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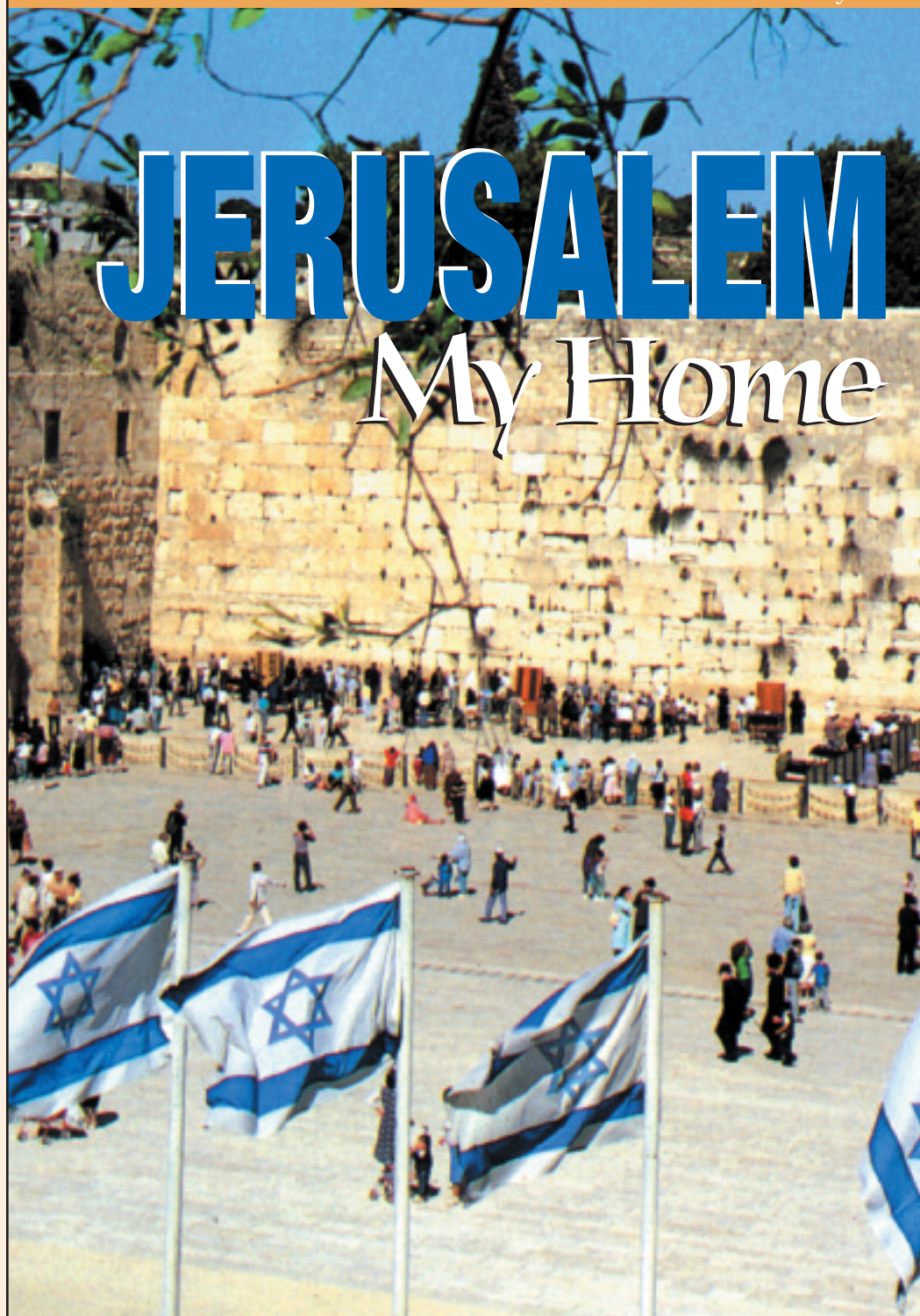
Bridges for Peace

Israel

Teaching Letter

Vol. #770507

May 2007





What do you think of when you hear the word “Jerusalem”?

