

The Miracle of Israel

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Baruch atta 'Adonai 'Elohenu, Melech ha'olam, Shehecheyanu, v'kiymanu, v'higiyanu la'z'man ha'zeh. "Blessed are you O LORD, King of the Universe, for giving us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this time." (Traditional Hebrew Blessing for Special Events)

This past May Beverlee and I were at the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC for a Christian Solidarity Event. There Christian leaders met with Ron Dermer, the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., and White House Counselor to the President Kellyann Conway. Israel's purpose in the event was to show gratitude for Christian support of the State of Israel and the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel and to move our Embassy there, as happened today. The date was carefully chosen by the White House to coincide with the date on our calendar that we celebrated Israel's Independence Day.

On that first Independence Day, May 14th 1948 (the 5th Iyar 5708 in the Jewish calendar) at 3pm, in haste before the Sabbath started, David Ben Gurion presided over the ceremony to mark the founding of the State of Israel and to declare her Independence. Until the last moment it was not even known what the name of the fledgling state would be. All of Israel's most important people were crowded into the bunker-like home of Meir Dizengoff; Jerusalem being under fire and there was a very real fear that they could all be wiped out simultaneously. The infant state had scarcely recovered from the Holocaust that had nearly decimated their national identity. It was only out of the ashes of Auschwitz, and a score of other death camps, that the promise of the dry bones began to be fulfilled. Yet all were aware that taking the step to statehood would move Israel from its refugee status coming out of the Holocaust to an Independent Nation capable of defending itself in the future. So, Ben-Gurion, citing from the words of the biblical prophets that envisioned a restored people in the Land, declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Even then, the

biblical heartland of the country – and its eternal capital of Jerusalem - was not yet part of the State and was only recovered through decades of war, but especially the war that occurred in 1967. The Arabs had boasted that they would destroy Israel, but in six days Israel overran the combined forces of Syria, Jordan, and Egypt and took the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, the West Bank (biblical Samaria and Judea), and the Sinai. This has been proclaimed one of the greatest military feats in history. Every Israeli who took part in that campaign recognized their victory as a miracle from God.

Israel's very birth as a People was a miracle from God. Abraham and Sarah were well into their senior years and Sarah had been barren all her life. Nevertheless, God supernaturally brought from their union a child, Isaac, who would inherit and carry forward God's Promise of an everlasting covenant designed to bless the world through Israel. Israel's rebirth as a Nation has been no less miraculous. Forged in a hostile land after the genocide of 6 million and the forcible exile of more than 800,000 from Arab lands with nothing but the possessions they could carry, the Jewish People rebuilt their homeland. Despite persecution from both the Arab population and the British administration, and opposition from most of the world, these people still declared their sovereign State. As Israel's first president David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) once declared, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

The event we are celebrating tonight is occurring while most of Europe, our Western Allies, continue to reject, as did the U.S. for 70 years, Jerusalem as Israel's capital and while almost all of the Middle East continues to refuse recognition of the right of the Jewish State to even exist. These countries continue to maintain that Islamic Shariah law, which imposed Dhimmitude status on non-Muslims during the Ottoman Empire, still prevails – or should prevail – over the Jewish population in their midst, including Israel, which they only call Palestine. Jerusalem, the only place toward which the Jewish people have prayed throughout their 3,000-year history in the Land, is claimed to be one of the holy sites of Islam and off-limits to non-Muslims, especially Jews. Given the great contrast in political realities and affirmations today, let us review together the facts of history and Scripture that argue for the Miracle of Israel.

First, we must recognize the divine preservation of the Jewish People through time and the miraculous restoration of the Nation in our day. This present reality was not perceived in the past. The great Reformer Martin Luther struggled with the significance of Jewish existence, and adopted a wrong conclusion based on his observation of the miserable condition of the Jews in his time (sadly, one largely imposed upon them by the Christian Church in ages past). Luther decided that such Jews could not be those to whom the Bible referred in its promises of future restoration, he said: "If the Jews are Abraham's descendants, then we would expect to see them back in their own land. We would expect them to have a state of their own. But what do we see? We see them living scattered and despised." As a result, Luther continued to accept the spiritual interpretation of his Augustinian order that the Church is the only heir of the promises to Abraham and to serve as the inspiration for Adolf Hitler in his program of Jewish annihilation. I wonder what Luther would say if they lived in our day when over six million Jews have returned to the biblical homeland to regain their independence in a developed Jewish state whose technology and military achievements are the envy of the world? How different might have been the religious and political history in Germany and Europe (and the world) had Luther rightly understood God's purpose for preserving the Jews?

