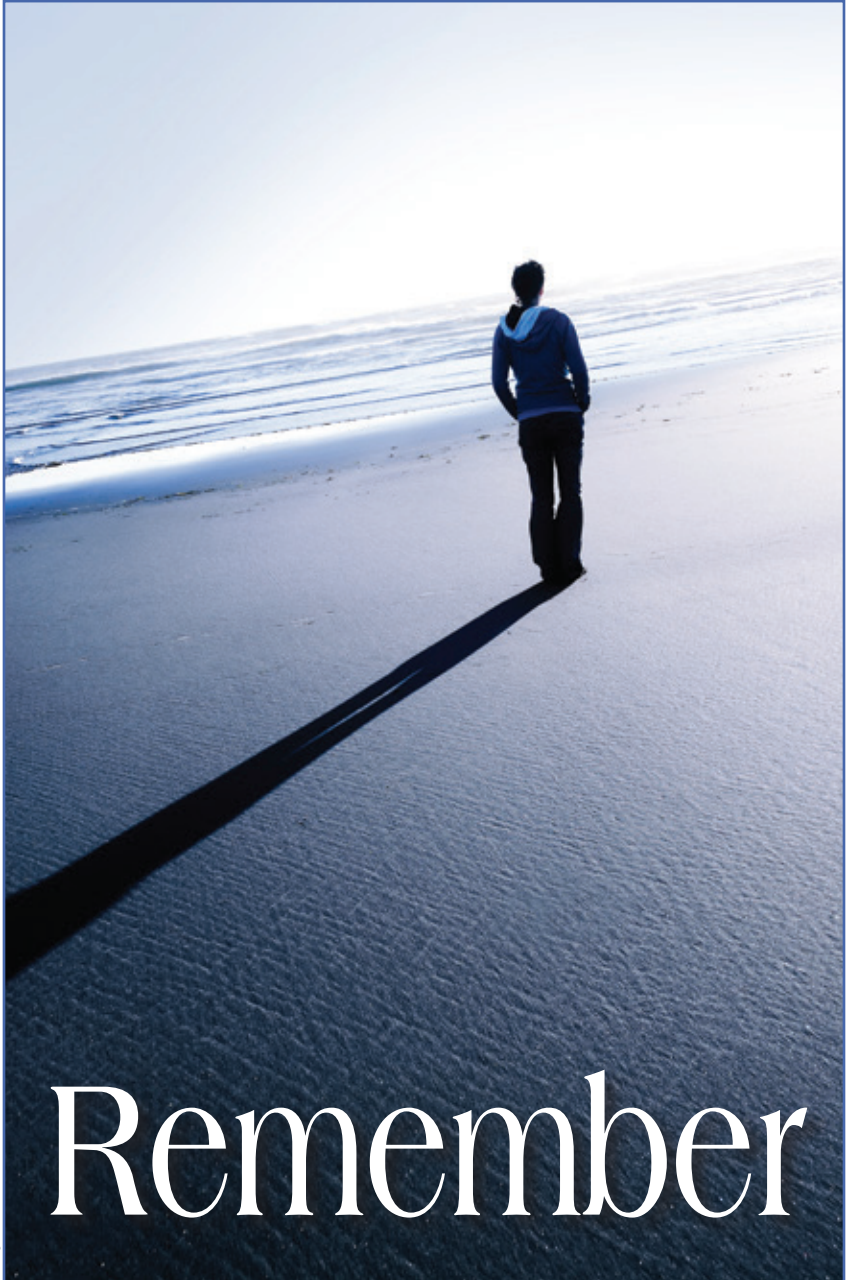


# ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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# Remember

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# Remember

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## THE SIGHT OF A JAPANESE FRIEND,

standing at the stove cooking with long wooden chopsticks, brought back memories of my own Japanese grandmother. She would also stand at her big stove with chopsticks and deftly pluck tempura vegetables out of a pot of hot oil...like a chopstick ballet.



She immigrated to Canada from Okinawa at the age of 19, facing an arranged marriage with a man she barely knew, and a new country with an unknown language and customs. She saw Okinawa only once more, 40 years later, and never saw her parents again.

