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# Bridges for Peace

## Israel

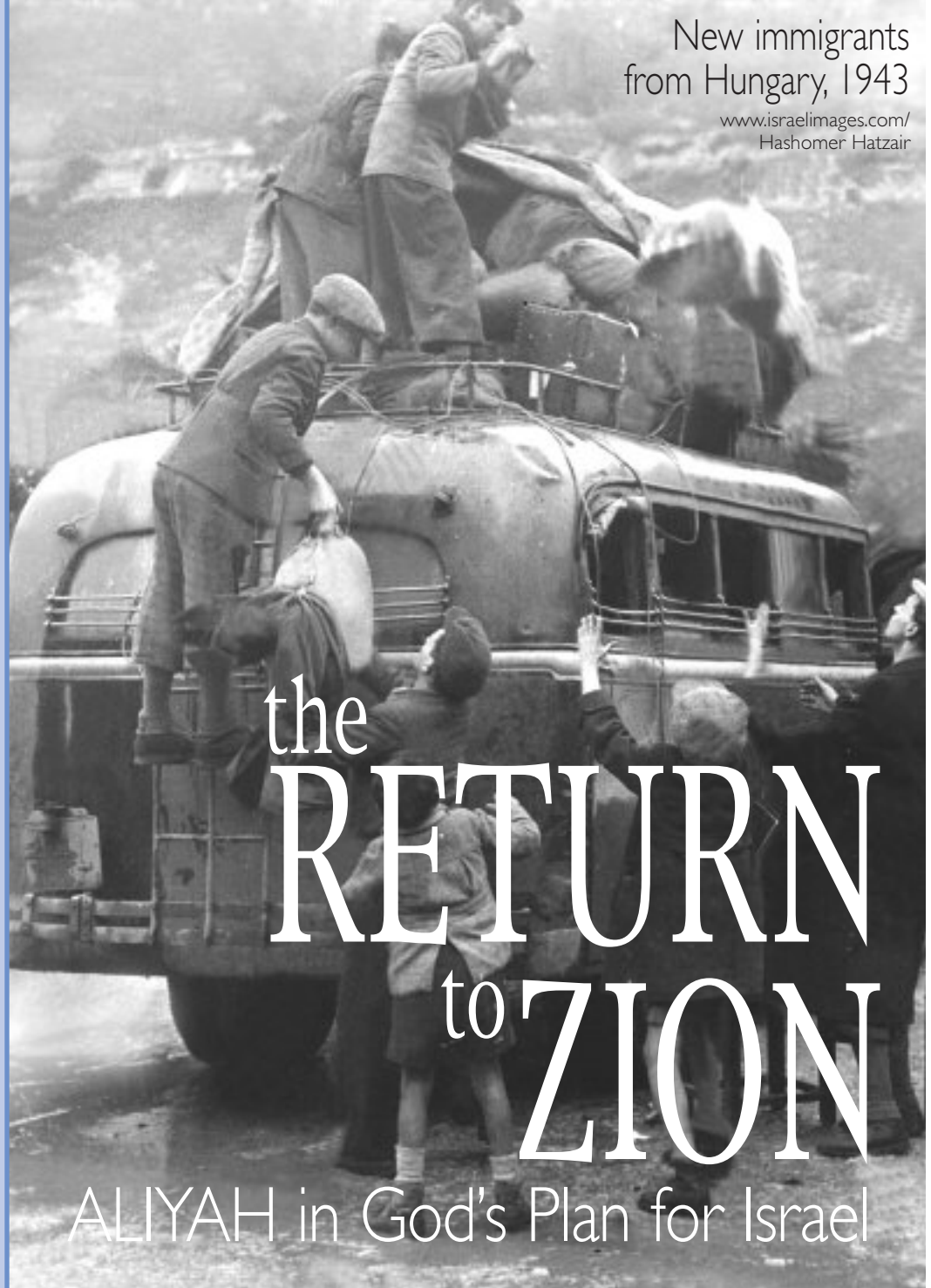
### Teaching Letter

Vol. #771005

October 2005

New immigrants  
from Hungary, 1943

[www.israelimages.com/](http://www.israelimages.com/)  
Hashomer Hatzair



the  
**RETURN**  
to  
**ZION**

ALIYAH in God's Plan for Israel

# the RETURN to ZION

## ALIYAH in God's Plan for Israel

*I have often thought of Israel as a miracle nation and the absorption of over a million immigrants by five million Israelis as miraculous.*

