

Museum: A Tribute to the Friends of Zion

Each faced a moment of decision—an opportunity with eternal impact.

Many said, “Yes,” but their choice often came at a great cost. They took action when others cowered in fear. Some gave up their careers, and others died poor and forgotten.

Many risked their very lives. Some were just doing their duty. For others, it was a conviction of the heart.

Some are famous—Corrie ten Boom, Oskar Schindler, Winston Churchill, Queen Victoria, Woodrow Wilson and Harry S. Truman. Others—Arthur James Balfour, Orde Wingate, John Patterson, George Bush and John Henri Dunant—are less well known but equally significant.

They are the heroes of Zionism—the hidden heroes of Christianity who helped protect the Jews from persecution and establish the state of Israel. Their stories are told at the new, state-of-the-art Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem.

The museum, the first in Israel to celebrate Christian heroes and their history, was dedicated Sept. 8 with the museum’s international chairman, former Israeli President Shimon Peres; its Israeli chairman, General Yossi Peled; and more than 25 Israeli diplomats present.

It was a day designed to honor the Christian men and women who provided aid and assistance to the Jews during their quest to return to their homeland and gain independence.

The Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem portrays the story of Christian love and support for the Jewish people. It showcases the contributions made by Christian Zionists to the rebirth of

the Jewish state in 1948 and their support since then.

The museum has a special relevance in our day. The five-story building has been transformed into the highest-tech interactive museum per square foot in Israel and possibly the world. The museum is located on some of Jerusalem's prime real estate at 20 Rivlin Street, 600 meters from the Temple Mount, across from the future home of what will be the largest Jewish museum in the nation, the Simon Wiesenthal Tolerance Museum.

I have enjoyed a lifelong love affair with Israel and led more tours than I can count. Each time I visited Israel, I found myself wishing to take my groups somewhere that celebrated Christian Zionism. Today, dozens of places exist where one can learn of the evil that people falsely professing to be Christians visited upon the Jewish people.

The Crusades, pogroms, the Inquisition and the Holocaust are and should be well-documented. I also wanted to visit someplace where Christian heroes were celebrated.

Certainly, trees are planted at Yad Vashim in honor of the righteous among the nations. My groups always wanted to see the trees for ten Boom and Schindler. Even so, I always felt that a place dedicated to the positive history of Christian Zionism would be a great addition to tours of Israel. With the opening of the Friends of Zion Museum, there is such a place. Christians who love the Jewish people unconditionally can be inspired, and Jewish people who have never known about Christian heroes such as ten Boom can find friends they did not know they had.

Unearthing the Heroes of Christian Zionism

In 1988, Mike Evans and his ministry partners purchased the home of ten Boom in Haarlem, Holland, and transformed the house and clock shop into a wonderful museum. Her story is virtually unknown among the Jewish people and, for that matter, the vast majority of young people in this generation.

This is despite the story of Anne Frank being known by Jews and Christians worldwide.

Evans wanted to bring the story of the ten Boom family to Jerusalem, but in researching that possibility, he encountered hundreds of individuals who not only assisted the Jewish people during the Holocaust, but also helped to establish the state of Israel.

In 2012, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said of the Christian Zionists' role in Israel's history: "I don't believe that the Jewish state and modern Zionism would have been possible without Christian Zionism. I think that the many Christian supporters of the rebirth of the Jewish state and the ingathering of the Jewish people in the 19th century made possible the rise of modern Jewish Zionism."

The Friends of Zion Museum has documented the oft-hidden history Netanyahu referred to. For example, spotlighted in the museum is the story of John Henri Dunant, a Swiss-born banker and humanitarian. Theodor Herzl first labeled him a "Christian Zionist." Dunant, the founder of the International Red Cross, also inspired the 1964 Geneva Convention and he was the recipient of the first Nobel Peace Prize.

Also spotlighted is Horatio Spafford, whose four daughters were drowned at sea. After viewing the site of their watery grave, he penned the hymn "It Is Well With My Soul." Spafford and his wife went to Jerusalem and built the largest orphanage in the city. The orphanage is now called The American Colony.