One night, long after my grandmother had died, I had a dream about her. I saw her as a young woman dressed in a kimono, looking lovely but sad; and I wanted to somehow comfort her. There was a jewelry box sitting on a nearby table, so I opened it and took out a strand of grey pearls to place around her neck. As I reached out, the strand broke and every pearl scattered on the floor.

I believe those grey pearls represented moments in my grandmother's life, forged and beautified by hardship and struggle, which I was to collect and remember. Memories are powerful, and in remembering, I would find foundations, roots and connections that would bring luster and depth to my own life and the lives of future generations.



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# A Memorial of Covenant

Yes, memories are powerful, and God in His infinite wisdom placed tremendous importance on remembering. The Hebrew word for remember is *zakar* which occurs 236 times in the King James Version of the Bible. *Strong's Concordance* translates *zakar* as: remember, be thought of, be brought to mind, record, make a memorial, and be brought to remembrance.

The Hebrew concept of remembrance involves not merely the mental exercise of recalling an event to mind, but implies decisive action taken as a result of that remembrance. When God remembers, He also acts and delivers.

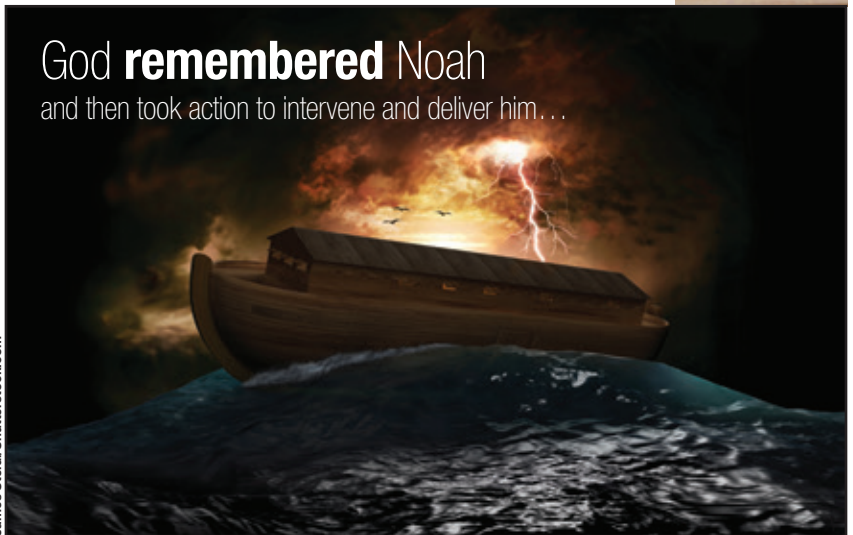
Conversely, it's not as though God "forgets" in the way that we think of forgetfulness. He cannot erase something or someone from His memory. The Hebrew word for forget is *shakach* which means ignore or neglect, willfully disregard or forsake. When God "forgets," the word means that He turns His face away and His presence is removed. The Hebrew word for presence is *paniym* which means countenance or face. The great priestly blessing of Aaron petitions that "*the Lord make His face shine upon you,*" (Num. 6:25). No wonder the psalmist pleaded with God: "*Do not cast me away from Your presence*" (Ps. 51:11). Without God's presence, we are bereft creatures indeed.

In Scripture, remembering is first mentioned in Genesis where God remembered Noah and then took action to

**When God remembers, He also acts and delivers.**

God **remembered** Noah  
and then took action to intervene and deliver him . . .

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intervene and deliver him and all those with him in the ark. *“Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided”* (Gen. 8:1).

Later, God promised to remember His covenant with mankind: *“I will remember My covenant that is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh”* (Gen. 9:15).

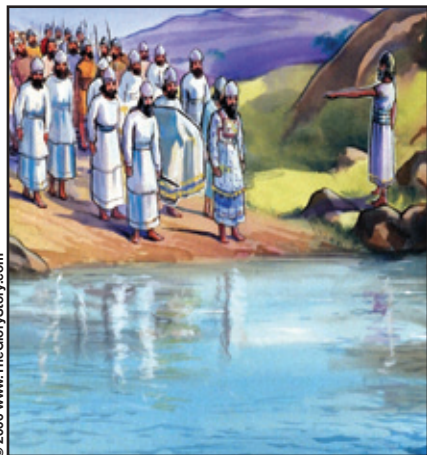
## “Remember, O Lord”

Recorded in the *Tanakh* (Gen.–Mal.) are prayers by some of God’s mighty men and women of faith. Their prayers all include the word *zakar*: a plea for God to remember them and to act quickly on their behalf. In Exodus 32, the Israelites had made a golden calf to worship. Moses pleaded with God to relent from His anger toward them and to *“remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self...”* (v. 13). Moses asked God to refrain from turning His face away from Israel, and God listened and relented from destroying His people.

