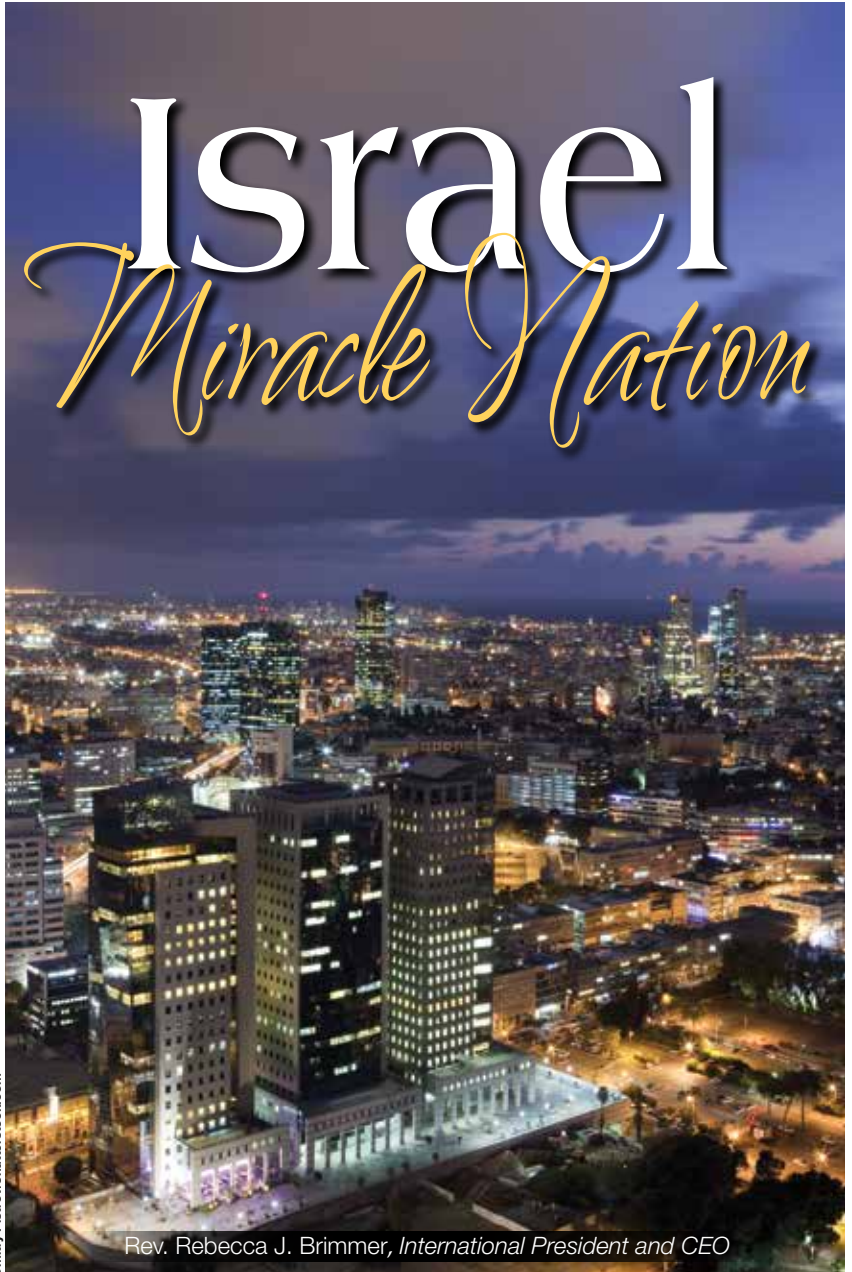


ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer, *International President and CEO*

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Israel

Miracle Nation



"Why just read about Bible prophecy when you can be a part of it?"

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The study of biblical prophecy has been my daily bread. My father was an evangelist who specialized in the area of Israel and Bible prophecy. Every night of the week, my sister and I were in a church somewhere hearing our father expound on world events in the light of Bible prophecy. He would often sit us down and read from the newspaper and then say, "Girls, this is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy...let's read the Bible and you will see." We watched the entire 1967 Six Day War on television with the knowledge that we were witnessing something significant. Only afterwards did we realize that, at that time, we were watching the fulfillment of Luke 21:24b, which says, "*And Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (NASB). June of 1967 was the first time since the dispersion in AD 70 that Jerusalem was under Jewish sovereignty.

We often heard my father talk about future events the Bible foretold. Little did we know that we would live to see many of them literally fulfilled in our lifetime. At Bridges for Peace, we have a little saying: "Why just read about Bible prophecy when you can be a part of it?" I consider it an awesome privilege to be alive today and even more so to be called to be an active participant in the fulfillment of God's prophetic Word. I am sure the prophets who recorded the Word of God would have loved to be in our shoes, but God in His infinite wisdom chose us to be the ones to partner with Him in these last days.

