

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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CELEBRATING

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YEARS OF FAITHFULNESS



By Rev. Cheryl Hauer, *Vice President*

Bridges for Peace...Your Israel Connection®



ISRAEL IS CERTAINLY NO STRANGER TO STREETS FULL OF REVELERS, dancing and singing with abandon, rejoicing over God's blessings. Each year on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Independence Day) and *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem Day), thousands of people sing and dance the night away, thanking God for His gift of a homeland. But no festivities, past or future we are told, will compare with "A Legacy of Innovation," Israel's official three-day, nation-wide 70th birthday celebration to be held in April of 2018. Seventy years merits 70 hours of non-stop rejoicing beginning with the largest fireworks display in Israel's history. Next comes an all-night beach party stretching 70 kilometers (43.4 miles) from north to south; several "light" parades and perhaps even an IDF (Israel Defense Forces) military parade; parties throughout the country with singing and folk dancing honoring the revelry that marked the dawn of statehood in 1948; all night rejoicing in the streets; all culminating with public *Shabbat* services on Saturday and a musical extravaganza Saturday evening.

Obviously, there is something very special about turning 70. Some of the oldest and best-known references to that significance come from the Bible, which is rife with references to the importance of “70.” King David tells us in Psalm 90:10, “*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away*” (KJV). However, the number seems equally relevant to the religious and non-religious alike.

A Significant Age

Seventy has been a marker in cultures around the world for generations. Experts in the US and Canada, for instance, now use reaching the age of 70 as an indicator of life expectancy. The average individual who reaches 70, they say, can look forward to celebrating at least another 14 birthdays. There are even financial ramifications. Although retirement benefits become available at 62, those who wait until 70 for their payouts to begin will receive 132% of benefits taken at the younger age. History tells us that 70 is not really “over the hill,” as so many think.

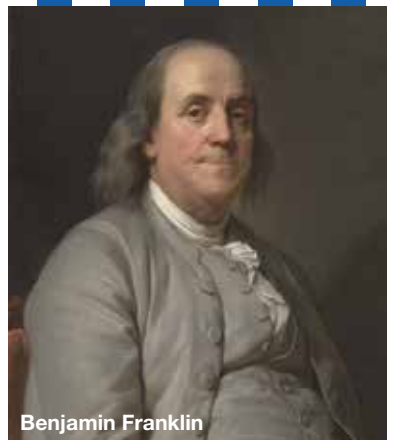
Benjamin Franklin helped to draft the US Constitution at 70 and became its oldest signatory, while Winston Churchill was 70 in 1945 when he led the UK to victory in World War II. Frenchman Peter Mark Roget was 70 when he began work on his dream project known today as *Roget's Thesaurus*. Golda Meir became prime minister of Israel at age 70, while actress Helen Hayes was 70 when she received her first Academy Award. Mark Twain summed up the implications of reaching 70 by proclaiming his right and responsibility to stand proudly atop his seven-terraced summit of decades and teach. The number even has some significance in Buddhism and Islam as well.