Hannah was barren and prayed fervently that she would bear a son. *“O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life...”* (1 Sam. 1:11). The Lord heard her cry and granted her petition, and her child Samuel grew up to be one of the greatest judges in Israel’s history.

King Hezekiah wept bitterly before the Lord when he knew he was dying, pleading with Him to heal him and to: *“remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight”* (2 Kings 20:3). God responded and said, *“I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you”* (v. 5), granting Hezekiah 15 more years of life.

## A Memorial of Deliverance



The Hebrew word for memorial is *zikaron*, from the same root (*zayin-kaf-resh*) as *zakar*. In Joshua 4, God told Joshua to set up an altar as a memorial after crossing the Jordan River. He knew that the Israelites would soon forget the miracle they had just seen with their own eyes: the parting of the Jordan River—just as their fathers had forgotten the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. The Lord knew that the children of Israel would need to remember His might and protection as they went into the land to conquer the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites.



They would need the courage that came from knowing who God was and what He had accomplished in the past on their behalf.

Therefore, God told Joshua that he was to set up a memorial of stones. It was to be a sign to the children who would later ask their parents, *“What do these stones mean to you?”* (v. 6). Their fathers could respond, *“...the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over...”* (v. 23).

It was to be a memorial of God’s faithfulness and deliverance through their forty years of wandering—a reminder that He would not leave them or forsake them as He blessed them with future victories when they crossed over into Canaan.



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## A Memorial at Gilgal

Twelve men obediently hoisted a stone onto their shoulders from the riverbed of the Jordan where the priests stood, and set them up as a memorial on the plains of Jericho at a place called Gilgal.

Joshua 5:9 tells us that Gilgal means *“the reproach has been rolled away.”* For forty years, the children of Israel carried memories of their life in Egypt; and those memories had been at the root of their continual complaining and dissatisfaction with Moses, Aaron and God. In this case, holding on to distorted memories of their past hindered them from going forward into God’s plans for their future. They complained about the food and they grumbled about the water. *“Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger”* (Exod. 16:3).

God heard their complaints and granted their request, but their whining *“sent leanness into their soul”* (Ps. 106:15). He provided them with manna every day, but they bemoaned the lack of variety. *“We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”* (Num. 11:5–6). The memories of Egypt had defiled their recognition that the Lord had not only rescued them, but had miraculously provided all they needed in the desert.

Now, the memories of Egypt had finally been erased, and a new generation of Israelites had arisen. This generation no longer whined and grumbled; they came into the land of Canaan as mighty and victorious warriors prepared to obey Joshua and to conquer the land (Josh. 1:16).

In the 1990s, archaeologist Adam Zertal from Haifa University discovered that Gilgal was not a particular location, but was one of the earliest places of gathering and worship for the Israelites. He suggested that there were five separate “Gilgals” mentioned in Scripture. These early places of assembly were shaped like the giant sole of a sandal, locations Zertal found in aerial surveys of Israel. The shape of the footprint was made by erecting a double row of standing stones around the perimeter, and represented God’s promise in Joshua 1:3: *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”* The Israelites were, by the very act of erecting stones in the shape of a footprint, proclaiming that promise from God and claiming the land as their own. Archaeologists found a circular altar located near the toe of the footprint at the Gilgal near Jericho. In the middle of the altar were 12 standing stones.

## A Memorial to the Lord

God gives another reason that a memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. *“...that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever”* (Josh. 4:24).

Terror filled the hearts of the people who lived in the land when they witnessed the miracles the Lord performed on behalf of the children of Israel (Josh. 5:1). God was not just concerned that the fledgling nation of Israel would know Him. He intended that the peoples of the whole earth would know who He was, to recognize His might and to fear Him.

