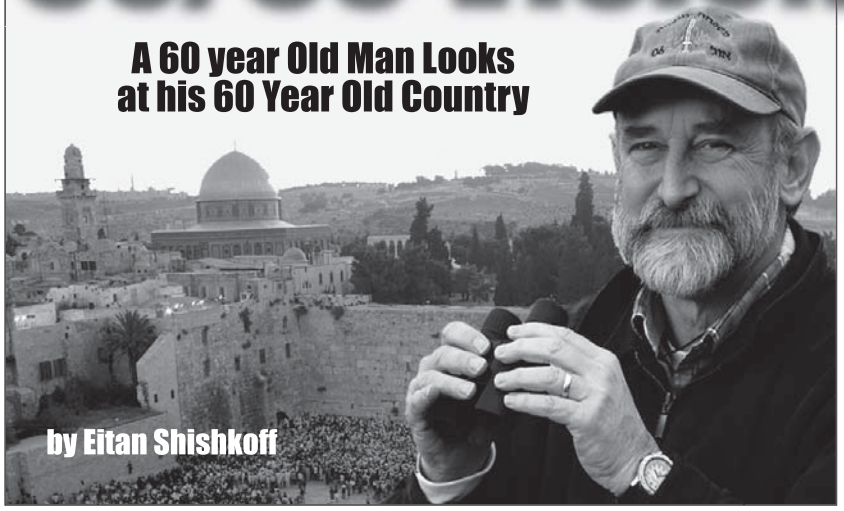
Oasis
A Publication of Tents of Mercy Congregation (Ohalei Rachamim) - Volume 8, Issue 4

60/60 VISION



It was a pivotal year in history; 1948 - only three years after a war that had engulfed the world. That conflict introduced weapons of destruction on such a massive scale that mankind has been trying to ban them ever since. New nations were being born (Republic of Korea) and old ones were either being freed from colonialism (India) or coming under Communism, the new colonialism (China). But of all the events that took place that year, it was the rebirth of an ancient nation, Israel that signaled a seismic shift in world history.

A SIGN OF THE WORLD'S END?

At the same time, the rate of technological change accelerated in a way that would eclipse all previous periods of discovery and invention. In the sixty years from 1948 to 2008 the world has hurtled into the space age, the information age, economic globalization and cloning. The scientific, electronic and mechanical advancements of the past sixty years have exceeded science fiction. I was also born in 1948. As kids in the '50s we thought televisions and transistor radios were a big deal. We now hold in our palm, communication devices whose capabilities required an entire building in 1948. I'm typing on a laptop that lets me see the world from outer space! It sounds exactly like the Prophet Daniel's prediction that knowledge would increase at the time of the end.

In 1970, sociologist Alvin Toffler wrote *Future Shock,* a book predicting the effects of rapid technological change. ***"This change will overwhelm people, the accelerated rate of technological and social change leaving them disconnected and suffering from shattering stress and disorientation."*** [1]

Preoccupation with the end of the world (albeit tongue in cheek) hit the pages of TIME magazine this January.[2] Lev Grossman reported on the unusually high number of current films, books, music and TV shows dealing with the subject of "the Apocalypse," the end of the world. The readers of TIME would do well to read the writings of Israel's prophets. Ezekiel pictured Israel rising from the ashes of the Holocaust, in a book written 2600 years ago (see Ezekiel 37). The prophet knew that Israel's resurrection would be God's catalyst, inaugurating the "end of the age." In the New Covenant, Yeshua also spoke of the latter days. ***"When you see the fig tree (symbolizing Israel) blossoming, know that I will be at the door, ready to return."*** *(my paraphrase of Matthew 24:32-34)*

THE DESERT SHALL BLOOM

Israel is a miracle on the stage of history, a nation that came back from the dead. Her dramatic progress on every physical, economic, medical and scientific front is astounding. Here are just a few statistics:

In 1948, Israel's Jewish population was 630,000. By end of 1951, that number had already doubled. It is now roughly 6,000,000, a growth of nearly 1000% in 60 years. Soon after Israel declared independence, Jerusalem was blockaded and the rest of the nation was fighting for its life. Food and supplies

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 3

were scarce. Fourteen years later (1962) our economic condition improved but we were still struggling; our annual per capita income was $1800. By 2000 it had multiplied ten times, to $20,000 and last year it was a startling $31,767. Only 60 years after its establishment, Israel has become an economic and technological powerhouse. Today there are 120 Israeli companies traded on Wall Street, more than any other country outside North America. A recently-published United Nations study ranked us 23rd worldwide in standard of living.