Golda Meir



Winston Churchill



Benjamin Franklin

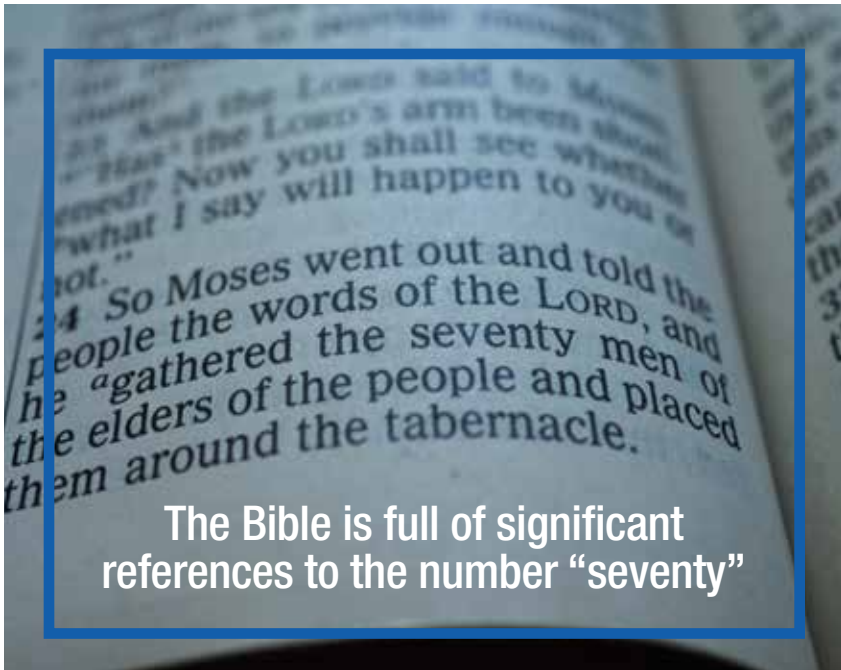
What About the Bible?

Why is 70 so important to the nation of Israel, however? People in both the Christian and Jewish communities are looking back at their history and noticing the many times that God specifically used 70 in the life of His people. In Genesis 46, for example, we are told that Jacob's entourage entering Egypt was comprised of 70 people, setting the stage for one of the most profound and powerful acts of God in human history.

Numbers 11 tells us that God instructed Moses to choose 70 elders to help him rule the nation as they traversed the desert, and both Jeremiah and Daniel tell us that the Israelites had suffered in captivity in Babylon for 70 years when God granted them the freedom to return to their homeland. In the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament), gospel-writer Luke tells us that Jesus (Yeshua) chose 70 disciples to go out from Jerusalem and take the message of the love of God to the world.

In Judaism, the meaning and significance of the number 70 is inextricably linked to the number seven which is one of the most important numbers in the Bible. It means perfection or completeness. Magnified 10 times, seven becomes 70 and indicates God's absolute power, authority, completeness and totality.

When Jesus (Yeshua), in Matthew 18:22, told His disciples that they were to forgive "70 times 7," He didn't mean they had 490 opportunities to say, "It's okay." He meant that just as God's unmerited mercy had been extended to them, they were to forgive without end. Mercy and forgiveness were to be the ultimate attributes of the believer.





An illustration of the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon. The Israelites remained in captivity in Babylon for 70 years.

After the flood, the world was repopulated by 70 descendants of Noah, indicating that God's final and absolute will for the world would be accomplished through the ensuing generations.

During the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins and those Jews remaining there were separated from their community and from the *Torah* (Gen.-Deut.). Many in Babylon were also disconnected from their Jewish heritage. But when 70 years had come, when the time of separation was completed, God sent the people back to Jerusalem with a mission and purpose that would turn the Jewish people back to the *Torah* and literally change the course of history.

Many in both the Jewish and Christian communities today believe there is something extraordinarily important in the fact that Israel is about to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its birth in 1948, and beyond the partying, many are expecting the celebrations to be accompanied by the miraculous. Some are pointing to the promise of US President Donald Trump to move the embassy to Jerusalem in May of 2018 as an indication that the year will indeed be of earth-shattering importance to Israel and to the world.

The Reason to Rejoice

Prior to statehood 70 years ago, Israel was a very different place than it is today. Barren and desolate after two millennia of war, oppression and abuse of the land by absentee landlords, the population lived primarily in poverty. The nation had virtually nothing to offer in terms of exports, natural resources or industry, and travelers to the land rarely had a kind word to say about their visit. It was a place that had, or so it seemed, been cast into the dust bin of history, never again to occupy a place of prevalence on the world stage. Other than its mention on the pages of the Bible, the world had forgotten Israel. Except, that is, for the heart of every Jewish person banished to the Diaspora (the Jewish population outside Israel) that, regardless of their location in the world, yearned to return to the Land of their forefathers and witness the restoration that God had promised so very long ago.