Frequently I meet with Christian groups visiting Israel. A number of times, a pilgrim has said to me, “Wouldn’t it have been wonderful to be here when Jesus and His disciples were here, in the days of the Bible?” I chuckle and think to myself, “Oh, but these are Bible days—these are the days when God is fulfilling His promises, written in the Bible for the nation of Israel, while the world watches.”

Israel is God’s object lesson to the world. It is on this small piece of ocean-front real estate that God is showing the world that He can be trusted to keep His Word. Think of the statistical improbabilities of all the following coming together to fulfill ancient prophecies.

The Ingathering after a 2,000-Year Dispersion

There has never, in the known history of the world, been another people group who were dispersed to multiple locations for over 2,000 years and came back to their ancient homeland. Yet, in the late 1880s, we saw the stirrings of the Spirit of God, as the Jewish people began to arrive in what was then known as Palestine. It was as if God had placed a homing instinct in them set to go off at a certain time in history, and they were compelled to come home. God dispersed the people because of their sin, and now He is bringing them back, not because they have proved themselves holy, but because He is proving His faithful character to the nations of the world. (See Ezekiel 36:19–24).

My family became involved in this effort before the Iron Curtain fell. In those days, many Jewish people were refused permission to immigrate to Israel, and some were imprisoned. They were called *refusniks* or prisoners of conscience. One Christmas, my father came home a few days before the holiday and told my sister Sandy and I that this Christmas was going to be different. This year we were going to think about others instead of just thinking about our presents. He presented us



Photo by Ashernet

with gaudy, cheap, star-of-David necklaces each with the name of a refusenik on it. It was a takeoff on the Vietnam POW (prisoner of war) bracelets that everyone was wearing in the United States in the early 70s. We prayed for our person regularly. My sister really took the project to heart and prayed diligently for the person on her necklace as well as the others. One of the names was Silva Zalmonson.

Some time later, while reading *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, we saw a small story about her, saying that by a miracle, she had been released from prison and was now living in Israel. We were over the moon with excitement as we realized that our prayers had been answered. Later on a trip to Israel, my sister was able to meet with Silva and tell how she had prayed every day for her release. Silva cried and said that she had always wondered why she, one of the infamous Leningrad 11, was released and none of the others were. Now she knew why—it was the power of prayer. Since 1990, over 1,112,000 Jewish people have come home to Israel from the nations of their dispersion, and they are still coming. As of 2010, of the 5,700,000 Jews in Israel, around 1,720,000 came as immigrants, most of the remainder being children or grandchildren of immigrants.

National Identity

The Jewish people were dispersed to over 100 nations throughout the world, and yet they maintained their Jewish identity and their heart connection to the Land of Israel. If you visit the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, Israel, you will see exhibits that show common elements of Jewish practice, which could be found in every Jewish home, regardless of whether that home was in Europe, Asia, or Africa. I grew up in the United States. In comparison to the ancient world, the US is a youngster. My family's ancestors (on my father's side) have been in the US since before the Civil War, some since the days of independence—more than 200 years. But, when you ask my father what nationality he is descended from, he will tell you that he is a mixed-breed. It is hard to find a European country from which he doesn't have an ancestor. The United States has been called a melting pot, and my father is proof.

Compare our experience in the United States with the Jewish experience. For over 2,000 years, the Jewish people have resisted the melting pot temptation and remained a unique people. Over the long centuries of dispersion, they were not forgotten by God; He preserved them as a people.



A Nation Born in a Day

In spite of overwhelming odds against her, Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948. The next day, five hostile Arab armies attacked the fledgling state. With little ammunition, soldiers (many of whom were refugees just off the ships from Nazi-torn Europe), and an air force that consisted of a few small planes,



Israel defeated her enemies. The Arab world was stunned, and the nations looked on in amazement. God was not surprised! This moment in history was foretold over 3,000 years earlier: *“Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons”* (Isa. 66:8, NASB). On May 13, the State of Israel did not exist, and then the next day, she was a reality!

Dead Language Revived

The Jewish people came from over 100 nations and spoke a wide variety of languages. How do you create a nation when you can't even communicate in a common language? Hebrew was nearly a dead language, only used for prayers and Bible reading. A visionary by the name of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, upon arriving on the shores of Palestine, refused to speak anything but Hebrew. His child was the first child in nearly 2,000 years whose native tongue was Hebrew. Eliezer was instrumental in Hebrew becoming a living language once again. Today, Hebrew is the native tongue to millions. A language that was only used for religious purposes is now used for the sacred and the mundane.