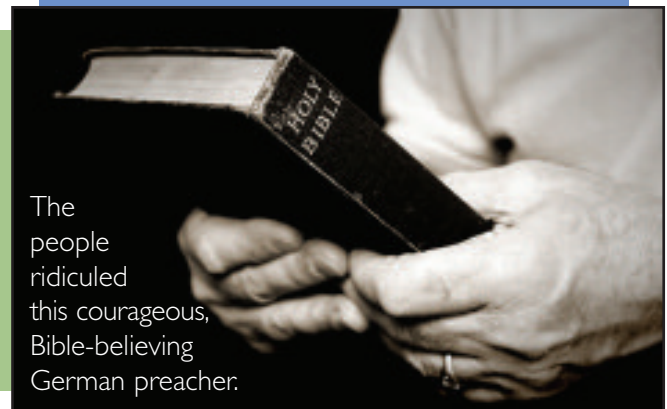
**W**e are living in a special time in history! It is a time when God is fulfilling His Word to Israel in the sight of the whole earth. He is bringing the Jewish people back to Israel—over one million in the past 15 years. We are seeing Bible prophecy being fulfilled with our own eyes. Those of us who live in Israel not only read about Bible prophecy, or see it being fulfilled on the daily news, but also reach out and touch it, as we hug new immigrants from around the world. The prophet Jeremiah talked about this day when he said, “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their own land which I gave to their fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14–15).

## A Modern Day Miracle

Today we see the evidence of the return to Zion all around us. We have become accustomed to seeing immigrants on the streets of Israel. I

don't want to ever get so used to it that I stop seeing it as a miraculous act of God. Remember, only 65 years ago, the world was embroiled in the Second World War, and it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to believe that God would literally fulfill His promises to Israel.

When my father, Dr. David Allen Lewis, was a small boy, only 9 or 10 years old, he lived in a small community in rural South Dakota in the United States. It was the early 1940s when a preacher from Germany named Hans Bretzsneider came to speak in his small church. World War II was in full swing in Europe, and the Jews were in the midst of the darkest hours of their history. It was in this political climate that Rev. Bretzsneider was preaching from the prophetic Scriptures. He told the congregants that the Bible says that the Jewish people would be restored to Israel and become a nation once again. Although my father was very young, he clearly remembers how the people of his little town ridiculed this courageous, Bible-believing German preacher.



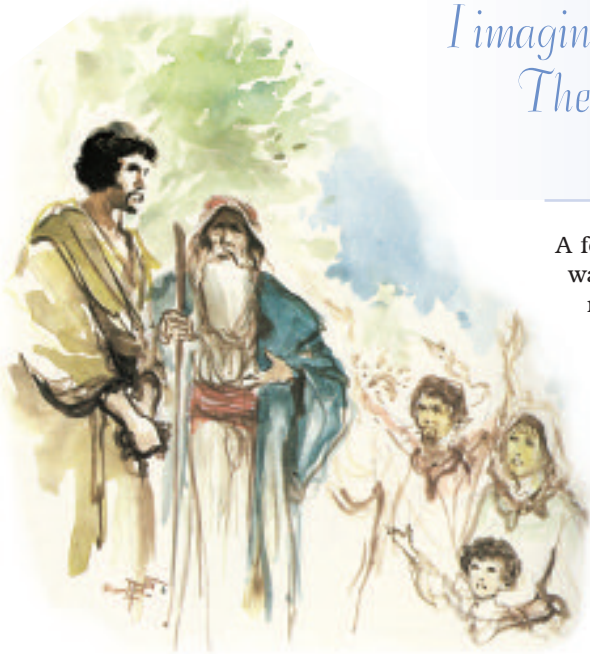
The people ridiculed this courageous, Bible-believing German preacher.



[www.israelimages.com/Moshe Shai](http://www.israelimages.com/Moshe%20Shai)



*I imagine the prophets would love to be in our shoes today. They wrote the prophecies down, but we are privileged to participate in their fulfillment.*



A few years later in 1948, my father was at school when the announcement was made over the loudspeaker that Israel had become a nation. My father recounts that he was instantly covered in goose bumps as he realized that God's Word was true, and it was all going to come to pass. He embarked on a lifelong study of Bible prophecy.

So I grew up hearing Bible prophecies and praying for their fulfillment. What a joy to see those prayers being answered! We believed in not only studying God's Word, but also in becoming active participants with God's plans. I often heard my father read Scriptures and tell us that God was going to act to fulfill His Word. Then I started seeing those prophecies come to pass. What an amazing time to be alive! I imagine the prophets would love to be in our shoes today. They wrote the prophecies down, but we are privileged to participate in their fulfillment.

## From Death to Life

From the ashes of the Holocaust, God breathed life into the dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and began to revive and restore the Jewish people—to life and to their ancient homeland, Israel. On May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born. Today God is showing the world that He is God, and the establishment of the State of Israel and the return of the Jewish people is one of the primary ways He is proving Himself to the world.