In 1945, the nations rejoiced that the Great War was finally over, and then gasped in horror as allied armies discovered the inconceivable atrocities committed by the Nazis. The Jewish people were brought to the brink of annihilation as Hitler's "final solution" saw the slaughter of one out of every three Jews in the world. Rendered voiceless and powerless, humiliated, tortured and butchered, it seemed impossible that the Jewish people would ever achieve their dream of a return to their homeland. But on November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted on Resolution 181, which would establish a Jewish homeland in what was then called Mandatory Palestine with 33 nations voting in favor, 13 against and 10 abstentions. On May 14 the following year, statehood was declared, and again the world watched in amazement as the Jewish people poured into the streets of Israel to dance, sing and rejoice that God was indeed keeping His promises. Israel was, at last, officially their homeland again.

When the UN Partition Plan was accepted in 1947, five surrounding Arab nations with comparatively well-trained and equipped armies declared war on the fledgling state, and when statehood was declared in 1948, Israel was attacked from three sides. Most unfathomable of all, that tiny community of Jews, many of them Holocaust survivors, with no army, no air force, few weapons and no ability to arm themselves further, without even a common language, managed to defend



themselves against the onslaught and emerge victorious. They were bruised but intact, a force to be reckoned with and a nation bent on survival.

Although the fighting had ceased, the country remained divided. Jordan occupied the biblical heartland of Israel, renaming it the West Bank, as well as the eastern part of Jerusalem. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights were a favorite location from which Syrian forces fired down on Israeli citizens as they went about their daily lives. In the ensuing decades, Israel was forced into several wars by her Arab neighbors even though her heart's cry was peace. In 1967, the Six Day War found Israel again defending herself, and at the end of less than a week of fighting, Jerusalem was reunited and under Israeli sovereignty for the first time in nearly 2,000 years. The Gaza Strip, the so-called West Bank and the Golan Heights were also again under Israeli control and people the world over stood in astonishment at tiny Israel's miraculous victory. Since then two Arab *intifadas*, or uprisings, have claimed hundreds of lives and left thousands injured. All the while, Israel has sought peace, prayed for peace, negotiated for peace, and surrendered land in the hope that peace would come.

Rendered voiceless and powerless, humiliated, tortured, and butchered, it seemed impossible that the Jewish people would ever achieve their dream of a return to their homeland.



But God kept His promises.



Meanwhile...

Throughout their history, the *Torah* has been the mainstay of the Jewish people. God's promises have been their hope, His word their consolation. The countless verses in the *Tanakh* (Gen.– Mal.) in which the Lord promises their return to their homeland were a lifeline for Diaspora Jews in the darkest of times:

Deuteronomy 30:5

Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Jeremiah 23:3

But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

Ezekiel 37:21

Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Surely, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land.'"

Jeremiah 32:37

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury and in great wrath; and I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell in safety.

Amos 9:14–15

"Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them," says the LORD your God (NASB).

Isaiah 43:5–6

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not keep them back!" Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth (NASB).

Isaiah 49:6

Indeed He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."




**Ink-drawn
Israeli flag
raised in what is
now Eilat after
Israel's victory in
the 1948 War for
Independence**

During the past 70 years, we have seen these promises fulfilled. Despite the hardships, wars, opposition and terror Israel has faced on a continuing basis, her doors are open to God's chosen ones from around the world as He has called them to come home. And come they have. In 1948, at the declaration of statehood, the Jewish population of Israel was about 650,000. Today, just 70 years later, there are 8.7 million people living in Israel, nearly 7 million of them Jewish. The nation has one of the highest birth rates in the developing world as well as one of the lowest infant mortality rates, lowest suicide rates and a life expectancy that is 17th in the world.