Isaiah predicted that in the time of our lengthy exile, Israel would be ***"forsaken and hated, so that no one went through..."*** Yet afterward, this same land would become ***"an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations." (Isaiah 60:15)*** The American author, Mark Twain, described Palestine in 1867 as a "desolate country…given over wholly to weeds - a silent mournful expanse. We hardly saw a tree. It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land."[3] Neither Isaiah nor Twain could have imagined the 77 million trees and 24 new cities that were planted in just the first 13 years of statehood. In contrast to the "bummer vacation" Mark Twain spent here 140 years ago, 2.3 million tourists enjoyed Israel's sites in 2007.

Yes, a miracle. At the same time, we are a people whose very existence is challenged by the hatred of Islamic jihad. Tyrants, led by Iran's Ahmadinedjad, openly promise our destruction. Rockets are raining down on the southern cities of Sderot and Ashkelon. In the midst of prosperity there is poverty; and many Israelis are struggling to find inspiration to offset the never-ending tension. Despite his professional success, a local veterinarian voiced the hopelessness of many. "I'm ready to leave this country. I'm not about to send my sons to die in this insane situation." There is anger over the endless need to defend ourselves, even after Israel's repeated and sacrificial attempts to make peace with the Palestinians.

ISRAEL'S STRUGGLE, like MODERN MAN'S, is SPIRITUAL

The dilemma of modern Israel is the dilemma of modern man: what is the meaning of life? Israel's struggle is a spiritual one. Will we be a nation like all others? This was the aim of David Ben-Gurion, our founding national father. He believed that Israel would take her rightful place among the nations when we had thieves and prostitutes like every other nation. After 60 years we can, with unfortunate certainty, say that we have entered the roll-call of nations in those respects. But isn't there a different calling for Israel? God commanded us, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Has God pinned us in a corner, allowing us neither the smug satisfaction of modern materialism nor the cop-out of assimilation into the fashionable group of "enlightened" liberal democratic societies?

Here are some relevant questions for Israel to ask herself as we enter our seventh decade: Is Israel chosen? If so, for what? What impact should this have on the daily life of the nation? Are we secular, religious or pluralistic? What is our responsibility for the poor and disadvantaged? How will we more fully integrate Israel's one million legitimate Arab citizens into the Jewish State? How will we respond to the death threats of regimes like Iran, as they race toward nuclear capability?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I am 60 and Israeli is 60. At this stage I feel like there's no time to waste. I want to live wisely rather than hastily. Israel, too, needs wisdom, not haste. Israelis are accustomed to reacting quickly. This is an asset when attacked, but a deficit when seeking the true meaning of life. This is the time for strategy, for surveying the chess board, for looking at the enemy's moves. It's also a time for examining priorities. I find myself doing that a lot lately. How many years do I have left? There's no way to know. But I really want to use them well. Israel is a lot like my generation, the baby-boomers. We think we can never grow old, never slow down, don't need to plan for the future. But I's time to re-evaluate. We got accustomed to living fast, fulfilling cravings, not counting the cost. After all, we were the first generation to "enjoy" the drive-up window.

The significance of Israel's 60th birthday is that we are poised at the edge of the most dynamic, cataclysmic and redemptive events in history. But we are not spectators. God has put us at the center of the action – the resurrection and revival of Israel. May we, as Jewish and Gentile followers of her King, be faithful to the opportunity of a lifetime! ✡

NOTES:

1. Wikepedia, *Future Shock*
2. *"Apocalypse New,"* Lev Grossman, Time Magazine, January 28, 2008, p.54-553.
3. Quotes taken from *Innocents Abroad,* Mark Twain. For a real treat, see You Tube video, *"Mark Twain and Israel"* http://www.youtube.com watch?v=HpFhKpS67DQ

DEAR PUSHKIE NATION,

Tents of Mercy is entering the final phase of purchasing our building outright!

Please empty your pushkies and send the totals in a check to Tikkun International, memo Tents of Mercy Building Fund.

We thank you so much for your generous support - you are incredible.

LONG LIVE PUSHKIE NATION!