A Depleted, Tired Land Restored

Mark Twain visited the Land in the 1800s and described it in his book *Innocents Abroad*. He called it a “blistering, naked, treeless land.” He called the villages “ugly, cramped, squalid, uncomfortable and filthy.” Other descriptive phrases say “solitude to make one dreary; unpeopled deserts, rusty mounds of barrenness that never, never, never do shake the glare from their harsh outlines; this stupid village of Tiberias, slumbering under its six funereal plumes of palms; yonder desolate declivity where the swine of the miracle ran down into the sea and doubtless thought it was better to swallow a devil or two and get drowned into the bargain than have to live longer in such a place.”

Nachmanides, a *Talmudic* scholar, visited in 1267 and described Jerusalem as “deserted and laid waste and Judea was more destitute than Galilee.” George Sandys reported in 1610 that the “land is bare of trees. The country is a vast empty ruin.” Colonel C. R. Condor wrote in 1877 that “Palestine is empty. The population is not large enough to till the land.” In 1831, Michael Russell wrote in his book *Palestine or the Holy Land* that “Jericho, once famous for its palm and balsam trees, is treeless and almost deserted.”

Today, as you visit Israel, you will see a far different reality. The Land is being restored to its former beauty as prophesied:

- “On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands” (Ezek. 20:6).
- “I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree; the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it” (Isa. 41:18–20).





- *“The desert and the wasteland will be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God” (Isa. 35:1–2).*

There is a special connection between the fruitfulness of the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. The Land flourishes when the Jewish people live here and falls into desolation when they are gone. I believe that this land / people connection is a direct result of the special covenant that God made with the Jewish people.

God claims in Leviticus 25:23 that He is the owner of this Land. *“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine...”* God chose to give the Land to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as an everlasting inheritance. *“I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God” (Amos 9:15, NIV).*

Why did God make this unusual covenant between a people and a land? There is a good answer! God placed the Jewish people in Israel to be a witness of His character. In the ancient world, all the peoples had gods who they looked to for fertility, rain, crops, etc. Most of the peoples were polytheistic, praying to multiple gods, but God had revealed Himself as the One True God to Abraham and his descendants. Their presence in the Land of Israel as His worshippers was a constant witness to the peoples round about. Israel was the highway of the ancient world, forming a natural land bridge between three major continents. If you wanted to travel from Africa to Europe or Asia, you had to pass through Israel. To the east, the treacherous deserts made travel extremely difficult, and to the west was the Mediterranean Sea. Traders, armies and travelers all passed through Israel, and on their way, they heard about the miracle-working God of the Israelites.



In this way, God caused His fame to spread throughout the ancient world. Only when the Land and covenant people are together in combination, do both flourish in accordance with God's divine plan. The prophet Ezekiel confirms it is the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel that triggers the restoration of the Land. *"But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come"* (36:8, NASB).

The Bible contains many beautiful prophecies concerning the Land that have seen their fulfillment in modern times:

- The desert shall blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1–2). Today, millions of flowers grown in the deserts of Israel are exported to Europe. Holland even imports tulips from Israel!
- Israel will fill the earth with fruit (Isa. 27:6). Millions of fruit trees have been planted in Israel, reaping a huge export harvest every year. Around the world, people eat the juicy "Jaffa" orange.
- Israel will become like the garden of Eden (Isa. 51:3).

Christians all over the world have become involved in the restoration of the Land of Israel through planting trees, praying for abundant early and latter rains and eating the produce of Israel.

Miracles in Battle

There are many stories of miracles on the battlefield. Let me tell you one of them that we heard firsthand from a young Israeli man. My husband and I volunteered on a *kibbutz* (a collective community) for nearly a year when we first came to Israel. During that year, we met a young Israeli man named Ari. He was thoroughly secular in his lifestyle and was a difficult person to be around. One day, Tom asked him why he didn't believe in God. Ari became indignant and protested, saying, "Of course I believe in God." So, Tom asked him to explain.

Ari told a fascinating story of God's miraculous protection of a group of soldiers. Ari was a commander of a group of 10 soldiers. They were in a canyon doing reconnaissance in southern Lebanon, when suddenly an enemy soldier popped from behind a rock and began to fire with a Kalashnikov automatic weapon. He was at point blank range, and there was no place to run. He emptied a clip into the group and started a second clip before one of the soldiers managed to shoot him. Shaken, the soldiers looked around, expecting to see their comrades lying dead on the ground. Instead, to their utter amazement, they were all standing, and not one had been hit by a single bullet. That is an absolute miracle! "So, how do you explain that, Ari?" Tom asked. "It was like angels were standing in front of each of us, batting the bullets out of the way. We all felt them whizzing by." Ari went on to say, "How can I not believe in God after an experience like that?"



