

# infocus

A quarterly newsletter from Focus on Israel, providing information, teaching & news about Israel, and offering opportunities to support or discover our work in the land.

## CHANUKAH

### And The Indestructable Jew

**The story of Chanukah which is celebrated at this time of the year – 22-30 December, is just one of many events in Jewish history that celebrate survival against the odds.**

In addition to Chanukah, both Passover and Purim also celebrate great acts of deliverance.

The events surrounding Chanukah makes for exciting reading and it all began during the days between the Greek and Roman Empires.

Alexander the Great had died and his empire split into four parts which gave rise to the Seleucids who ruled over Syria and Israel.

It all came about when Antiochus IV (Epiphanes – madman) came to power 174 BC and he much like Haman really hated the Jews. He was a tyrant, rash, ruthless and very cruel and tried to force the Jews to worship pagan gods.

On one occasion Antiochus entered the Jewish temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar.

This was just too much for some of the Jews and as a result Judas Maccabee came to prominence and led Jewish resistance against an army of 40,000 and defeated them.

The Maccabees returned to the Temple in triumph, cleansed the Temple, built a new altar and rededicated it on the 25th Kislev in 139BC.

However, when they came to light the Menorah they discovered they had only enough oil for one day. They lit it in faith and the oil continued to burn for 8 days, when a new supply of oil had been prepared.

The miracle of the oil, a reflection of many other similar OT miracles became the Feast of Chanukah and continues to be celebrated up until the present time. Jesus himself celebrated the Feast of Dedication or Chanukah – (John 10:22) and like all the Feasts of Israel they celebrate key events in Jewish history – the main theme being God's goodness to his ancient people.

The Jewish people are the greatest survivors in the history of mankind. Almost since the day of their birth they have endured hostility from nations and empires.

Although the Babylonian captivity was devastating along with the loss of the First Temple, the exile which began in the Roman empire was even more devastating and this included the loss of the Second Temple.



Whereas the Babylonian captivity lasted just 70 years, the second exile was to last for almost 2,000 years – corresponding very much to the valley of dry bones prophecy in Ezekiel 37.

No other nation on earth has ever come back from such a long exile and yet we have seen the restoration of Israel during the 20th century – a most remarkable event.

Whilst all this was happening and unfolding before our eyes God's chosen people have experienced unprecedented opposition – beginning with the Holocaust which eliminated half of world Jewry. No sooner had Israel been reborn in 1948, 5 Arab armies attacked them but were beaten back. Then in 1967 the famous Six Day War took place which again resulted in an Israeli victory. This was followed not long after by the Yom Kippur War in 1973 which saw 5 Arab armies have a 24 hours advantage – yet not only did Israel overcome they actually got to within an hour from Damascus and Cairo. Talk about miraculous! During this war the greatest tank battle in military history took place.

Also, another feature of these wars is that in every case Arab weaponry was greatly superior to that of the Israeli's.

This is just a postage stamp reflection on Jewish

survival over centuries – but listen to the words of Zeresh, wife of Haman (who had a pathological hatred of the Jews).

Esther 6:13 records the words of Zeresh. – “Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him – you will surely come to ruin.”

What an amazing statement by a rank unbeliever! There was another amazing statement made during the 1800's. The Kaiser of Prussia asked his head advisor Otto van Bismarck if he could prove the existence of God to which von Bismarck replied – 'The Jews, sir, the Jews.'

Let us celebrate with the Jewish people this Chanukah their remarkable survival and celebrate too the God of Israel who has made it all possible.

Psalm 124 sums it up so well – “If the Lord had not been on our side, now may Israel say, if the Lord had not been on our side, when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive, the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging water would have swept us away..... our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

*Mervyn Tilley - Chairman*



## BOOK OUR DIRECTOR TO SPEAK

Our director Mark Baker is a charismatic and influential speaker who has ministered in the UK and Israel for over 35 years. His knowledge of the Hebraic background of scripture is well known and he always presents a balanced biblical view when it comes to Israel.