Editor: *Martin Shoub*
Graphic Design: *David Coddington*
P.O.Box 1018 Kiryat Yam 29109, Israel
Tel: +972 (4) 877-7921, Fax: +972 (4) 875-7792
E-mail: ohalei@netvision.net.il
Stateside: c/o Tikkun Ministries
P.O.Box 2997 Gaithersburg, MD 20886-2997
www.tents-of-mercy.org

Tents of Mercy אוהלי רחמים

Our Vision:

Tents of Mercy - to participate in today's historic exodus by assisting Israel's returning exiles.

No spectators in the Kingdom - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

Come back Yeshua - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.

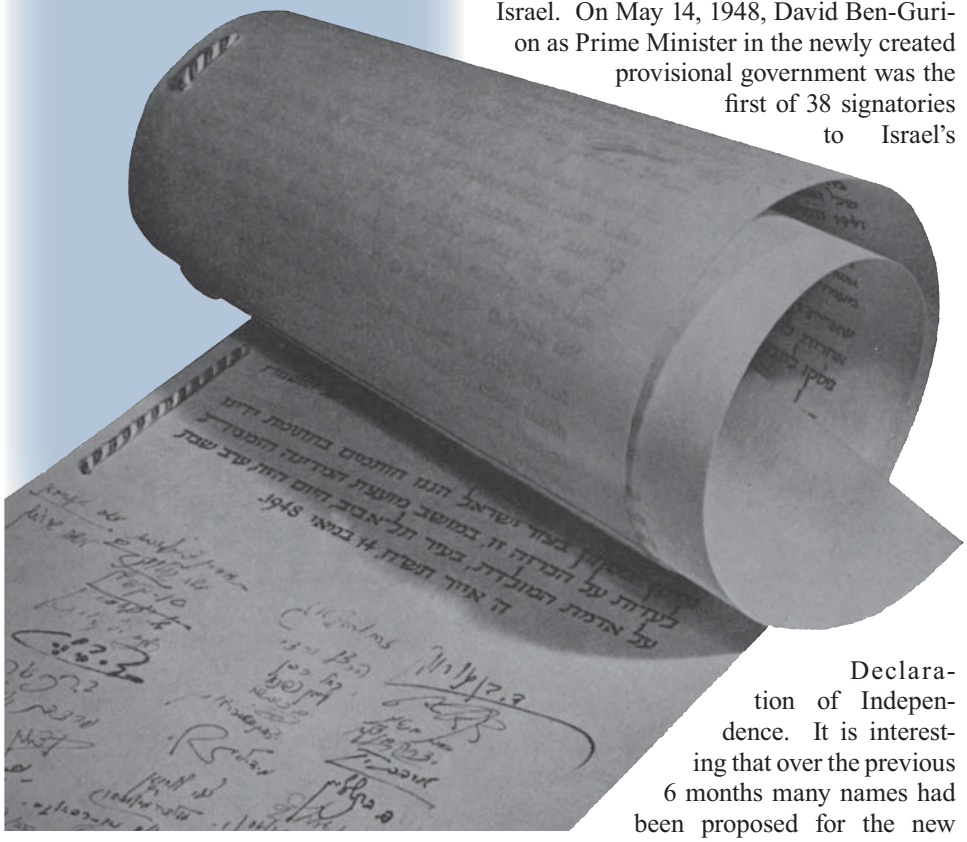
BIRTH PANGS 60 YEARS IN

by Moshe Morrison

When I was 13 years old I became a bar mitzvah (Son of the Commandments). The passage from the Prophets that I chanted that day was Isaiah 66. Though it is a dramatic and critically important passage, unfortunately the focus of my reading was more concerned with the proper chanting of the words than with their actual meaning. The contents of the piece really seemed to have little bearing on my life.

How different now, years later, when I read those words again as a follower of Yeshua and a citizen of Israel. As we are approaching the 60th anniversary of the modern state of Israel, verses 7 and 8 are especially pertinent. *"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? 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."*

Here in the words of the prophet written approximately 2700 years ago is a picture of the overnight birth of the modern state of Israel. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion as Prime Minister in the newly created provisional government was the first of 38 signatories to Israel's



Declaration of Independence. It is interesting that over the previous 6 months many names had been proposed for the new state: among them Zion, Ziona, Judea, Ivriya. However, it was not until this reading of the document that it was known publicly that the name of the state was to be Israel. One early Jewish Agency official, Walter Eytan, captured the essence of it so well.

