



## A Tribute to Australian Jewry Part three



Everyone enjoys a birthday party, especially young children. Who of us could ever forget the anticipation of festive balloons, party-poppers, fun and games with our friends, then a candle-topped chocolate birthday cake? Life was never so good and the years ahead seemed like one endless dream, full of joy and hope.



Tel Aviv celebrates Israel's 60th Anniversary

But “fast forward” 60 years. The decades have rolled by and suddenly, inexplicably, the “senior years” have burst over the horizon engulfing us like an avalanche. Somehow, the eager expectations of birthdays in our

youthful years have been “tempered by the harsh realities of life” and we realize that time is definitely more “limited” than ever we could have thought.

As Israel approaches the end of her 60th birthday of modern nationhood, her well deserved celebrations have been shattered by “the harsh realities of life”.

Externally, her inveterate enemies have tried to spoil her legitimate party at every turn. Suicide bombings in her crowded cities, a constant barrage of Qasam rocket attacks from Gaza on southern towns, a bizarre bulldozer rampage against innocent citizens in Jerusalem, and the international pressure from Western countries to “keep the ‘Road Map’ to Peace” on track, all combined to destroy her national celebrations.

Even within the nation itself, there have been considerable distractions to the party. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stood down from office, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni (Kadima – Lit. ‘Forward’) took over, then national elections were held in February. It seems that a unity coalition government headed by Benyamin Netanyahu (Likud – Lit. ‘Consolidation’) and either Tzipi Livni’s Kadima Party, or Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beitnenu (Lit. ‘Israel, Our Home’) Party will eventuate. Whatever the final outcome, it will be up to these leaders to see if they can continue to deliver “the goodies” their compatriots expect – now and in the future!

As we conclude our present series of articles, The Friends of Israel

ministering throughout Australia, New Zealand and South East Asia, wants to pay tribute to Australian Jewry as Israel’s 60th “Birthday Party” year reaches its finality.



Benyamin Netanyahu

We believe that there are four basic reasons why it is appropriate to do so at this anniversary time.

First, **it is incumbent on all believers** in the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah and coming King, **to acknowledge the source of their spiritual roots**. We worship the God of the Bible – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is our God, too. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). We bless Him because His covenant people, Israel, gave us the Scriptures. Those sacred writings reveal at least 330 promises of the coming Messiah. Indeed, we concur with the apostle Paul that “it

was the Israelites, to whom (belong) the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises” (Rom. 9:4). Moreover, these “promises (are) to the fathers, and from whom is the Christ (*The Messiah*) according to the flesh, who is over all, God be blessed forever” (verse 5, emphases added).

The Abrahamic covenant promises and blessings are also revealed as being applicable to Gentile believers, for “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham (comes) to the Gentiles, so that (they) might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14). Paul further reminds us that “all the promises of God are in Him (Jesus, the Messiah) ‘Yes’ and ‘Amen’” (2 Cor.1:20). How wrong, ungrateful – even impertinent – it would be for us Gentile believers to ignore (or inadvertently overlook) our spiritual roots in Judaism as revealed in the Jewish Tenach, our Old Testament scriptures! To the contrary, we gladly acknowledge the source of our spiritual roots and pay tribute to God’s people through whom the promises and the Messiah came.

Secondly, it logically follows that **we owe it to the physical descendants of Abraham to stand in solidarity with them as true friends**. This must be, and *is* in fact, unconditional and without surreptitious agendas whatsoever. Israel is God’s possession. Isaiah tells us that “the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel” (Is. 5:7). The Land and its people are God’s for He chose them (Dt.7:6-8; Is. 43:1ff). He established a unique covenant relationship with them (Gen.12:1-3; 15; 17; 22), confirmed it to the Patriarchs (Gen. 26 and 28), later to Moses (Ex: 19:4-5; 20-24:8) and especially the “new” covenant of

Jer. 31:31-34. According to Matthew 26:28, this “new covenant” – being “new” in respect of the “old” Mosaic/Sinai covenant – is applicable to all believers who appropriate the “blood” of Messiah’s atoning sacrifice on the Cross personally for their sins (Cf. Is. 53; Rom. 3:20-24ff; Col. 1:20).