Let us then consider three miracles of God in the preservation of the Jewish People.

- 1. The Jewish People are the only people to remain a distinct people despite exile and assimilation.**

The modern return of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel has been called the "Miracle on the Mediterranean." Such a return by a people group that had been scattered among some 130 nations is unprecedented in history. Indeed, the Jewish People are the only exiled people to remain a distinct people despite being dispersed to more than 70 different countries for more than 20 centuries. The mighty empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome all ravaged their land, took their people captive, and scattered them throughout the earth. Even

after this, they suffered persecution, pogrom, and Holocaust in the lands to which they were exiled. Yet, all of these ancient kingdoms have turned to dust and their former glories remain only as museum relics and many of the nations that opposed the Jews have suffered economic, political, or religious decline. But the Jewish people whom they enslaved and tried to eradicate still exist and have become one of the strongest and most prosperous nations in the world! As to Jewish distinctiveness, despite on-going debates, this can be measured empirically on a biological basis. Dr. Harry Ostrer, a medical geneticist and professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York and director of genetic and genomic testing at Montefiore Medical Center explains in his book *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People*, that Jews exhibit a distinctive genetic signature and as a homogeneous group they bear all the scientific trappings of what we used to call a “race.” The God Who chose them as His People and developed them into a Nation, has not let them assimilate and lose their separate identity or they could fulfill their promised future as an ethnic people.

2. The Jewish People are the only people to return to an ancient homeland once dispersed and to have regained their independence in their land after 2,000 years.

The fact of the Jewish people’s continuity is even more remarkable in light of the testimony of exile and return. In all of human history there have been less than ten deportations of a people group from their native land. These people groups disappeared in history because they assimilated into the nations to which they were exiled. However, the Jewish people did not simply experience a single exile, but multiple exiles. While other people groups were exiled to one country, the Jews were dispersed to many different countries, and in fact were scattered to every part of the earth. Nevertheless, the Jewish people returned to their ancient homeland of Israel (800,000 in 1948) and they continue to return to this day (6,556,000 as of the beginning of 2018). And here they have established a sovereign nation, the only such people to have done so after a loss of independence in their land for 2,000 years. When this event occurred on May 14, 1948, Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declared that what Israel was doing was fulfilling

the vision of the biblical prophets. In other words, modern Israel was back in the Land to continue the destiny that had been written of them in the Bible.

Recognizing the miracle of such a return, Vice President Mike Pence has stated: “The Jewish people held fast to a promise through all the ages, written so long ago, that “even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens,” from there He would gather and bring you back to the land which your fathers possessed. Through a 2,000-year exile, the longest of any people, any-where, through conquests and expulsions, inquisitions and pogroms, the Jewish people held on to this promise, and they held on to it through the longest and darkest of nights ... We marvel at the faith and resilience of a people who, just three years after walking beneath the shadow of death, rose up from the ashes to resurrect themselves, to reclaim a Jewish future, and to rebuild the Jewish state.” (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-mike-pence-special-session-knesset/>)

3. The Jewish People are the only people to have revived their ancient language.

The Jewish people also hold the distinction of being the only people to have successfully revived their ancient tongue after more than 2,000 years. In the late 19th century when Jews began immigration to the Land, Jews only spoke over 80 different languages of the countries from which they had returned. Hebrew was used only for reading the Bible, Jewish literature and for prayers. It was considered a sacred tongue and not a language for common conversation. Even the renown founder of the Zionist Movement, Theodore Herzl, thought reviving the Hebrew language was a ridiculous idea. One man, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda thought otherwise. He determined now that the Jewish people were back in the land of the prophets their language had to be the tongue of the prophets. He began teaching the children and today modern Hebrew is spoken daily by every man, woman, and child in Israel. By contrast, what country or people group today speak as their regular language Egyptian, Assyrian, Akkadian or Latin, the languages of the great empires that conquered Israel – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. Only the Jewish people have successfully regained the use of their original tongue in everyday life.