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# Waves On The Beach

## *A Prophetic Picture*

**In Ezekiel 36, God promised that He would return His people to their Land I'm two ways: a physical return and a spiritual return - an aliyah (a “going up”) from the nations of the world to the Land Promised to Abraham and a spiritual aliyah of a return to God through Yeshua (Jesus).**

Picture two waves breaking on a beach. The first wave is the physical return to Israel, which in modern years has been going on since the late 1800s and is still happening today. The

second wave is a wave of salvation as God's first chosen people return to Him, led by their own people already there.

We see certain evidence of this second wave in the rise of the Messianic movement, particularly since the return of Jerusalem to Jewish ownership in 1967. This move has resulted in an increasing number of more or less independent congregations appearing. Some have become large communities that have caught the attention of the Western church and some of whom are well-supported in a number of ways.

Today we are also seeing small, grass-roots ministries that don't fit the congregational model. On a recent visit to Israel, FOI's national director and a board member found several



# LIFE ON THE EDGE

## Messianic Life In Israel's Most Dangerous Town

Sderot is probably the most dangerous town to live in, in Israel! You have to visit it to see how close it is to the Gaza strip, source of 1500 rockets and mortar bombs just in the last year. Being so close to Gaza and with a population of around 26,500, the town has suffered hugely in recent years. Every bus stop has a bomb shelter next to it; every school has shelters around the playground, every home has a safe room and the police station has racks of rocket pieces in its back yard!

But Sderot is also home to a Messianic congregation working actively to supply practical and emotional support to their town alongside bringing the gospel to their own people. "City of Life" ministry is pastored by Michael Benning and his wife Dina, a Russian immigrant family.



Their "church" is the ground floor of an industrial unit and their ministry includes professional counselling for families by one of the elders and a store room of household items to give away. The town's population includes Holocaust survivors, new immigrants, victims of extremist Muslim terrorism as well as widows, orphans and homeless, many of them (particularly children) traumatised from years of rocket fire on their community.

Michael and his small Messianic congregation are doing wonderful work in a dangerous environment. This is just the kind of work FOI is reaching out to in the Land to support and encourage. We have found that there are many amazing works going on in Israel as God moves over His people in His Land. Help us to support and encourage what He is doing in Israel in our day.

small ministries doing amazing things as they find an increased openness among Israelis to the Gospel. But they are mostly struggling and unsupported and fighting discouragement and opposition from their own "un-saved" people.

This visit and the discovery of these needy works is a confirmation that FOI is on the right track and is being called to support these unconventional Messianic groups; to show them that they are not alone, but they are cared for, prayed for and loved by Western Christians.

This in itself is prophetic, as "wild olive branches" from the West reach out in love and support to the "natural olive branches" (Romans 11) being gathered by Yeshua to their God.

*by an FOI Board Member*



## RESPONSE FORM

### 1. FOI Donations

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The enclosed sum of

A: £..... for the charitable work of FOI.

B: £..... Supporting Messianic works in Israel.

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### 2. FOI General

Please contact me for FOI's Director to speak in our church

Please send me details for the following tour.

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Please put me on your mailing list (if not already on it)

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**\* Please could you write our full name on the cheque and not just the abbreviation 'FOI'.**

**Thank you.**



### 3. Your Contact Details

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Post code.....

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#### Please send to:

FOI, P.O. Box 3200,  
Romford, RM3 3BS

(N.B. PLEASE use only our initials on envelopes - we suspect mail with "Israel" on goes missing!)

#### GIFT AID DECLARATION

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## WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

It would be true to say that most of us don't like the thought of making a will because of the implications. On the other hand leaving a will ensures that you decide who the beneficiaries are and in the process save those who survive a lot of unnecessary work.

By leaving something in your will to Charity means that you continue to have influence even after you are gone, to things that are close to your heart, and so your legacy lives on.

We would count it a great honour if you were able to make mention of the ministry of Focus on Israel in your will and we know that God would bless you for it.



**CHAIRMAN'S  
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