

Standing with Israel



Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israeli Independence Day)

יום העצמאות

The Israeli flag is being raised all over the Land of Israel as we prepare to celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut {Hebrew: יום העצמאות, *yōm hā-'ašmā'ūt* }, Israel's Independence Day, which begins this year at sundown on **Wednesday, April 25, 2012**, and ends the next sundown on **Thursday, April 26, 2012**.

This joyous occasion, commemorating Israel's declaration of independence on the Hebrew date of Iyar 5th, 5708 (May 14, 1948), is always preceded by the more somber day of Yom Hazikaron, the Israeli Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism Remembrance Day.

Before we can rejoice over the miraculous survival of the nation of Israel, we must first pay tribute to those who paid such a high price - the young Israeli men and women of the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) who sacrificed their very lives, and the innocent victims of terrorist attacks – in order that Israel could exist today.

“Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

Most every man, woman and child in Israel carries a deep sorrow in their hearts, over loved ones who were either a casualty of war, or one of the many victims of vicious terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians.

The Bible tells us, however, that although **weeping many endure for a night, joy comes in the morning.** (Psalm 30:5)



Israeli air force Yom Ha'atzma'ut flypast 2011

As the sorrow of Israel's Remembrance Day ceremonies are winding down at dusk, the rejoicing of Independence Day festivities are just beginning with an official ceremony and torch lighting on Mt. Hertzl. Twelve torches are lit to represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

This is followed by colorful fireworks displays and people coming together to celebrate with joy and gladness, with singing and dancing, especially the traditional folk song, Am Yisrael Chai (The nation of Israel lives!).

“I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful.” (Jeremiah 31:4)

Streets around public squares are closed to traffic so that the people may freely dance in the streets of Jerusalem. The ancient Hebrew prophet Jeremiah foretold the coming of this day:

“Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness...and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD...For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,” says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 33:10-11)

Yom HaAtzma'ut is an official day off work during which Israeli families, regardless of religious observance or denominational affiliation, celebrate with annual spring picnics and barbecues. These are called, in Israeli slang a *mangal* – from an Arabic word meaning stove.

Balconies, parks, schools and buildings all over Israel are decorated with Israeli flags, and most vehicles display a small Israeli flag as well hanging from their windows or attached to their side view mirrors.

Special prayers are recited, the Presidents' Residence hosts a reception, and the Israel Prize ceremony takes place on this day as well.

Yom Ha'atzmaut, is not, however just a cause to celebrate and rejoice for Israelis and Jewish people in the Diaspora, but for Bible Believers in all the nations. The fact that Israel has been

reborn and continues not only to survive, but also to thrive, is undeniable evidence that God's Word is true.

The Prophet Isaiah asked, "Can a nation be born in a day?" The obvious answer is, "Of course not!" This is an impossibility; and yet with God all things are possible. Israel was, indeed reborn in one day, on May 14th 1948, as Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, read Israel's declaration of Independence.

"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children." (Isaiah 66:8)



God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19) He faithfully keeps His Covenant promises to His people. Although He punished Israel for their sins by sending them into exile, He also promised that one day they would return and rebuild this land.

"I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before." (Jeremiah 22:7)

God, who scattered His people to all four corners of the earth, vowed to one day gather them back to their own land. **"He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd."** (Jeremiah 31:10)

That day is now. The set time to favor Zion has come. Am Yisrael Chai! Halleluyah!

"You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come." (Psalm 102:13)

Not everyone rejoices with Israel and the Jewish people over the survival of the nation of Israel. Some Arab citizens (excluding the Drze and Bedouins who support the nation of Israel) consider Yom Ha'atzmaut a tragic day in their people's history, calling it al-Nakba ("the catastrophe").

There are many who are determined to see Israel's destruction – to drive her into the sea – but God promises that the nation of Israel will always exist before Him – as long as there are stars in the sky.

Surprisingly, there also exists a fringe element of Jewish society that also does not see Yom Ha'atzma'ut as a happy occasion. Some ultra-orthodox, anti-Zionist Jews go so far as to display a black flag and wear ashes and sackcloth as symbol of grief. Some sects even fast and seek God's forgiveness for what they see as the sin of creating a Jewish state without the Messiah.

But these are the exception. For the overwhelming majority of Jewish people, both in Israel and around the world, this is one of the happiest days of the year.

Even some Christians, however, seem to be confused about the issue of Israel's right to the Land, especially when the media presents such a biased and distorted perspective.

The one indisputable fact that needs to be established on the basis of God's rock solid word is **Israel's right to the Land by Divine Covenant.**

When did this covenant begin? The covenant for the Land of Israel began with Abram; and it was for this reason that God called him out of Ur: **“The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.”** (Genesis 12:1)

We may note that this land was not uninhabited when God promised it to Abram and his descendants, but that Canaanites were in the land.

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” (Genesis 12:6-7)

The fact that there may have been people groups living in the Land when Israel became a nation does not nullify God's covenant with Israel for the Land. When God commanded Joshua to lead the children of Israel to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land, it was also inhabited. And yet God expected Israel to battle with and drive out the former inhabitants and to take possession of this Land, as He does to this day.

The primary purpose for which God brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees was to give Him this Land. **“I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”** (Genesis 15:7)

The covenant God made with Abram was then sealed with blood. God caused Abram to fall into a deep sleep while the Spirit of the Lord, as smoke and fire, passed through the cut pieces of the sacrificial animals.

“As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him... When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land,” (Genesis 15:12, 17-18)

This act signified that the Covenant for the Land is based solely on God’s faithful promise and rather than Abram or his descendants’ merit or lack thereof.

This covenant for the Land of Israel is clearly everlasting and forever.

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” (Gen. 17:7-8)

What then, some may ask, about the descendants of Ishmael, the Arabs, who were also descended from Abraham? Do they not also have a right to the Land?

If we trace the lineage of covenant we find it then descends through the child of Promise, Isaac (Yitzchak). Even Abraham was fooled into thinking that Ishamel would inherit the Land:

“O that Ishmael may live before You”, Abraham said to God. But God answered, **“No – My covenant I will establish with Isaac.”** (Genesis 17:21)

When it comes to Jacob and Esau, the inheritance also passed to Jacob (whose name was later changed to Yisrael (Israel). God said, “Jacob have I loved and Esau I have hated.” (Romans 9:13) Who are we to argue with God’s election? He is the potter and we are the clay. It is God who passes the inheritance of the Land to Jacob and not his twin brother, Esau (Genesis 28:13).

Scripture makes these truths abundantly clear. Thank you for standing with Israel, and on the solid Rock of God’s Word about her right to this Land. May we all weep with Israel as she weeps for her losses on Yom Hazikaron and rejoice with her as she rejoices on Yom Ha’atzmaut. Please also pray for the spiritual rebirth that is surely to come for the nation of Israel!

Love in Yeshua,

Hannah

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Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.



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