Any one of these facts of Israel's survival would be remarkable but taken together they are miraculous. The world has recognized Israel's miraculous survival, but it has not understood the reason for its preservation. For example, the great secular historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) in his 10-volume *A Study of History* (1934–1961), traced the rise and fall of 26 civilizations, developing a scheme of history in which the Jewish civilization did not fit. He therefore classified the Jews as “fossils of history” because they seemed to be frozen in time, refusing to assimilate into the soup of humanity. He remarked that there was no natural explanation for the survival of Jewish People through the ages. With similar perplexity, the American novelist Mark Twain wrote in *Harper's Magazine* in 1897: “If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. The Egyptian, Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greek and Roman followed, made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up, and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal, but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

Because Mark Twain was an agnostic and skeptic, he could only recognize the miracle of Israel's preservation, but could not understand the reason for it. However, men of faith have offered the correct response. In a conversation on religious questions, Fredric II, King of Prussia (1740-1786) asked Joachim von Zieten, General of the Husars, whom he esteemed highly as a Christian for his

plain and uncompromised views, “Give me proof for the truth of the Bible in two words!” To which Zeiten replied, “Your majesty, the Jews!” The General’s statement reflected his understanding of not only the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people, but his belief that their preservation was for the purpose of bringing God’s unfulfilled promises to pass. To Zeiten, the present existence of the Jewish people was proof that God’s Word was true because Scripture had promised that they would remain until all that had been prophesied concerning them was fulfilled. Remarkably, this expression of faith was made in a day when the Land of Israel was desolate of a Jewish population and the majority of Jews were scattered among the nations. Also at a time before the return of the Jews, Sir Isaac Newton, who formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation and wrote: The Jewish People “in a wondrous manner continue numerous and distinct from all other nations: which cannot be said of any other captivated nation ... and therefore is a work of Providence.” The prophet Jeremiah reminded Israel of this fact even in its darkest hour of destruction and exile: “The LORD’s lovingkindnesses never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22).

In order to correctly understand the miraculous significance of the State of Israel and the Jewish People, we need to consider 5 biblical facts:

1. The Jewish People are God’s Chosen People.

It is good to be chosen but looking at all of the suffering the Jewish People have endured they often complain, “Can’t God choose someone else for a change?!” Certainly, being chosen to represent God in a world that is hostile to Him is a guarantee of problems. However, when we consider what the Scripture says about chosenness we understand that Israel’s cause of suffering is self-inflicted. In Amos 3:2 we read: “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Jesus said much the same thing to Israel when He stated: “To whom much is given, much will be required” (Lk. 12:48). Israel’s history attests to

its failure to fulfill its role as the Chosen People. As a result, today as the modern State of Israel turns 70 it is surrounded by people groups who not only will *not* celebrate its birthday, but who continue to assert that it should never have had one! This opposition centers around the conflict over the supposed “occupation” of the Land. Palestinian and Islamic revisionist history asserts its rights to the Land as hereditary. In *The Case for Palestine: Evidence Submitted by the Arab Office* we read: “The Arabs of Palestine are the indigenous inhabitants of the country, who have been in occupation of it since the beginning of history” (p. 92). However, even the Qur’an states that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish People by divine decree: “O my people (Israel), enter the Land that God has decreed for you ...” (Sura 5:21). By contrast, the Jewish People, who settled and developed the Land and have maintained a continuous existence there for the past 3,700 years, base their claim to the Land on the Bible. The Bible is a legal document that records the Jewish people’s title deed to the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is a “Holy Land” because God chose and designated it to be the place where a “holy people” would fulfill their appointed purpose in the plan of God. This identity has remained unchanged throughout history, despite exile from the Land, because God’s purpose has not yet been fulfilled. This fact produced Zionism, which holds that the Land of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people.