## Israel Remembers

Jewish writer Lesli Koppelman Ross wrote about the importance of remembering to the Jewish people and their keen sense of history. *“It is memory that has allowed us to last through thousands of years of history. Our religion and our people are founded on the collective memory of revelation at Sinai. Scripture throughout commands us to remember...All the memories define us and help us keep focused on the goal of our national mission...Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption.”*

Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel once said, *“I marvel at the resilience of the Jewish people. Their best characteristic is their desire to remember. No other people have such an obsession with memory.”*

As you walk the streets of Jerusalem today, you’ll see many Jewish men with long tassels hanging from their garments, called *tzitziyot*, a custom instituted by God in Numbers 15. God told Moses that these tassels were to be a reminder to God’s people of His commandments. *“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel [tzitzit], that you may*

look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them..." (vv. 38–39).

As we noted before, the act of remembering for the Jewish people means much more than just recalling and commemorating an historic event. For example, celebrating the Passover *seder* involves participating in and reliving the Exodus from Egypt as though it was happening once again. With that active remembering comes the assurance that the deliverance their ancestors experienced long ago is also available to the nation of Israel today.

## Statutes Forever

Leviticus 23 records several feasts known as God's appointed times (*mo'edim*) which He designated as set times to meet with His people.

The Sabbath was set aside as a day of rest where no work was to be done. "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*" (Exod. 20:8). When Jews and Christians who celebrate *Shabbat* pray, "Blessed are you O Lord our God, King of the Universe," we are reminded of God's kingship, sovereignty and provision. The words of that prayer repeated week after week engrave themselves on our hearts and minds, instilling within us the truth that God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it, and therefore well able to care for us and meet our every need.



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The three feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits are observed as one feast (*Pesach*) from the 14th to the 21st of the month of Nisan, the first month on the Hebrew calendar. This weeklong celebration recalls the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt 3,300 years ago. The resurrection of Jesus (Yeshua) also occurred on the Feast of First Fruits, an event celebrated by Christians around the world.

During the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (*Shavuot*), Jewish people not only commemorate the giving of the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.) to their ancestors on Mount Sinai, they see *themselves* as the recipients of the *Torah* from the hand of God. Christians celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit to all believers as recorded in Acts 2. Yeshua promised His disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to help them remember what He had told them. "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*" (John 14:26).





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In the autumn, Israel celebrates three more feasts. The Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh HaShanah*) is a “memorial” of blowing trumpets. This begins the ten Days of Awe where the people come before the Lord in repentance and prepare their hearts for the great Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).

Five days later is the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), where Israelis remember that they lived in temporary dwellings for forty years after their exodus from Egypt. Today, in active remembrance, Israelis build temporary shelters called *sukkot* where they eat their meals during the weeklong festival. *Sukkot* dot the landscape, erected on balconies, in gardens, parking lots and on sidewalks. The flimsy dwellings are strong reminders that, in these days of uncertainty, permanent refuge and security are found only in the Lord Himself.

God spoke of all these feasts as “*statutes forever...throughout your generations.*” God’s people weren’t just to celebrate the feasts occasionally, they were to celebrate God’s faithfulness at these set times every year—crucial reminders that His faithfulness would endure from generation to generation.

## Days of Remembrance

Many dates on the Hebrew calendar are set aside for remembrance, every holiday recalling an historic event in the life of the Jewish people. These are opportunities to celebrate Israel’s victories, to mourn her losses, and to remember God’s faithfulness.

The saddest day on the Hebrew calendar is called *Tisha B’Av*. On this day, the Jewish people lament the destruction of the First and Second Temples, about 655 years apart, on the ninth of the Hebrew month of Av. It also commemorates the evil report of the ten spies that Moses sent into the Promised Land and their deaths by plague for rebelling against the Lord (Num. 13–14).