## Aliyah— Raison D'être of the State of Israel

From the very beginning, *aliyah* (immigration of Jewish people to Israel) was a foundation stone of the new state. It was prominently included in the Declaration on the Establishment of Israel, read on the first day of statehood. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, appealed to world Jewry, saying, "We call upon the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to unite with us in our homeland by making *aliyah*, by building the land, and by taking part in the momentous undertaking of the redemption of the Jewish people, which has been the dream of generations."

Today the Israeli government Web site states, "The ingathering of the exiles to their ancestral homeland is the *raison d'être* [justification for existence] of the State of Israel."

*Aliyah* literally means "ascending" and is the Hebrew word for immigration to the Land of Israel. The rabbis tell us that the meaning of ascent in this context is spiritual as well as physical; all Jews are educated in the belief that this ascent is an essential part of Judaism. It is the ultimate form of identification with one's people, the Jewish people, whose life and destiny are inextricably tied to the Land of Israel. "Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants 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" (Isaiah 43:5–6).



### From Death to Life:

Last year, 20,000 Jews and Christians met at Auschwitz for the 60th March of the Living, commemorating the liberation of the death camps at the end of WWII.

# Brief History of Modern Aliyah

- **First Aliyah (1880s–1914):**

Twenty-five thousand Jews came from Eastern Europe and Yemen. The European Jews were motivated by pogroms (organized massacres) and the inability to integrate into Russian society due to anti-Semitism. The Yemenite Jews were motivated by their belief in the imminent arrival of the Messiah.

- **Second Aliyah (1904–1914):**

Forty thousand came, mostly from Russia. A particularly vicious pogrom in 1903 shocked the Russian Jews and sent many streaming for their ancient homeland.

- **Third Aliyah (1919–1923):**

Following World War I and the Balfour Declaration in 1917, 35,000 Jews returned to Zion.

- **Fourth Aliyah (1924–1932):**

Sixty-five thousand persons with capital—tradesmen, artisans, professionals, and academics—came after the British authorities opened up immigration to people who could contribute to society.

- **Fifth Aliyah (1933–1939):**

Fleeing from the Nazis, 250,000 Jews came to Israel. It was a matter of survival.

- **Youth Aliyah:**

This was originally founded in 1933 to rescue Jewish youth from Nazi Germany. Some 5,000 teenagers were brought to the country before World War II and educated at Youth *Aliyah* boarding schools. After the war, an additional 15,000 youth, most of them Holocaust survivors, joined them. Today Youth *Aliyah* villages continue to play a vital role in the absorption of young newcomers, as well as offering thousands of disadvantaged Israeli youth a second chance.

- **World War II (1939–1948):**

The *aliyah* effort focused on rescuing Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe. Some entered the country on visas issued under the “White Paper” quota (1939 British policy limiting Jewish immigration), but the majority came as illegal immigrants. This “illegal” immigration, called *Aliyah Bet*, brought Jewish people by land and sea, from Europe and the Middle East, in contravention of the British Mandatory government’s orders. The loss of contact with European countries, the hazards of maritime travel under wartime conditions, and the difficulty in obtaining vessels for transport of illegal immigrants placed severe constraints on *Aliyah Bet*. Several boatloads of immigrants who managed to reach Palestine were sent back by British authorities upholding the quota system. Many lost their lives at sea or in the Nazi inferno in Europe.



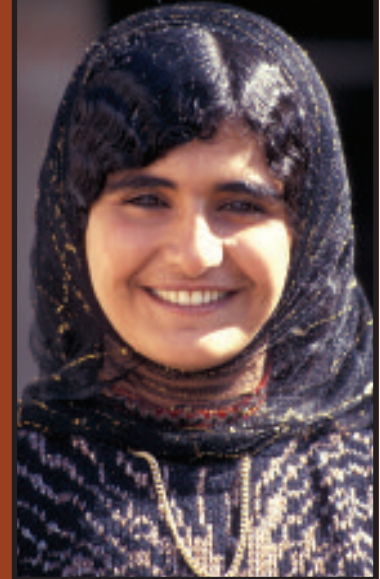
## עלייה Aliyah

*Aliyah* literally means “ascending,” and is the Hebrew word for immigration to the land of Israel. The meaning of ascent is spiritual as well as physical, and this ascent is an essential part of Judaism.