2. The Jewish People were Chosen to Be the Means of Blessing for All Mankind.

One of Israel’s miracles is that despite the unparalleled hardships the Jewish People and the State of Israel has faced, the Jewish contribution to society is unmatched among the peoples of the world. In very many respects, world history *is* the history of the Jews! The history of the Jewish people represents the trajectory of world history. In his book, *A History of the Jews*, historian Paul Johnson asks: “Is history merely a series of events whose sum is meaningless?... No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny” (*The History of the Jews*, New York: Harper & Row, 2). Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) once declared: “To Jewry has belonged ... an exerted sense of historical destiny ... The Jewish people are, predominantly, a people of history, and in the historical destiny of this people is felt the inscrutability of God’s destinies ...” In his youth, Berdyaev was a materialist, but when he tried to make sense of his materialism in light of examining the history of the Jews,

everything broke down. He could not explain “the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint...” (N. Berdyaev, *Smysl' istorii* [“The Meaning of History”], originally taken from a series of lectures given by Berdyaev in Moscow in 1920-21).

Jewish giftedness is a real phenomenon. Jim Melnick, who has authored a recent book on this subject (*Jewish Giftedness and World Redemption: The Calling of Israel*, Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2017), says Israel “leads the world in the percentage of its GDP that goes to research and development ...” Because it has so many start-ups, Israel is often referred to as *Silicon Wadi*. The city of Be’ersheva, once the site of Abraham’s well (Genesis 21:25-33), now hosts one of the most important cyber security hubs on the planet. It also has more chess grandmasters per capita than any other city in the world. For that matter, Israel as a whole has more engineers and scientists per capita than any other country and produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation ... and dwarfs all nations when it comes to per capita innovation. The geniuses, Noble Peace prize winners, and successes in technology and industry among the Jewish People are out of proportion to the nations of this earth. The New York Stock Exchange lists more hi-tech companies from Israel than any other nation.” (from Chapter 14 “Jews in History” in Price, ed., *What Should We Think About Israel?* Harvest House, 2019). This is interesting from a prophetic perspective since Ezekiel 38:10-13 predicts that Israel will become an economic envy of the nations leading to an end time invasion.

Some of the most amazing contributions to humanity have come from these efforts. The mobile phone is one of these, but here are a few recent Israeli inventions: a robotic exoskeleton that enables paraplegics to walk, of camera pills to help locate colon cancer, 3-D holographic imaging so doctors can study a patient’s organs without invasive surgery, cold plasma to seal wounds without stiches, an app to allow pregnant women to take ultrasound on their cell phones, and my personal favorite, a 3-D food printer that uses plant cellulose to make and cook in seconds juicy hamburgers indistinguishable from the real thing!

Why does Jewish giftedness exist? Some have claimed it is just a fluke of history or a phenomenon based on traditional Jewish devotion to education, the result of good 'Jewish

mothering'(!) or the guilt of always striving to achieve or to prove oneself in a non-Jewish world. Even if some of these factors have played a role, they all fall short of adequately explaining the phenomenon. The Scriptures offer the reason: "In your seed (the Jewish People) all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 18:18). Israel was chosen by God to be a means of blessing the world (materially and spiritually) and God has continued to be faithful to His promise to His People. For that reason, those in this world that oppose Israel not only miss this blessing, but also come under God's judgment. In the past, nation after nation, both ancient and modern, have fallen or lost their international standing as a result of being on the wrong side of God's purpose for Israel.

3. God gave the Land of Israel to the Jewish people as an eternal inheritance.

From the very outset of the Jewish desire to re-establish a homeland there was international outcry about a return to the ancient homeland, then called Palestine. Other places were suggested, such as Uganda, but the Zionists held firm to their conviction that there could be no home except for Zion. One time a Jewish man was asked why the Jews so insisted on going to that land, rather than somewhere else. The Jewish man replied, "Where does your grandmother live?" The other man answered, "in New York, why?" "Well," said the Jewish man, "Why go all that way when there are plenty of old ladies around here!" The famous lawyer Blackwell, author of a long-used legal text, once was asked for a legal definition of home. He replied, "Home is that place, from which, once a man sets forth, he is a wanderer until he returns." The Jewish People have wandered for 2,000 years, and in fact were often referred to as the "Wandering Jew." If the God of Israel gave the Land of Israel to the People of Israel, there can be no home but that safe place determined by His Will.