Israeli soldiers
leaving Lebanon

Photo by Ashernet



Future Miracles

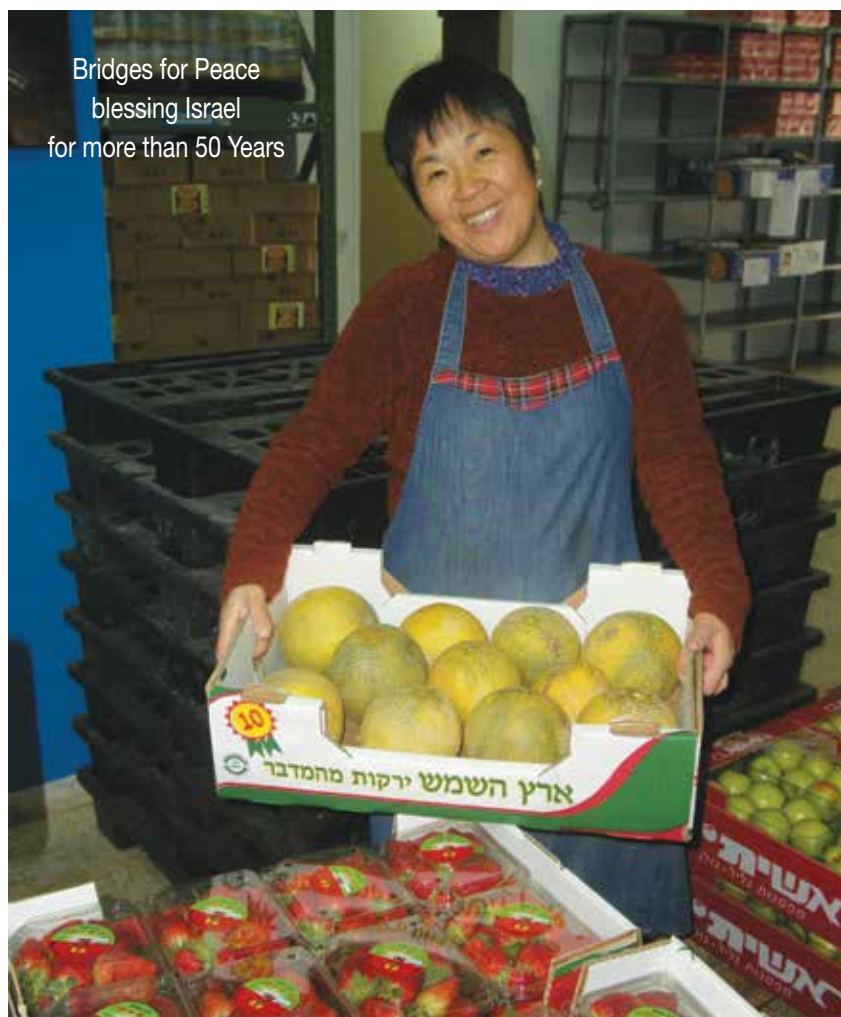
I hope I have whetted your appetite a little. If God fulfilled all of these promises in the life of modern Israel, surely we can trust Him to fulfill the rest! There is more to come! It is God's plan that the people of Israel know Him, love Him, and put their trust in Him. We have the awesome privilege to be part of what God is doing now and in the days to come. Consider a few marvelous prophecies to come:

- *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the highway of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it. It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:5–10).*
- *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you: I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:26–28).*
- *"'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' says the LORD: 'I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD." For they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' says the LORD. 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'" (Jer. 31:33–34).*
- *"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written; 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Paul quoting*

Isa. 59:20]; *for this is My Covenant with them, when I take away their sins* [Paul quoting Isa. 27:9]" (Rom. 11:26–27).

Israel—God's Miracle in the Making

God's Word resounds down through the ages with the promises for the restoration of Israel. God is bringing the people back from the nations of their dispersion, establishing the State of Israel, and restoring the Land. I am confident He will finish His work in such a way that the nations of the world will know that He is God.



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for more than 50 Years

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Isaiah 62:10 is part of my own call from God. *“Go through, go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones. Lift up a banner for the peoples!”* Truly God is using Christians today to assist in His great plans for Israel. No one knows at what speed the Lord will move to finish His plans. But this I know, there will be Christians ready and willing to assist in any way He asks. James said that faith without works is dead. My father paraphrased that statement and said, “Belief without action is deception.” We see God at work, and we believe He will finish what He started, so let’s partner with God in prayer and action to see His name glorified throughout the world.

Rishon LeZion



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Scripture is taken from the New King James, unless otherwise noted.



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