Perhaps you think of the Mount of Olives splitting in two, when Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) returns. *“And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south”* (Zechariah 14:4). Perhaps you think of wars—past and future. Maybe you think of the prophecy in Zechariah (12:3), which says all nations will come up against Jerusalem. *“And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”*

Many believers think about the rebuilding of the Temple, prophesied by Ezekiel (chapters 40–47). Maybe you think about the turmoil Jerusalem has faced in recent years as terror attacks ravaged the city. Perhaps you are reminded of the time when Yeshua spoke to His disciples of future events which would precede His return. He said, *“...Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”* (Luke 21:24b). Many biblical scholars believe that this prophecy was fulfilled on June 7, 1967, the 28th of Iyar on the

Hebrew calendar, when Jerusalem came under Israeli sovereignty again. This year, the 28th of Iyar falls on May 16, the 40th anniversary of that event. This annual celebration is called Jerusalem Day. The streets are filled with music, dancing, and happy faces. Flags wave, and the people rejoice in a festive parade through the streets.



Photo by Philippe Ryckner

Certainly we are living in momentous days when the words of Israel's prophets are being fulfilled in Jerusalem, and the words of Yeshua are living in front of our eyes. I reflect on all these things and more when I consider Jerusalem. But, there is another dimension to my thoughts. Having lived in Jerusalem for the past 17 years, when I think of Jerusalem, I am thinking about my home.

JERUSALEM of Significance

Jerusalem is unique. In the entire world, there is no other place like Jerusalem. Did you know that you always “go up” to Jerusalem? It is said that if you were in a helicopter flying over Jerusalem and you fell out, you would still fall “up to Jerusalem”!

Geographically, ancient Jerusalem did not have any of the characteristics that make a city great. It was located off the main trade route along the coast. It had no great water source, only the Gihon Spring. It was not an important location for an army to conquer. Yet, Jerusalem is filled with the history of the events of the Bible and of the world. In fact, the name “Jerusalem” is mentioned a total of 881 times in the Bible (667 times in the Old Testament, and 144 times in the New Testament). Interestingly enough, it is never mentioned in the Koran. Additionally, scholars say there are over 70 poetic or descriptive names for Jerusalem. The Hebrew name *Yerushalayim* (first mentioned by this name in Joshua 10:1) means “city of peace” and has a plural ending. Thus, it is a city of double peace!

Centrality of JERUSALEM

Ezekiel speaks of Jerusalem as the center of the world (Ezek. 38:12, NASB). If you go into a poster shop in Israel, you can find copies of ancient maps, which show Jerusalem as the center of the world.

Jerusalem has a special importance to the Jewish people. Throughout nearly 2,000 years of dispersion, every year at Passover, their prayer has been, “Next Year in Jerusalem.” The Jewish people are the people God chose from all the families of the earth to represent Him and His character through the Holy Scriptures, and Jerusalem has been their most beloved city throughout history. Teddy Kollek, one of Jerusalem's beloved former mayors, said, “For three thousand years, Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion, and consciousness of a



Jerusalem
ירושלים



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people as has Jerusalem in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of exile, Jerusalem remained alive in the hearts of Jews everywhere as a focal point of Jewish history, the symbol of ancient glory, spiritual fulfillment, and modern renewal. This heart and soul of the Jewish people engenders the thought that if you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be Jerusalem."

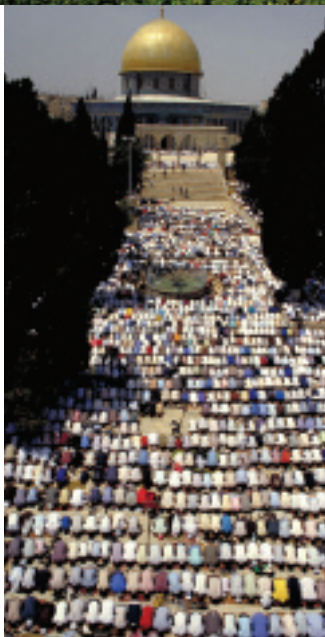
Jerusalem also has special meaning to God. He chose this city as His dwelling place. Several Scriptures reveal that God loves Jerusalem more than any other place on earth.