1920, Polish Immigrants



Yemenite Woman



Photos above and below from [www.israelimages.com/](http://www.israelimages.com/) Hashomer Hatzair

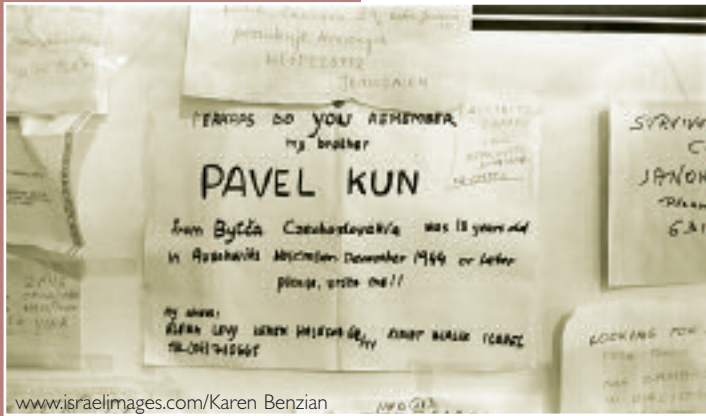
Photo right from [www.israelimages.com/A-liza-Auerbach](http://www.israelimages.com/A-liza-Auerbach)

Youth Aliyah



[www.israelimages.com/Hashomer-Hatzair](http://www.israelimages.com/Hashomer-Hatzair)





www.israelimages.com/Karen Benzian



Photo courtesy of Zionist Archive, Jerusalem

Top: These notes were posted in Jerusalem in 1981, still requesting information about Holocaust family survivors.

Bottom: Two young immigrants arrive still wearing clothes from the Nazi death camps.



www.israelimages.com/Roland Metzger

Illegal immigration was the major method of immigration, because the British had set the immigration quota at a mere 18,000 per year. Sixty-six illegal immigration sailings were organized during these years, but only a few managed to penetrate the British blockade



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Sixty-six illegal immigration sailings were organized between 1944 and 1948, but only a few managed to penetrate the British blockade and bring their passengers ashore.

and bring their passengers ashore. The British stopped vessels carrying immigrants at sea and interned the captured immigrants in camps in Cyprus; most of these persons only arrived in Israel after the establishment of the state. Approximately 80,000 illegal immigrants reached Palestine during 1945–48. The number of immigrants during the entire British Mandate period, legal and illegal alike, was approximately 480,000, close to 90% of them from Europe.

By 1948, when statehood was declared, the Jewish population in Palestine had grown to 650,000.

## The State of Israel is Born

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel stated: "The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex..."

This was followed in 1950 by the Law of Return, which granted every Jew the automatic right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen of the state.

With the gates wide open, a wave of mass immigration brought 687,000 Jews to Israel's shores. By 1951, the number of immigrants more than doubled the Jewish population of the country. The immigrants included survivors of the Holocaust from displaced persons' camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy; a majority of the Jewish communities of Bulgaria and Poland and one



“The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel...”

The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel

third of the Jews of Romania; and nearly all of the Jewish communities of Libya, Yemen, and Iraq.

The immigrants encountered many adjustment difficulties. The fledgling state had just emerged from the bruising war of independence, was in grievous economic condition, and found it difficult to provide hundreds of thousands of immigrants with housing and jobs. Much effort was devoted towards absorbing the immigrants: *ma'abarot* (camps of tin shacks and tents) and, later, permanent dwellings were erected; employment opportunities were created; the Hebrew language was taught; the educational system was expanded and adjusted to meet the needs of children from many different backgrounds.

Additional mass immigration took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when immigrants arrived from the newly independent countries of North Africa, Morocco and Tunisia. A large number of immigrants also arrived during these years from Poland, Hungary, and Egypt.

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New immigrants learned the Hebrew language.

[www.israelimages.com/IsraelTalby](http://www.israelimages.com/IsraelTalby)

Photo courtesy of the Zionist Archive



Newly arrived Iraqi immigrants pray outside their *ma'abarot* (temporary housing) in 1951.

## Immigration from the Soviet Union

and the Former Soviet Union

From 1948 to 1967, the relations between Jews in the Soviet Union and the State of Israel were limited. Following the Six-Day War, Jewish consciousness among Soviet Jews was awakened, and increasing numbers sought *aliyah*. As an atmosphere of détente began to pervade international relations in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union permitted significant number of Jews to emigrate. At the end of the decade, a quarter of a million Jews had left the Soviet Union; 140,000 of them immigrated to Israel.

Soviet Jews were permitted to leave the Soviet Union in unprecedented numbers in the late 1980s, with President Gorbachev's bid to liberalize the country. The collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 further facilitated this process. After 190,000 immigrants reached Israel in 1990 and 150,000 in 1991, the stabilization of conditions in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and adjustment difficulties in Israel caused immigration to level off at approximately 70,000 per year. From 1989 to the end of 1996, approximately 700,000 Jews from the FSU had made their home in Israel. In all, between 1989 and July 2005, 1,013,956 came to Israel.