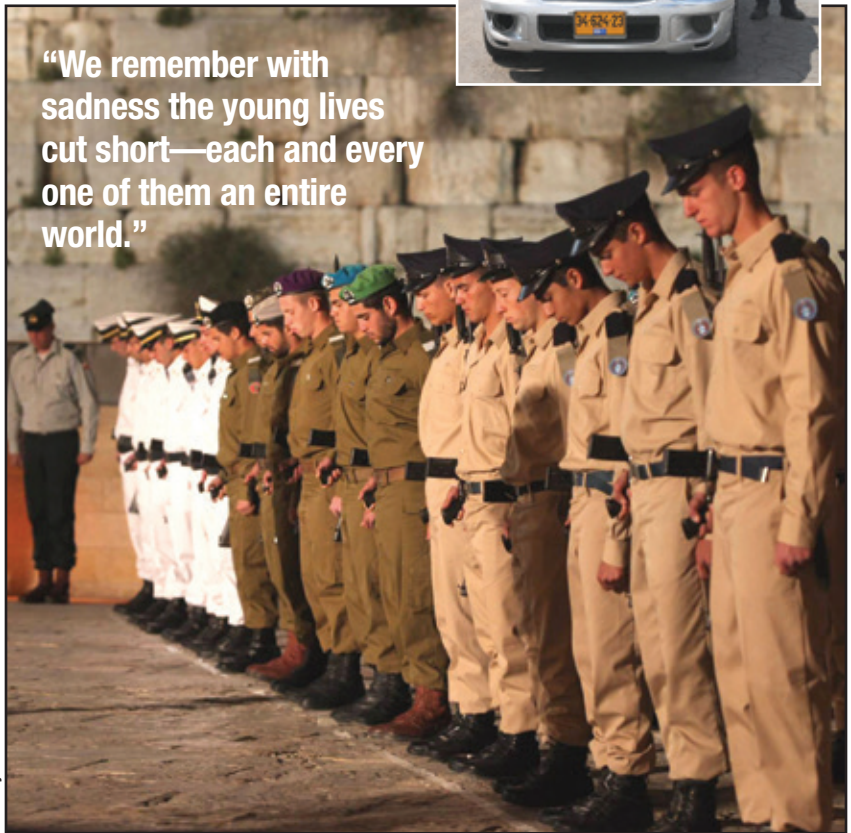
*Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day, recalls the horrors of the Holocaust and the 6 million Jews who were systematically slaughtered by Hitler’s regime. For survivors of the Holocaust, those memories are still painful and ever-present. However, lest the memory of that horror, which occurred in civilized, 20th-century Christian Europe, grows dim for others, Israel is committed to educating the world to remember. For, as the poet and philosopher George



Santayana once wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

This year, Israel remembers the Holocaust on the 27th of Nisan, or April 28. Israelis gather at Holocaust memorials such as Yad Vashem to light candles, listen to survivors speak about their experiences, and pray for those who perished. A siren sounds and Israeli citizens stop working, stop shopping, stop driving, and the nation comes to a standstill in solemn remembrance.

*Yom HaZikaron*, Israel's Memorial Day, honors victims of terrorist attacks, and the soldiers and civilians who fell while defending the nation from her enemies. The sirens sound once again and Israel comes to a full stop, to weep and to remember. The fallen now number over 23,000, and at least as many tears fall this day by those left to mourn. In the commemoration of *Yom HaZikaron* in April 2013, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz said, "We remember with sadness the young lives cut short—each and every one of them an entire world."



**"We remember with sadness the young lives cut short—each and every one of them an entire world."**

Photo by Ashernet

Photo by IsraNet

*Yom HaZikaron* will fall on May 5 this year, the day before Israel's Independence Day, *Yom HaAtzmaut*. The placement of Memorial Day and Independence Day, back-to-back, is designed to emphasize that freedom came at the costly price of thousands of Israeli lives.

## The Price of Freedom

One such life belonged to a young major in the Israeli Defense Forces, Roi Klein. During the 2006 Lebanon War, Roi was with two of his men near a village in south Lebanon. As they tried to place a wounded comrade on a stretcher, the enemy hurled a grenade at them and Roi saw it land. His subsequent act is the stuff of legend. He immediately fell on the grenade, crying out "*Shema, Yisrael*" (Hear, O Israel) as it exploded. His heroic act of self-sacrifice saved the lives of the men who were with him. In that split second of decision, Roi Klein knew what he would do, and he didn't hesitate to do it.



www.idfblog.com

## "Bravery Fiercer Than Death"

During the pre-war months leading up to the War of Independence, the four communities of the Etzion Bloc were Jerusalem's first line of defense to the south. Arab bands had imposed a brutal siege on the Bloc in late 1947, annihilating the convoys from Jerusalem that tried to break through the blockades.