The moment the name was proclaimed everyone realized instinctively that it could in fact have no other. The children of Israel, the people of Israel, the land of Israel, the heritage of Israel - all these had existed in reality and metaphysically for so many thousands of years. They had exercised such influence on the evolution of mankind that the state of Israel was their logical consequence and culmination. Ben-Gurion's choice of a name was hailed as a stroke of genius; in fact it arose out of the innermost historic or tribal consciousness of us all. There could have been no more effective introduction of the new State to the world. 'Israel' on its visiting-card, was as eloquent as could be. It was so evocative, and so imminently true that nothing more needed to be said. It made obvious to the world not only who we were, but that we were what we had always been. And that if the State of Israel as such was a newcomer on the international scene, it was in fact, but the natural outward form in modern terms, of a mystery and a people whose roots went back to the earliest ages of man."

Of course, with birth there are nine months of preparation and development before the actual birthday, which is also usually accompanied by pain and struggle. In Israel's case, it was many centuries, even millennia since Israel was a free and independent nation. This people had been created in the covenant made by God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But often other realities than these obscured that beginning and shaped the identity of the people that would become the modern state of Israel. This is why Isaiah 51:1, 2 is a call for the nation to return to its foundations. *"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the LORD; Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him."*

After 60 years Israel still struggles with her identity. Is she really a modern state like all the other nations? Is that something we should seek? The question is, what does God intend for Israel? Why did He begin this work with Abraham and give him this piece of middle-east real estate in which to live it out? But if the goals of the founders and builders are not the same as those of the Great Architect and Designer, can they truly have a constructive part in fulfilling His purposes? This is why some have even questioned whether the creation of the modern state of Israel was a divine imperative at all.

Early Pioneer Vision

However, to expect that God will only use those that are completely aligned with Him is too high an expectation on flesh and blood and too low a value on the sovereignty of God. Not to mention the fact that it totally ignores the truth of the Bible and the history of mankind. When the LORD promised to restore His scattered people to their homeland and to rebuild it, the guarantee was that He would do it. The details were often left intentionally indistinct that we should be kept humble while He did it His way.

Even before the creation of political Zionism as a moving force, there were young pioneers from Czarist Russia in the late 1800's who came to build a new life here. They were raised in a Jewish religious environment, nurtured on the words of the prophets and the prayers of devout parents and grandparents. Though they themselves were not religious, but secularists, socialists, Marxists, and utopians, God used them to begin the returning process.

If you examine the words of early Zionist leaders you'll see many statements regarding the high level of morality and integrity that they expected would be the hallmark of the Jewish state as per the words of the Bible. They often evoked images from the prophets to express their vision for a restored Jewish homeland, but in a humanistic way, not a religious one. Of course the religious Jews also wanted a state based on the Torah and Talmud, not on secularism regardless of how lofty sounding the words. In the Orthodox world there were (and are) those who totally rejected any secular Israeli government and there were others like the first chief rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, who taught that it was the divine plan that initiated the modern state of Israel even if it was not yet run as a totally religious nation.

After 60 years Israel still struggles with her identity. Is she really a modern state like all the other nations? Is that something we should seek? The question is, what does God intend for Israel?

God's Plan

But what is God's intention for Israel, the people and the land? The answer is quite clear; it is to be a blessing to the entire world. God told Abraham that he and his offspring would be a blessing to all the families/nations of the earth. (Genesis 12:3/22:18) In later verses this same promise was made to Isaac and to Jacob.

When delivered from Egyptian bondage, Israel was told that they were to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. (Exodus 19:6) The Lord declares to Israel in Isaiah 43:10, *"You are my witnesses and my servant whom I have chosen."* And in Isaiah 60:3, we read that nations will come to Israel's light and kings to the brightness of her rising.

Israel is the primary vessel that God has chosen to bless the whole world. The land of Israel is an inseparable piece of that equation. The call of Abraham and his offspring, by God's design, are eternally connected to the Land. Without it, the blessings intended for the rest of the world can never come. But there is one other element that must be considered: The Messiah of Israel, Yeshua of Nazareth.

Israel can never fulfill her mission without Him in the center. In Him, all the lofty principles that both the humanists and the religious have sought find their expression. In Him can be found the genuine ideals of which the founders and pioneers only had a glimpse. When the nation embraces Him, then the world will see the Light of the perfect Servant of the Lord in His servants. They will see the Holy One of Israel, our great High Priest, reflected in the priestly service of His people. This is why we are here. The modern state of Israel, while in many ways is like other nations, is much more than that. Israel is the chosen vessel to carry the reality of the kingdom of God to the rest of the world…Even so, come Lord Yeshua.