In these last days, Israel is becoming increasingly isolated in the international community. The recent retaliatory incursions against Hamas in Gaza are interpreted by a growing anti-Semitic world as crass examples of “Israeli aggression”. But has not the LORD’S ancient people the right to defend her God-given borders? Is she not justified



in targeting those who openly state that they seek Israel’s destruction and ensconce themselves, their rocket launchers and caches of weaponry and ammunition in civilian neighborhoods? Yes, Shimon Peres’ recent repeated, piercing question to the Turkish representative on the European Union Council was right: “If your people were fired upon with rockets day after day, *what would you do? What would you do?*” His Turkish counterpart refused to answer and walked out.

Israel needs friends, and she needs them right now! Therefore, as The Friends of Israel, we continue to stand unashamedly and unapologetically

with Israel and our Australian Jewish communities against the brunt of biased, unwarranted world criticism. We stand in solidarity with God’s covenant people, and our support as “friends” remains unequivocal!

Thirdly, **Christians are to pray for “all who are in authority** that (they) may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence ... (that) *all men may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim.2:2, 4 – emphases added). The context of Paul’s words to Timothy is one where believers might enjoy the benefits of a peaceful life-style, administered by understanding, stable government authorities. As citizens of this great country of Australia (while at the same time being “(citizens of) heaven” in an ultimate sense – Phil 3:20-21), Christians enjoy the fruits of the labours of so many of our Australian Jewish forefathers. They, along with many other non Jewish colleagues, have left a wonderful legacy for us. Our land remains a vibrant, free, stable democracy, whose foundations are based squarely on those admirable qualities of the Judaeo-Christian ethic.

To be sure, these religious, cultural and spiritual morés have been under attack in recent decades, but by God’s grace, ours is still a “blessed land” in many ways because of our Judaeo-Christian heritage.

Notwithstanding all our spiritual shortcomings, we who are believers living in a multicultural society, seek to be “one people under God”. We show allegiance to our flag; we are answerable to the nation’s laws and we seek to respect our national and state political leaders. In this context, we recognize that there is so much for which we should thank God. Australia’s current political stability,

general “well-being”, relative privileges and freedom are due in no small part to the contribution many Jewish leaders have given in government and the community since the founding of the Colony in 1770, and its Federation in 1901. These aspects have been clearly demonstrated and documented in our two previous articles.<sup>(1)</sup>

Yes, Christians in this country—and in particular, The Friends of Israel – praise God for the significant political, socio-economic and community leadership contributions Australian Jewry has established over the 239 years of “white-settlement” history.



Parliament House, Canberra

Fourthly, as disciples of Jesus Christ, **believers are “under obligation” to everyone (viz., Jew and Gentile alike) to share the good news of His gospel**. Paul – a “completed” Jew who had come to faith in Israel’s Messiah – made no bones about that issue. In unequivocal terms he stated that he was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, *for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16, emphases added).

So, in paying tribute to Australian Jewry, The Friends of Israel says thanks to Israel and her people by sharing God’s love with them, as indeed with all *goi’im* (Gentiles), as well. This love is exemplified in the Person of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant,

The Messiah, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Is. 53; Phil. 2:5-11). It is a privilege to do so, and we always seek to show His love and share His good news of forgiveness in appropriate, culturally-sensitive ways. Paul was no stranger to these approaches. He contextualized the gospel, but always without compromise, so “that by all means he might save some” (1 Cor. 9:16-24ff). How rewarding it is when God’s Holy Spirit (Ru’ach HaKodesh) touches the hearts and lives of Jews and Gentiles to bring about conviction of sin that leads to a spiritual rebirth. What a joy it is to witness Messiah changing lives through the miracle of believers being forgiven, forever (Is. 53; Heb. 9:11-14ff; Rom. 8:1-39).

This is what our colleague Meno Kalisher and his aging father Zvi (of whom many read in our *Israel My Glory* magazine) are seeing in Jerusalem, Likewise, we here in Australia are delighted to hear of Jews and Gentiles “(seeking) the Lord while He may be found, and (calling) upon Him while He is near”.