"...Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there..." (1 Kings 14:21).

Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a ruler over My people Israel. Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel" (2 Chronicles 6:5-6).



*"We're marching to ZION,
beautiful, beautiful ZION.
We're marching upwards
to ZION, the beautiful
CITY OF GOD."*

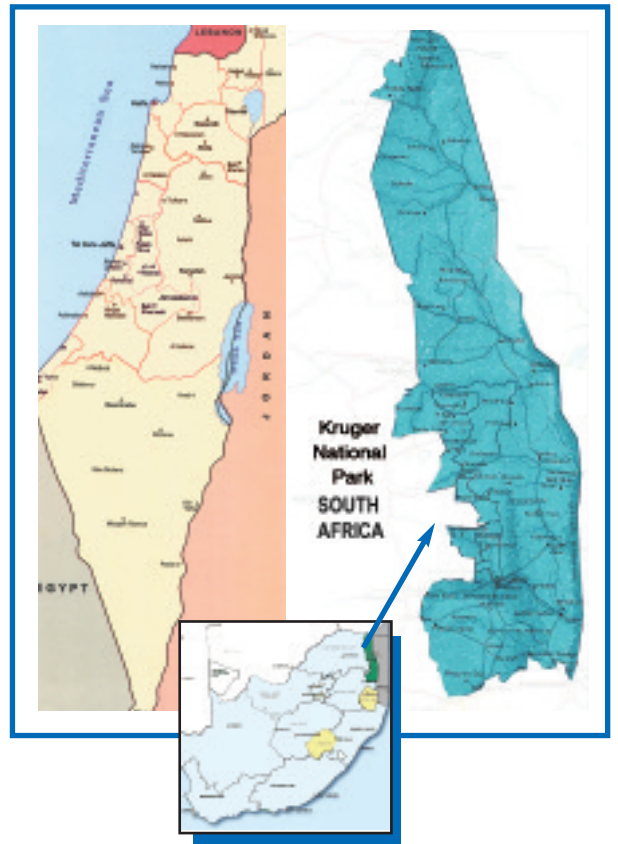


Christians view Jerusalem as the Holy City because it is the location of many events that took place in the Bible and in the life of Yeshua. Jerusalem is the major destination on their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. My father brought groups to Israel 67 times. He always saved Jerusalem for last as the highlight of their Israel experience. I remember him leading the pilgrims in singing an old song: "We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upwards to Zion, the beautiful city of God." Many Christians, on their first visit to Jerusalem, feel an incredible love for this city and a feeling of being "at home."

Jerusalem is also important to modern-day Muslims, who view it as their third holiest city. They claim that Muhammad visited Jerusalem in a night vision. However, the city of that visitation is not named in the Koran and was not associated with Jerusalem until much later.

Jerusalem has become a landing place for journalists. Did you ever wonder why Jerusalem and Israel are on the front pages of newspapers around the world on a regular basis? It has been said that there are more journalists in Israel than in most other places in the world. Certainly the eyes of the world are on Israel. I have talked with schoolchildren in the United States and asked them: "How big is Israel?" Invariably they think that it is a huge country, because they hear it talked about so much. Yet, it is only the size of the state of New Jersey in the United States, Kruger National Park in South Africa, Wales in the United Kingdom, Vancouver Island in Canada, the island of Shikoku in Japan, the region of Canterbury in New Zealand, and one-third the size of Tasmania in Australia.

I believe the eyes of the world are trained on Israel because of its importance to God and its centrality in the Scriptures. The city continues to be a focal point of spiritual and physical attack by those who seek to control her.