Following the Six-Day War, Jewish consciousness among Soviet Jews was awakened, and increasing numbers sought *aliyah*.





Ethiopian immigrants on their way to Israel.

## Immigration from Ethiopia

In recent times, we have witnessed the *aliyah* of the ancient Jewish community of Ethiopia. In 1984, some 7,000 Ethiopian Jews walked hundreds of miles to Sudan, where a secret effort known as “Operation Moses” brought them to Israel. Another 15,000 arrived in a dramatic airlift, “Operation Solomon,” in May 1991. Within 30 hours, 41 flights from Addis Ababa carried almost all the remaining community to Israel.

### Absorption Comparison

3,354,932	Australia
5,160,719	Canada
21,224,678	Japan
79,791	New Zealand
7,885,077	South Africa
9,812,799	United Kingdom
48,863,094	United States

## Immigration Statistics 1989–2005

From 1989 to July 2005, 1,195,207 immigrants have arrived in Israel; 1,013,956 came from the FSU, and 181,251 came from all other nations combined. When this most recent wave of *aliyah* began, the Jewish population of Israel was less than 5 million. I have often thought of Israel as a miracle nation and the absorption of over a million immigrants by 5 million Israelis as miraculous. In order to understand the magnitude of this miracle, it would be like your country absorbing the same number of immigrants as indicated in the chart (left).

## Where Do the Jews Live Today?

There are about 13 million Jewish people worldwide. The largest Jewish population in the world is in the United States, with 5.28 million, and the second largest is Israel, with 5.235 million. The two communities together comprise 80% of world Jewry. Analysts believe that by 2006, Israel will be home to the largest Jewish population in the world, due to assimilation in the U.S. and immigration and higher birthrates in Israel. Many countries have large Jewish populations: England—300,000, France—494,000, and the FSU—an estimated 1 million. Currently, 40% of world Jewry live in Israel. Three million of them came as immigrants.



Our Project Rescue program helps Jewish people get ready to leave their countries of origin.

## How Can We Cooperate with God's Plan?

In some countries, notably the former Soviet Union and Argentina, poverty makes it nearly impossible for the Jewish residents to finance their *aliyah*. They are living in dire financial straits, owing to the economic collapse in their countries. Bridges for Peace and other Christian groups are actively involved in helping them escape from their hopeless lives. Through the efforts of Bridges for Peace, over 24,000 Jewish people are now in Israel working to create a new life. Our Project Rescue program helps



www.israelimages.com/Moshe Shai

Jewish people get ready to leave and take advantage of the airfares sponsored by the State of Israel. We pay for paperwork, often helping them obtain historic documentation proving their Jewish heritage. This is a costly endeavor, which involves research and travel to the communities where their parents and grandparents lived. We provide food, clothing, and transport to the airport or seaport to travel to Israel. These 24,000 immigrants are living in Israel because of the assistance they received from us. Thousands more are currently in the process, working with our Christian Project Rescue workers. The process is often long, between six months and two years. Each person and family has unique needs.

These are special times to be alive. As I walk in the streets of Jerusalem, go shopping, or go to a concert—all around me—I hear Jewish people speaking Russian, Ukrainian, French, Spanish, and other languages and recognize again the miracle of life with God. No human being could have engineered the miracle of modern Israel, fulfilling in minute detail the promises of the Lord as recorded by Israel's prophets.

Remember, what we are witnessing is all about God showing the world that He is a faithful God, who keeps His Word. It is His plan for the nations to see that He is God as they see Him fulfill His promises to Israel:

*“When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land and left none of them captive any*

*longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord God” (Ezekiel 39:27–29).*

As we watch God fulfill these prophecies, we know that He will also fulfill the rest. All my life I have been taught to actively participate in God's actions and plans. As I look around me and see that 8,000,000 Jewish people still live outside of Israel, I am praying and asking God what actions He desires from Bridges for Peace. Join with us as we pray for God to continue drawing His people home to Israel. He has a glorious plan for His people Israel:

*“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all the countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:24–28).*

Christians around the world are joining to help in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Please join us in interceding for the continued fulfillment of God's Word. You can be an active participant by helping to fund the work of *aliyah* with your donations. God is calling us to join Him in this end-time drama.



Blessings from Jerusalem,

Rebecca J. Brimmer  
International Executive Director (CEO)  
Bridges for Peace International

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**M**any pastors, Bible teachers, and laypeople 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, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).*