But we should also note that the promise of the Promised Land is eternal. Genesis 13:14-15 states "the LORD said to Abram ... "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever." Likewise, in Genesis 17:8: "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting

possession ...” Even after Israel had been condemned to exile, the promise of return to the Land was reaffirmed: "And they shall live on the Land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever ..." (Ezekiel 37:25). Only repentance was required for restoration: "... then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever" (Jer. 7:7) and "Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever" (Jer. 25:5). The Prophet Jeremiah here uses the Hebrew phrase *min 'olam v'ad 'olam* ("forever and ever"), used only elsewhere of God's attribute of Eternality. There could not have been a stronger expression of the eternal nature of the Land promise than to pair it with God's own nature as an Eternal Being.

4. God made guaranteed habitation and total enjoyment of the Land conditioned on Israel's faithfulness.

It was been argued by opponents of Zionism that the spiritual defection of the Jewish People abrogated God's promise of the Land and that the modern return to the Land in unbelief does not demonstrate God's continued covenant. But the Scripture reveals that past spiritual rebellion that resulted in God's judgment did not alter the *unconditional* covenant, but only enforced the *conditional* aspect of it that was based on national obedience (Jer. 30:11). God would be faithful to fulfill His covenant someday, but in the meantime, Israel would fulfill a time of divine discipline. After the exile the Jewish People were returned to the Land, but under foreign dominion, a time known as "the period of indignation" (Dan. 8:19) and "the times of the Gentiles," Lk. 21:24). The situation has remained the same ever since, with the Jewish People returned in unbelief to the Land under the modern State of Israel, but still oppressed by foreign nations until the time of Israel's national repentance. Biblical prophets, such as Ezekiel, explain that there would be two regatherings of national Israel: one to the Land (physical), Ezekiel 36:22-24, and another to the Lord (spiritual), vss. 25-28. When the Jewish People experience national repentance toward *Yeshua Ha-Mashiach* ("Jesus Christ"), it will be in the Land (Zech. 12:9-10). Thus, the celebration of modern Israel's Independence Day looks forward to its greater future deliverance at the return of Christ to save the Nation spiritually (Isaiah 66:8; Romans 11:26-27).

5. God's promises to the Jewish people are irrevocable regardless of unbelief.

Finally, it must be restated that the present state of national Israel in unbelief cannot and has not changed the covenantal promises, even though this national unbelief has postponed the reception of the full blessings of the covenants. Evidence for this can be seen in the fact that when Israel was removed from her Land by divine judgment that this did not affect the promised outcome: “When they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. For their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt” (Leviticus 26:44-45). The loss of the Land, far from being a sign of God’s rejection of Israel as His People and an abrogation of the covenants, was rather a sign of His personal commitment to His Chosen Nation until the promise could be fully realized: Therefore say, thus says the Lord God, 'I shall gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I shall give you the land of Israel.'" (Ezekiel 11:16-17).

Today there are many who believe that Israel was rejected by God, and therefore lost their chosen status and forfeited their promised covenants. To the contrary, the Abrahamic covenant was contract law. As such, for the agreement to be mutually binding, there has to be a legal understanding known as a “meeting of the minds.” In other words, both parties agreeing to the terms must understand unambiguously the intention of the other to fulfill what has been promised. If Abram understood God to say the Land was the inheritance of the Jewish People forever, then God could be accused of deception and violating His covenant if He originally intended or later changed His mind so that it would ultimately belong to another people. However, God has declared that there was no deception in the Abrahamic Covenant, nor any of the covenants that grew from it, such as the Davidic Covenant:

“If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have

sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful” (Psalm 89:30-37). Historically, Israel has violated the conditions within these covenants, but, God, Who assumed the obligation to fulfill them (Gen. 15:12-21), never will.

Two other passages, one from the OT and one from the NT, reinforce the divine commitment to Israel regardless of its spiritual condition throughout history: “Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: ‘If this order departs from before Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a Nation before Me forever.’ Thus says the Lord, ‘If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will cast off Israel for all that they have done,’ declares the Lord.” (Jer. 31:35-37). Nothing in heaven or on earth can change God’s immutable decree! It should be noted that in this verse in the original text (Hebrew), the promise is made to preserve them not merely as a “people” (*ha-am*), but as a “nation” (*ha-goy*). While it would be a phenomenon of history that any Jews might survive, it is an incredible miracle that they survived intact as a nation. This is because the Lord has a future purpose for the nation to bless the rest of mankind (Genesis 12:3). While today Israel as a nation has returned to the Land, it has yet as a Nation to return to LORD. But, that day is coming and may come sooner than we can imagine, because it will come by the supernatural power of God, preserving His People through the time of the Great Tribulation, to be restored finally as a Redeemed People at the coming of their Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the NT we read: “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:28-29). Both of these passages affirm that God remains faithful to His covenant promises despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, and it will be that divine faithfulness that will one day return Israel to the Lord (Hosea 6:1-3; Amos 9:14-15).