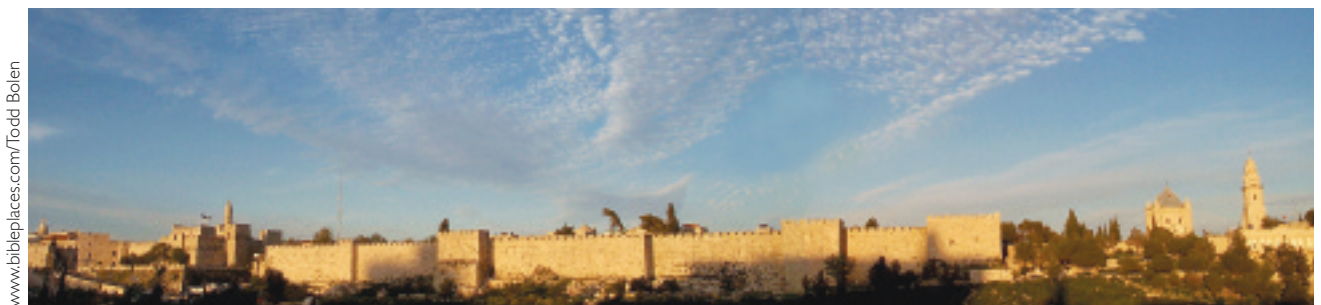
JERUSALEM Today

I am one of about 750,000 inhabitants, which include Jews, Arabs, Christians, and inter-nationals from around the world. Until recently, my husband Tom and I lived in Gilo, a southern neighborhood of Jerusalem. Our apartment there has a beautiful view of the city of Jerusalem. For about two years, Gilo was under attack from Palestinian groups. Nearly every day shots were fired at Gilo. We lived six blocks from the danger line and learned to live with the constant sound of gunfire. The Bridges for Peace office is in downtown Jerusalem, and over 15 terrorist incidents occurred within six blocks of our office during the height of the second intifada.

People are always asking me if I am afraid to live here. Certainly terror attacks are frightening, but at the same time, Jerusalem is also a city where I feel safe to walk alone at night, because there is very little crime against individuals. Children ride alone on city buses to go to school, and no one worries about their safety because crimes against children are almost unheard of in Israel. There are no pictures of missing children on milk cartons in Israel. But, certainly no one would say Jerusalem is a peaceful city today.

JERUSALEM, City of Peace?

Many say the name "Jerusalem" is *Eir Shalom* (city of peace). Others say it is *Eir Shilem* (complete city). Certainly it is the dearest wish of the Jewish people that there would be peace in Jerusalem and in Israel. Many times we say peace will only come when the Messiah comes. The



Hebrew phrase *Ad sh' yavo Moshiach* (until the coming of the Messiah) is a common phrase in Israel. The city has seen much conflict throughout history and also in recent times, and, at times, it seems that peace is a distant dream.

But there is a peace that descends on the city every week that I have come to cherish. Every Friday afternoon, the city begins to quiet down as the citizens prepare to welcome the *Shabbat* (Sabbath). The smell of chicken soup fills the air; in fact, you can't walk down any street in a Jewish neighborhood without smelling chicken soup. Everyone dresses in nice clothes. Fathers bring flowers home to their wives. Traffic slows down to a near standstill as everyone hurries home to be with their families before sundown. The tables are set beautifully, and families join together to share a leisurely time together over the *Shabbat* meal. The Scriptures are discussed, and beautiful songs are sung. Husbands bless their wives by reading Proverbs 31 to them. Parents bless their children. When I travel outside of Israel, the thing I miss most is *Shabbat* and the blessing of a day set aside from our busy lives to be with our families and the Lord.

Living in JERUSALEM As a Christian

I am in Israel and living in Jerusalem because I want to see relationships between Christians and Jews improved. For 2,000 years, we have been divided in our belief of who the Messiah is. As Christians, we accept that Yeshua is the Messiah, while the Jewish people are still looking for their Messiah. This difference in belief has caused great tension between our peoples. For 1,700 years since Christianity was made the state religion by Constantine, the Jewish people suffered at the hands of organized Christianity. Their persecution through the ages has been well documented and culminated with the Holocaust when six million were murdered simply for being Jewish.





YAD VASHEM Holocaust Memorial Jerusalem

It saddens me to know that people who bore the name of Christ acted this way. I would love to go back in history and change events, but I can't. However, we can make a difference today and for tomorrow. Many Christians have made the decision to make a difference by showing unconditional love to the Jewish people. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, Christian Friends of Israel, and Bridges for Peace are three of the largest Christian min-

istries in Jerusalem doing that. It is not always comfortable to be a Christian living in Israel. I have personally experienced some persecution, dislike, and suspicion from Jewish people who have negative

attitudes about Christians, as a consequence of past actions by Christians. I understand why they feel that way and want to change those negative attitudes by living a godly Christian life in their midst, a life characterized by love and mercy.

