

“THE NATION OF ISRAEL LIVES”

“I AM WITH
YOU AND WILL
WATCH OVER YOU
WHEREVER YOU GO,
AND I WILL BRING
YOU BACK TO THIS
LAND. I WILL NOT
LEAVE YOU UNTIL
I HAVE DONE
WHAT I HAVE
PROMISED YOU.”
— GENESIS 28:15

Each year, when spring emerges, Israel’s Independence Day, *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, comes around and reaffirms our bond to the land, people, and the God of Israel. As this day approaches I take a few moments to reflect on this wonderful and holy land that I have been blessed to call home.

As the biblical homeland of the Jewish people, Israel possesses many qualities that make it unique. For me, life in Israel is as close to paradise as I can imagine. The Israeli flags that line every public street and wave proudly from private homes in the weeks leading up to *Yom Ha’atzmaut* assure me that the pride and love I have for my country is shared by all.

The people in Israel are family, which gives everyone a feeling of safety. Children play outside by themselves, take public buses alone from a young age, and have independence that I have yet to see anywhere else in the world. They feel comfortable and safe asking strangers for help. In fact, in Israel, we don’t teach our children not to talk to strangers, but simply to ask strangers for help if they need it.

Another unique aspect of life in Israel is the sanctity of God’s word. For instance, there is no place in the world where *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) is as closely observed. In my community on *Shabbat*, families take time to eat together, pray, and study the Bible. The streets are quiet with a holy silence — often the only sounds heard are prayers coming from the nearest synagogue and children laughing as they play special *Shabbat*

games. Most businesses shut down, enabling each person to enjoy the day of rest without worrying about daily responsibilities. By sanctifying *Shabbat*, strong family values are instilled from a young age.

When I walk the streets of Israel before *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, I

realize we have much to be proud of. For more than 60 years, we have survived as a Jewish nation in our biblical homeland, and we have kept our national spirit alive as well. Terrorists have tried to destroy us from the moment the State of Israel was formed in 1948 by attacking us, but the people of Israel remain undaunted.

There are words we live by, words that sound in our souls constantly and are sung by our children in prayer: *Am Yisrael Chai* (“The nation of Israel lives”). That unwavering conviction will keep us celebrating *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, our Day of Independence, and flying our flags proudly in our beautiful, holy country for many years to come.



(Debbi Cooper)

GOING DEEPER FOR CHRISTIANS

Think about your own country, community, or neighborhood. What makes you proud of where you live? How can you imbue it with a sense of holiness?

Read also:

- Acts 17:26–27
- Ephesians 2:19–20
- Philippians 3:20