From this overview, we understand that Israel has a biblical right to the Land because God's Chosen Place has not changed, God's Chosen People have not changed, and God's clear promise has not changed.

While to some the incredible witness of Jewish preservation might seem to attest to the resiliency of the Jewish people, as though they had some unique strength in themselves, the reason for the Jews survival is, and always has been, the work of God. Messianic Jewish author Sandra Teplinsky has well said:

"Four thousand years ago God chose Abraham ... Four thousand years later the world is changed but the Word is not. God has catapulted Israel back to global center stage and made it an international battle zone. Why? Because its all about Him. The Creator King picked an otherwise sorry little strain of humanity called Israel for the sake of His own glory - not just for Bible times, but for all of history, down to this hour and beyond. Israel in the twenty-first century is all about Him." (*Why Care about Israel?* Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2004, 17).

The Miracle of Jerusalem

The miracle of Israel's rebirth also brings into focus its most prophetic city – Jerusalem. In December 1949 David Ben-Gurion declared in a speech to the Israel Knesset: "We regard it as our duty to declare that Jewish Jerusalem is an organic and inseparable part of the State of Israel, as it is an inseparable part of the history of Israel, of the faith of Israel." Teddy Kollek, longtime Mayor of Jerusalem (1967-1993) stated: "For three thousand years, Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of exile, Jerusalem remained alive in the hearts of Jews everywhere as the focal point of Jewish history, the symbol of ancient glory, spiritual fulfillment and modern renewal. This heart and soul of the Jewish people engenders the thought that if you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be 'Jerusalem.'" *Jerusalem*

(Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1990, pp. 19-20). I and my family lived in Jerusalem in the late 1970's and it is amazing to look back at photos from those days when I stood with my infant daughter on the Mount of Olives and there were no buildings between it and the Old City! In those days the eastern part of Jerusalem (historically Jewish and 64% of the entire city) had just returned to Israeli control. How things have changed as Israel has moved forward to invest in their capital despite the protestations of the international community.

The opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem and official U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital signaled a change in policy that has awakened belligerent nations to the fact that Israel, with the support of the most powerful nation in the world, will remain on the map of the Middle East and its capital is historically Jerusalem. My own family has a history with the recognition of Jerusalem. My wife Beverlee and I were so proud when as graduate students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, our daughter was born at nearby Hadassah hospital. We felt our connection to the Land of Israel was nearly complete until we went to the American Consulate in Jerusalem to get our new daughter's U.S. Passport. When I looked at the line designated for "country of birth" it read "Jerusalem," not "Israel." Inquiring of a consulate official I was bluntly told "the U.S. does not recognize Jerusalem as part of Israel." It has now taken 70 years for the U.S. to officially change that policy and finally recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. For many who are not apprised of the facts but have only heard political propaganda through the mainstream media, this act of recognition may seem troublesome. Some media have even explained it as President Trump's attempt to reward pro-Israel evangelicals whom he credited with his election victory. So, let's review the facts historically, religiously, and politically.

Historically, Jerusalem became the capital of Israel decree of King David 3,000 years ago, based on his understanding of God's own choice of this place (Gen. 14:18-20; Ex. 15:17-18; Deut. 12:5-7). It has remained Israel's capital ever since, and though other nations conquered and settled in the Land of Israel, none ever declared Jerusalem as their capital. Over the past 2,000 years, even during times of occupation and persecution, a Jewish community resided there and maintained