JERUSALEM of Future Hope

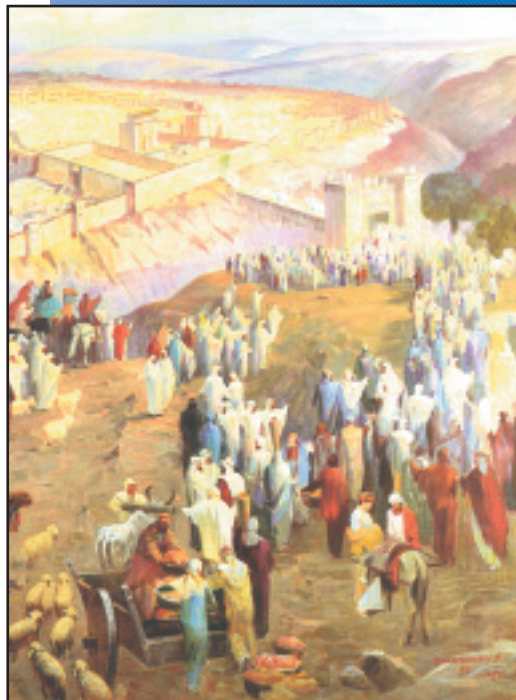
Recently, we have noticed a shift in attitude as Jewish people have recognized that Bible-believing Christians are their friends, maybe their only friends. Through the good work of many Christians in Israel and around the world and that of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, we are seeing a shift in attitude. The Caucus was formed in January of 2004 when Knesset Member Yuri Shtern, along with 12 other Knesset Members, joined together to recognize Christian support for Israel in an official capacity within the Knesset (Parliament) of Israel. It was the first time an official government body was created to reach out to Christians and forge relationships based on mutual respect and appreciation.

In the past, whenever a Jewish person asked me if I was an evangelical Christian, I braced myself for a negative response when I answered in the affirmative. Today, I am more likely to get a word of thanks for the many good things we do to help Israel and her people. Jewish people are awakening to the fact that millions of Christians around the world love them, because they are loved by God.



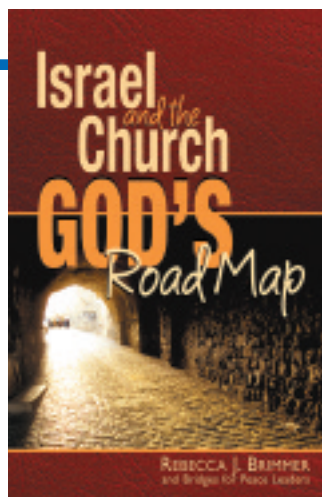
In many conversations with Jewish people (rabbis, politicians, intellectuals, and average everyday people), there is an affirmation that when the Messiah comes, we will all follow Him (both Christians and Jews). Teddy Kollek was once asked if he believed that Yeshua was the Messiah. He was always the consummate politician and obviously didn't want to offend the inquirers. So he answered by saying that he had a good idea. When the Messiah comes, a committee should be formed including both Christians and Jews. The committee should seek an appointment with the Messiah and prepare questions to ask Him. Teddy suggested that the first question should be, "Sir, have you ever been here before?"

The centrality of Jerusalem in biblical history is undisputed. The fact that the world is watching Israel is apparent today. And in the future, Jerusalem is the city the Messiah will come to! I'm looking forward to the day when Psalm 133 will become reality in the lives of Christians and Jews...when together we will join arms and sing the song, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity." Our shared past is not good, but our shared future will be amazing under the leadership of the Messiah.



By Rebecca J. Brimmer
International President and CEO

For more information on Jerusalem, order our new book (see ad below) and read Chapter 11, "The Significance of Jerusalem" by John Anthony.



Israel and the Church: God's Road Map,

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

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