The horizon of nearly every city in the land is dotted with construction cranes as the nation builds homes for those Jews from the nations who continue to come. They are also building schools, universities, government and scientific institutions, community centers and parks. Israel has more libraries per capita and publishes more books per capita than any nation on earth. The country has the highest number of university degrees per capita, the highest number of museums per capita, the largest number of chess grandmasters per capita, more computers per capita, the highest rate of entrepreneurship among women and a scientific community that produces more papers than anywhere else in the world.

Israel boasts one of the strongest free-market economies on the globe and can only anticipate growth as the highest number of start-up companies on earth continue to pour billions of dollars annually into Israel's coffers. As the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel's vibrant political scene fosters debate and brings together political leaders from every facet of Israeli society including the nation's minority populations.

It is through their contributions to the rest of the world, however, that Israel fulfills her most important mandate, that of light to the nations. Israeli advances in medicine, science, technology, communication, agriculture and security are



“And the
nations shall
know that
I am the
LORD.”

Ezekiel 36:23

making the world a safer and healthier place for the global community. Their groundbreaking drip irrigation technology has made it possible for third world nations in arid areas to increase their food production, and advances in storage techniques allow them to keep their food stores safe for consumption.

Recently a team of Israeli scientists extracted a polysaccharide from algae and created a material that can be used to encourage regeneration and repair of injured organs and tissues. The material has already proven useful for victims of heart attacks.

Another team created the SniffPhone. This device analyzes exhaled breath and decodes it to determine the presence of illness or disease. The results are then transmitted via smart phone to the physician for further action.

Finally, another scientific team has succeeded in breeding a cherry tomato, itself an Israeli creation, with fruit to produce tomatoes that stay firm for weeks and are much higher in lycopene and richer in Vitamin A and C.

Well Done, Israel

What has all of that to do with the number 70 you might ask? The answer is a simple one. Israel’s very existence, not to mention her astounding successes, is the result of God’s absolute power, ultimate authority and unqualified faithfulness. No other country has ever faced the overwhelming odds against its very survival that are “business as usual” in Israel. No other country has dealt with the international disrespect of its sovereignty that Israel faces constantly, or the demonization of its very existence that Israel encounters on a global scale. Yet no other nation has gone from a third world to a first world country in less than 50 years as has Israel. Nor have they reached the level of achievement that Israel has in hundreds of years, much less 70.

Many have looked at Israel’s struggles and setbacks of the past decades and found in them the words of Psalm 83:1–4:

Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head.

They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more."

And rightly so. The enemies of Israel, who are in fact the enemies of God, have tried, not for decades but for millennia, to wipe Israel from the face of the earth. The past decades have seen a rabid increase in such activity combined with historical revisionism that would indeed, if successful, ensure that the name Israel would be remembered no more.

But today, we see an Israel that is strong and successful, overcoming obstacles and building relationships globally on an outstanding scale—an Israel whose existence shows the world that there is a God, a faithful and merciful God, who desires relationship with His people and who is altogether faithful to love, guide and protect them. Ezekiel 36:23–24 says, “‘*And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations... and the nations shall know that I am the LORD;’ says the Lord God, ‘when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.’”*

Perhaps those expecting the miraculous during Israel’s 70th anniversary year are correct. Perhaps this is the time that Israel will step from Psalm 83 to Ezekiel 36. Perhaps it is at this 70-year mark that the totality of His will for Israel will become reality, that through His absolute power and authority, Israel will continue on her journey of becoming the light to the nations that God has promised she will be. Regardless, Israel deserves our congratulations and our support for 70 years well done. *Kol hakavod* (well done), Israel, we love you! May you go from strength to strength.

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

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (*Yeshua*)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or O.T.) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or N.T.)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

BOMBS ON THE BORDER

As tensions build with Iran on Israel's northern border, Bridges for Peace is repairing 22 bomb shelters in communities facing the daily threat of missiles.



Karmiel's bomb shelters are 30–40 years old and in bad shape. Please consider a donation to our Home Repair project so that we will have enough funds to finish this work!

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