While we have not used the local city buses to do so here (as Meno has in his part of the world), we share the same message with any and all who are willing to consider the scriptural truths we hold dear. Some come into our home as back packers. Others we host outside our home. Recently, we had the joy of fellowshiping with an Israeli Ph. D. research student who now resides in Australia. To sit with this brother-in-Christ for hours and hours talking about the Messiah and then studying the scriptures together, was an indescribable blessing. He has done what King David admonishes his readers to do in Psalm 2: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry” (verses 11, 12). He acknowledged “Yeshua” (Jesus) as The Messiah, and his personal Saviour. “Shlomo” (not his real name)

now lives for, and looks for the “soon-returning-One” who is destined to “rule the nations” from Jerusalem as His inheritance after He “makes His enemies the footstool of His feet” (Ps 110:1-2). This dear brother is a wonderful part of our personal tribute to Australian Jewry and we commend him and his wife and family to your prayers.



Gospel Poster Advertisement  
Public Bus, Jerusalem – May 2008  
Translation: What will God do in the future?  
Photo by Meno Kalisher  
Redemption Assembly, Jerusalem.  
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So, in conclusion, what is appropriate for us as Israel’s 60th birthday party comes to an end? Why not make it the most memorable year of your life? Chocolate Birthday cakes aside, heed King David’s invitation: “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! (Ps. 34:8). Whether Jew or Gentile, it makes no difference for, “*whoever* shall call on the name of the LORD will be saved” (Rom.10:13).

**HAPPY 60th BIRTHDAY, ISRAEL! The Friends of Israel honour you and pay tribute to Abraham’s physical descendants “Down Under”! May God’s blessings rest upon you, now, and in the future!**



## Deane & Margaret Woods Move to Sydney

After 23 years in Adelaide, and serving the Lord with The Friends of Israel since the end of 2003, Deane, Margaret and “special needs” son, Cameron (31), will move to Sydney in April, God willing.

Family and ministry considerations over recent months have prompted the move. Cameron’s ongoing support from his parents and married sibling sisters and his “packaging work” at Cumberland Industries Sheltered Workshop (Castle Hill) and longer-term care plans were initial catalysts. Additionally, the growth of the Mission and the ever increasing “doors of opportunity” on the eastern seaboard and New Zealand, have necessitated the establishment of a second office for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Sydney. This “Harbour City” of four million people is home for nearly one half of Australia’s Jewish population of 102,000.

The main Australian Office of The Friends of Israel will still be located in Adelaide. Catherine Seeley, Sue Ferguson and the team of volunteers will remain responsible for the office there and the same contact details as previously will apply. These details are listed below.

Deane will return frequently to the Adelaide Office, initially, for administration purposes as well as to fulfill ministry appointments already scheduled for South Australia.

## A Tribute To John & Kae Thornhill



Due to on-going health issues being experienced by John, John and Kae Thornhill have tendered their resignation as The Friends of Israel’s West Australian voluntary representatives, effective last December.

John and Kae have served the Lord with distinction over a lifetime of Christian service. Coming from the godly heritage of Christian homes, they both graduated from Bible College, and then moved to a Middle East country to serve in a Christian hospital for several four-year terms. They eventually returned to Australia with their four sons and were involved in several pastorates. In 2004 they responded to an invitation from The Friends of Israel to become voluntary representatives in West Australia. The following year, John and Kae joined Deane and Margaret Woods and some other Australians on an Israel Tour, then attended the Institute of Jewish Studies in Philadelphia, USA. On their return, they headed up the ministry

of the Mission in their home state, faithfully contacting and supporting folk in Perth’s Jewish communities, while at the same time being part of the spiritual leadership of their local church.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude to John and Kae that The Friends of Israel pay tribute to them for these years of faithful, sacrificial and fruitful service. Eternity alone will reveal the number of people they have served, hearts touched and lives changed as they showed God’s love in The Messiah to countless Jews and Gentiles.

The Friends of Israel wish John and Kae well and pray the Lord’s richest blessings as they “retire” in Perth’s northern suburbs.

### Endnotes

- (1) *The Australian Shofar*, September 2008, Vol.2, Issue 1 page 3 and Endnote (17); *The Australian Shofar*, December 2008, Vo. 2, Issue 2, passim, and Endnote (4).

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