



Israel: God's Holy Land

This year we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the miraculous day, May 14, 1948, when Israel declared her independence to the world. Jewish sovereignty in Israel was no longer just a dream. It had been willed into existence through the blood and tears of the Jewish people.

As we celebrate that momentous day, we must never forget that it is only with God, and through God and His promise, that Israel came into being and continues to exist. At the same time, we also must remember the struggles and sacrifices made by the people of Israel.

These past 75 years are the fulfillment of the hopes of the past and the promise of future generations. The psalmist wrote: *"Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

Israelis have spent much time weeping, sowing the seeds of a new country. Some of those sacrifices have come in the form of hard work in the hot sun; others have come in the form of the ultimate sacrifice – losing a loved one or one's own life. But we have borne much fruit.

Today Israel is a beautiful country with a strong military, a rich culture, and a bright future. As President John F. Kennedy once said, "Israel was not created in order to disappear — Israel will endure and flourish."

As we rejoice in all that Israel is and has become in the past 75 years, we must also remember and honor those who made it possible and rededicate



Our Spiritual Homeland

In Deuteronomy 3:25, we find Moses desperately pleading with God to *"Let me go over and see the good land."* Moses wanted nothing more than to enter the land of Israel. Why was it so deeply important for him to go into the land? Moses knew that this land was unlike any other. This land was holy.

Many people call Israel the Holy Land because of the biblical events that took place there thousands of years ago. Both the *Torah* and the Christian Bible center on the land of Israel. However, Israel was holy long before Jesus walked through the hills of Galilee, before Joshua and the Israelites marched around the towering walls of Jericho, and before Abraham heeded God's call to leave his homeland and go to *"the land I will show you"* (Genesis 12:1).

In Judaism, the word "holy" means something or someone that is designated for a special purpose. The land of Israel was set aside by God at creation to be His own special land.

We read in Deuteronomy 32:8-9: *"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance."*

Yet, there is more to Israel than the fact that it was given to God's



An Eternal Heritage

As we celebrate 75 years of the modern State of Israel, we must also recognize its greater context — the fact that while our nation is relatively young, it is also very, very old.

The first time the Bible references the Promised Land is in Genesis 12:1 when God tells Abraham (then still known as Abram) to *“Go from your country...to the land I will show you.”* That land is none other than Israel!

When Abraham arrived in the land then known as Canaan, God promised him *“To your offspring I will give this land.”* He reaffirmed this promise in Genesis 13:15, when He told Abraham, *“All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.”*

Interestingly, when God entered into a covenant with Abraham, He said, *“To your descendants I give this land”* (Genesis 15:18). In Hebrew, the word used in Scriptures for “give” is *natati*, meaning “I have given,” which is in past tense.

God *had already given* this land to Abraham’s descendants, and indeed Jewish tradition teaches that Israel was given to God’s people from the beginning of time. In other words, Jewish rights to the land were always part of the very fabric of Creation.

But who are Abraham’s descendants? After all, Ishmael was also Abraham’s son. Yet in Genesis 26:3, God confirmed that Isaac was the one



A Modern Miracle

Just 78 years ago, the Jewish people stood in the ashes of the Holocaust. Over six million Jews had been murdered — two million of them children — just for the “crime” of being Jews. It was the worst devastation that the Jewish people had suffered in their nearly two thousand years of exile, persecution, expulsion, humiliation, and assimilation.

More than one-third of the world’s Jewish population was murdered during the Holocaust. Like the prophet Ezekiel, we looked down in the valley of death, *Sheol*, weary and weak, and asked, “*Can these bones live?*” (Ezekiel 37:3).

And behold a miracle! God breathed life into those dry bones and they came together, bone to bone, sinew to sinew. They took on flesh and spirit, and the nation lived again!

As God said through the prophet, “...*these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off’...‘My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel’*” (Ezekiel 37:11-12).

Just years after the Holocaust, the modern nation of Israel was born. On November 29, 1947, in nothing less than a miracle, the United Nations voted to support the creation of the modern State of Israel. However, it wasn't until May 14, 1948 that a group of Jewish leaders gathered in Tel Aviv to sign the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel.



Think About It...

1. **Through God, the Jewish people beat the odds and defied normal reality by returning to their homeland twice.** Be inspired by Israel and imagine what God can do for you in your own life.
2. **Israel is an example of one generation working on behalf of the next.** What fruits have you enjoyed from the labor of those before you? What seeds might you sow for future generations?
3. **In 1867, Mark Twain visited the Holy Land. This is what he saw: "...A desolate country...given over wholly to weeds...a silent mournful expanse...a desolation..."** Just a century later when the Jewish people returned to Israel the land gave forth its fruit once again, just as the prophets said it would. How does this fact deepen your faith?
4. **If you could go back to any time in the Holy Land, which time period in history would you choose and why?** What questions would you want to ask the people who lived in that time?
5. **What is one thing about Israel that you are grateful for?** How might you express your gratitude to God on Israel's 75th birthday?
6. **History, especially in Israel, is unfolding before our very eyes.** How might you be a part of it?



Apply It

1. **Learn about Israel.** [Educate yourself about God's](#)