it as their “eternal capital.” When in 1948 the U.N. voted to partition Israel into Arab and Jewish states, Israel was reborn and immediately reaffirmed Jerusalem as their capital and enshrined it in their national anthem *Hatikvah* (“the Hope”): *Kol od ba’le’vav p’nima, Nefesh yehudi ho’miyah* (“As long as within our hearts the Jewish soul sings”), *U’lefa-atei mizrach kadimah, Ayin le’Tziyyon tzofiyah, Od lo avda tikva-teinu* (“As long as forward to the East to Zion, looks the eye – Our hope is not yet lost”), *Ha’tikvah bat sh’not al-payim, Lih-yot am chofshi b’ar-tzeinu, Eretz Tziyyon v’Yerushalayim* (“it is two thousand years old, to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem”). However, with the 1948 War of Independence, Jordanian forces conquered and occupied the eastern part of Jerusalem containing the historic Jewish Quarter, the Temple Mount and Western Wall, Hebrew University and Hadassah hospital. When in 1967 the Six-Day War restored this part of the city (64%) to Israel, Jerusalem was reunified and every Prime Minister since has declared the city “the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish State.” In 1955 Sir Winston Churchill, recognizing the historical reality that no other people could restore Jerusalem to its former glory, remarked to British Diplomat Evelyn Shuckburgh: “You ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it was they who made it famous.” (Descent to Suez; *Diaries* 1951-1956, London: 1986).

From a religious perspective, the Bible, which mentions Jerusalem more than any other place (some 800 times), states “the LORD has chosen Jerusalem and will dwell there forever” (Psalm 132:13-14) and expressly calls upon His People to never forget Jerusalem and to “exalt it above their chief joy” (Psalm 137:5-6). Here Israel’s kings ruled and the Temples stood, and it was, and is, at the center of the prophets’ predictions of worldwide peace and blessing at the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 2:2-4). For this reason, it was called “the City of the Great King” (Psalm 48:2). Every single Jewish couple that got married for the last 2000 years swore to Jerusalem. Every family who celebrated Passover said “Next year in Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is where the Prime Minister of Israel lives, where all of the government agencies exist, where the Parliament sits, and where the Supreme Court presides.

For these reasons, despite its international status as a disputed city, the United States has continually acknowledged it as the capital of Israel. In 1995 the U.S. Congress passed the “Jerusalem Embassy Act,” calling Jerusalem the undivided capital of Israel. One year ago, the U.S. Senate marked 50 years of Jerusalem’s reunification with a vote of 90-0 that the U.S. Embassy should be moved to Jerusalem and that it should remain the undivided capital of Israel. Recognition of these facts by President Trump was nothing more than following through on the historic reality of the city, the religious precedent going back to biblical times, and the political intentions of the U.S. government and past Presidents. He, unlike them, kept his promise.

What will be the outcome of this decision? For one thing, it means our daughter will get a new Passport with a long-awaited change affirming that being born in Jerusalem is being born in Israel! For another, we have witnessed expected acts of aggression by the Arab world. Turkey, the United Arab Emirate and Saudi Arabia spent a quarter of a billion dollars to strengthen Jerusalem’s Islamic character. Turkey, in particular, has called for a massive army to attack Israel, and in solidarity with Iran and Russia, is an act that alerts biblical students to a 2,500 year-old prophecy. In Ezekiel 38-39 we read of an invasion of Israel from these countries in the last days. This cautions us that we may be closer to the end of the age than we may have imagined, but of one thing we can be sure. Whatever threats come upon this world there is one city that has been promised a future – Jerusalem. This future is guaranteed by the LORD Himself, Who will one day return to Jerusalem to begin His great Kingdom rule.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said: “No one yet knows what awaits Jews in the 21st century, but we must make every effort to ensure that it is better than what befell them in the 20th ...” In the 20th century America recognized the Jewish State and has been allied with it ever since. We all know that there are those in government and in the private sector who could threaten that relationship in the future. The late Jerry Falwell, founder of Liberty University, once warned against any such change in attitude against Israel: “God has blessed America because America has blessed the Jews. If this nation wants her fields to remain white with grain, her scientific achievements to remain noble, and her freedom to remain intact, America must

continue to stand with Israel!" It was faith that rebuilt the ruins of Jerusalem in ancient days and modern, and it will be the faith of God's people supporting it in prayer that will keep it secure. The call of the Psalmist (Psalm 122:6a) is for us all: *Sha'lu shalom Yerushalyim* ("Pray for the peace of Jerusalem"), the City of the Great King Who is coming to redeem and to restore and to reign from Israel over all the world! Happy 70th Anniversary Israel – You are a miracle of divine preservation and prophetic promise and spiritual prosperity to those who love you (Psalm 122:6b).