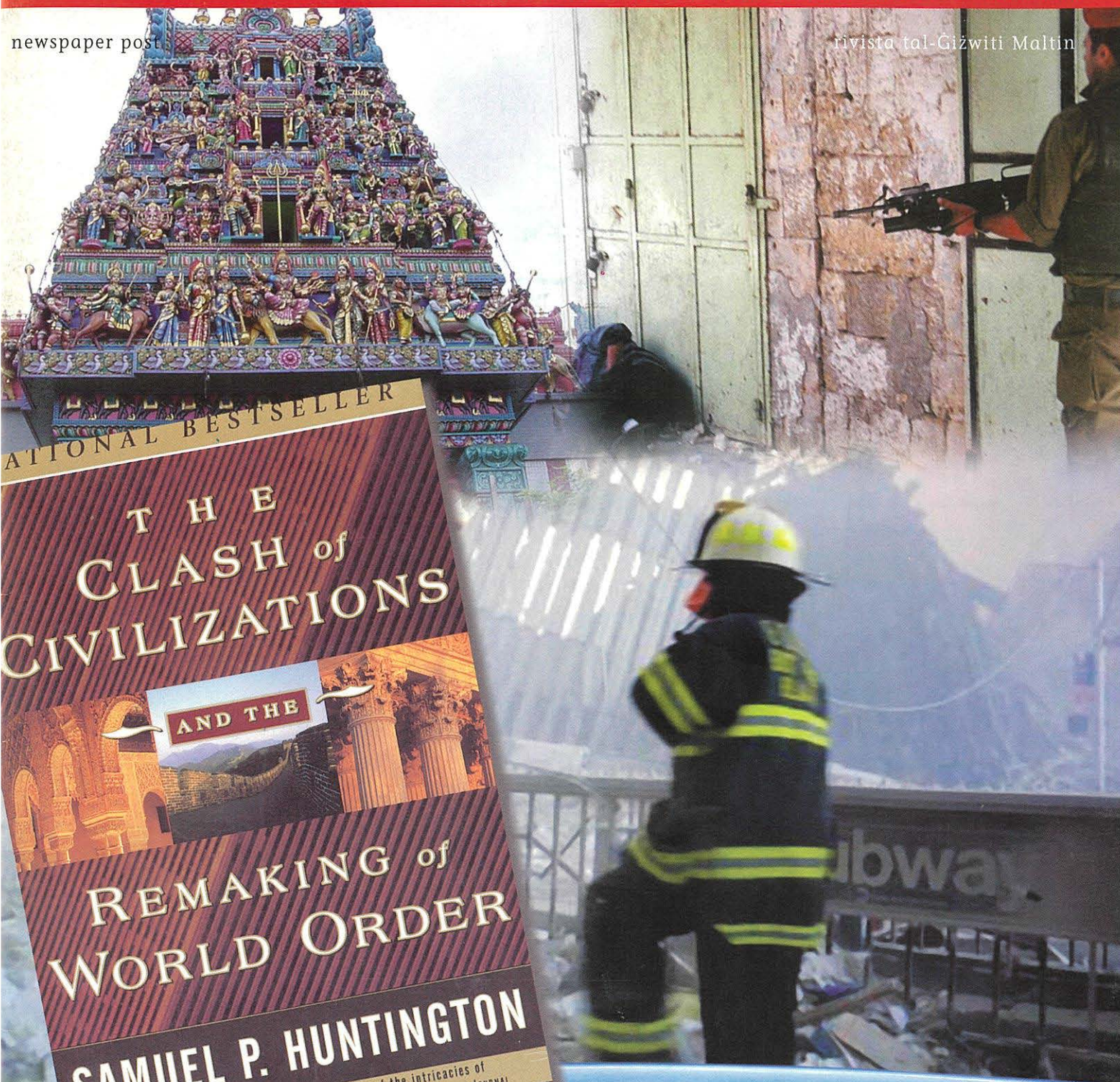


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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

THE CLASH of CIVILIZATIONS

AND THE REMAKING of WORLD ORDER

SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON

"The book is dazzling in its scope and grasp of the intricacies of contemporary global politics." —FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

*Hakmet lid-Dinja minghajr ma ghaqqditha*

soċjeta kultura twemmin



**RBIS**

THE WORD OF GOD

# *Biblical perspectives on the clash of civilizations*

*'When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'*

*Leviticus 19: 33-34.*

Since the disaster of 11th September 2002, it has virtually become a commonplace to talk about the clash of civilizations, by which are meant the Oriental (mainly Islamic) and the Western (mainly North American and European) cultures. World terrorism is often linked to such a clash, which is portrayed as inevitable. It is obvious that one way of avoiding such a situation is dialogue, whereby nations from various cultural backgrounds try to understand, nay even to respect and love one another. One's assumptions in cultural studies and sociology will determine whether one concludes that such a clash is inevitable or not. What is the Biblical perspective on such matters?

As in many other things, the Bible presents a developing viewpoint. It is well known that after the Babylonian Exile of 587/586 B.C., the Jewish community presented a rather closed front to anything

that was foreign to it. However, one does well to remember that this is only one perspective arising from very particular historical circumstances. Indeed, already in the Old Testament, we find texts which underscore the importance of being open to those who are foreign to us, to those with a different cultural background.

One such is the quotation from Leviticus cited here. The belief that by belonging to the chosen people of God one was a member of an exclusive society was criticized in the Old Testament also by such books as that of Ruth, Jonah and by many passages in the book of Isaiah. Such texts propose a universal viewpoint according to which even the non-Jews are called to form part of the one big family of God.

The New Testament erases any residual ambiguity regarding the inevitability of the clash of civilizations. It is explicit that there should be none.

### **For prayerful reflection and action:**

*Jesus Christ taught that we should make ourselves neighbour to everyone, including our enemies (see Luke 10: 36-37), and thus his followers accepted the logical conclusion that people from various cultural backgrounds should live together in harmony. As Peter said to those who criticized him for eating with 'unclean' foreigners: 'If then God gave them (non-Jews) the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?'*

**Prof. Anthony Frendo is  
a biblical scholar and  
archaeologist.**