In a last-ditch attempt to avert catastrophe for the Etzion Bloc, thirty-five young soldiers of the *Haganah* tried to carry medical supplies and ammunition on foot over the arduous route through the Judean Hills. One hour from their destination, the brigade was discovered and the alarm raised, drawing hundreds of Arab gangs

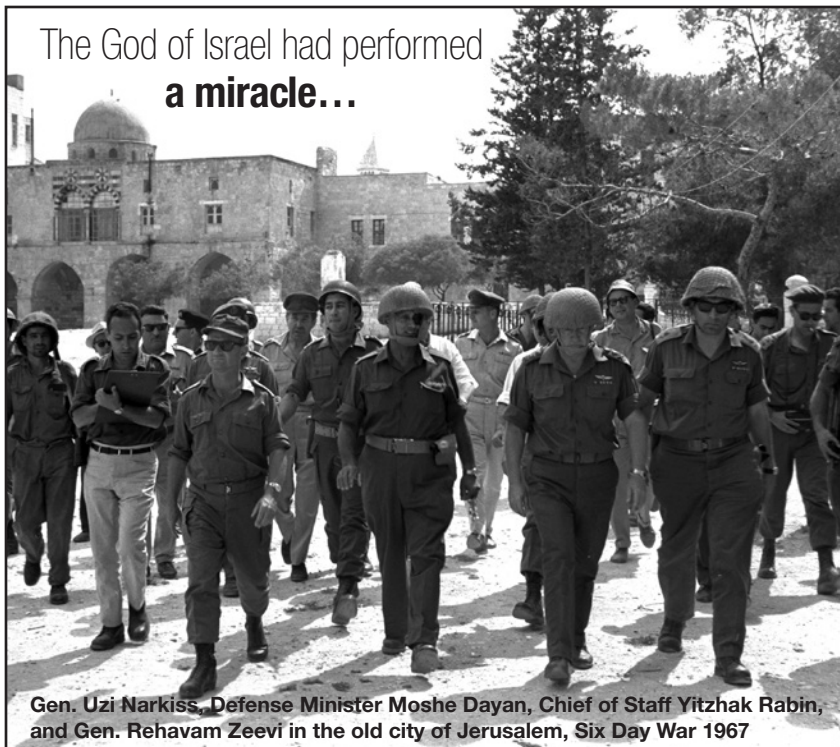


Graves of the "Thirty-five"

"These lions of Israel were a mix of youthful spirit and glory, superior wisdom . . . and **bravery fiercer than death.**"

www.wikipedia.org/Denor-Avi

The God of Israel had performed  
**a miracle...**



www.wikipedia.org/Flickr/ILAN BRUNER, GPO

**Gen. Uzi Narkiss, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin, and Gen. Rehavam Zeevi in the old city of Jerusalem, Six Day War 1967**

to the rocky hill where the thirty-five men had barricaded themselves. After an intense battle, all thirty-five were slaughtered. David Ben-Gurion wrote, “These lions of Israel were a mix of youthful spirit and glory, superior wisdom...and bravery fiercer than death.”

## The God of Miracles

In 1967, Israel was surrounded by nations far superior in manpower and fire-power—Egypt, Jordan and Syria—who threatened that the Mediterranean Sea would run red with Jewish blood. In a debacle of confusion and miscommunication between the Egyptian military and their high command, Israel went on to decimate the Egyptian Air Force, soundly trounce the Jordanian and Syrian armies, triple their land, and regain their capital city Jerusalem, in six short days. It was a victory so spectacular, so inexplicable, that secular and religious Jews alike could only attribute it to an “unseen Hand”—the God of Israel had performed a miracle on their behalf.

## Remembering Who God Is

The unfolding saga of the nation of Israel is a mosaic of hundreds of stories like these of courage and sacrifice, mortared into place, and unveiling the dramatic

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picture of who God is for His people. Like the ancient Israelites, we too need to be reminded of God's power and faithfulness in order to go forward. Though we don't see the complete picture yet, in choosing to remember these stories—stories often marked by immense sacrifice and profound triumph—we get a glimpse of God's plan for Israel and the nations of the world. It promises to be magnificent—transcending all sorrow and hardship, and infinitely beyond all we dare ask or hope.

By Kathy DeGagné, BFP Staff Writer

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

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