George Bush also holds a place of honor in the museum. This George Bush was never president of the United States. He was, however, an ancestor to both Bush presidents. He was a college professor, born in Vermont in 1796. He was a Presbyterian pastor who taught Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York University. Bush was an ardent believer in the return of the Jews to their rightful land, then called Palestine. In 1844,

Bush wrote *The Valley of Vision*—based on the dry bones mentioned in Ezekiel 37. The book was a clarion call to Christian Zionism and sold more than 1 million copies.

The museum also showcases Orde Charles Wingate. He was a Bible-believing British army officer who created a special military unit in Palestine in the 1930s that later became the Israeli Defense Forces.

Colonel John Patterson, after whom the prime minister's brother, Jonathan, was named, is a significant figure at the museum too. Patterson, a Christian, commanded the Zion Mule Brigade, which became the first Jewish fighting force in 2,000 years.

Combating the Rise of Anti-Semitism

As a former Christian university president, I am deeply concerned about the warped historical view being taught on many campuses. Too many young people have bought into an anti-Israel worldview politically. Others have fallen into the trap of "replacement theology." I have been disappointed to see some of my evangelical colleagues and leaders embrace this theology.

The Friends of Zion Museum seeks to address this serious issue. The museum's educational experience combats anti-Semitism and inspires Christians to learn of their biblical history and heroes and their biblical relation to Israel and the Jewish people. The museum is an exciting high-tech vehicle to combat anti-Semitism. This museum is especially needed as the world turns its back on Israel and supports the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

As part of the international program of the museum, Peres presented President George W. Bush in March with the first Friends of Zion award in acknowledgement of his friendship with the Jewish people. President Peres traveled to the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas to present

the award.

In April on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Friends of Zion Museum hosted a global event that was aired on 13 satellite networks with about 6,000 churches in more than 50 countries participating live. This broadcast was a show of solidarity with Israel that honored Christian heroes who stood by the Jewish people during World War II. Eli Wiesel, President Peres and Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared on that special.

In the last few months, many of the most prominent evangelical leaders worldwide have toured the Friends of Zion Museum and have lent their support. These include Dr. Jack Hayford, chancellor of The King's University, who said, "This brief and impacting moment has left me tearful, speechless and with a sense of accountability."

"You can't miss it," says Gordon Robertson, chief executive officer of the Christian Broadcasting Network. "If you're on a trip to Israel, this should be your first stop. It will inform you. It will inspire you. It will enlighten you. Don't miss it."

Mark Williams, general overseer of the Church of God, says, "Floor by floor, it was just amazing. I just hope you and your family will take advantage of the opportunity to visit the Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem."

Excellent Visual Effects Captivate Audiences

Dr. George Wood, general superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, said, "It was spectacular! The kind of visual display and advanced technology is unlike anything I have seen in the whole wide world."

If one cared nothing at all for the subject matter, the technology itself is well worth seeing. More than 150 Israeli multidisciplinary experts created the experience in 30 months.

The museum contains the largest onyx video-mapping floor in Israel and perhaps the world, and is equipped with more than 30 video projectors, 45 LCD screens and about 50 speakers.

The museum houses the largest employment of digital equipment per square meter ever in a single museum. The music, which is originally scored, is broadcast on a surround-sound system. A unique, complex animation method called “rotoscoping” brings live action footage into a painted setting that transforms each story during the museum experience.

The tour begins with a unique surround-sound aerial excursion over the land of Israel synchronized with sculptured topography of the biblical land and the 12 tribes of Israel. All aerial shots were originally filmed for this segment with 4K cameras—the largest digital-filming format available.

Visitors then board a high-capacity experimental “time-machine” elevator. As the elevator rises, the surrounding glass surface comes to life with a spectacular sound-and-light show. It is the largest exterior glass elevator in Israel with a unique LED video network beneath its glass interior that combines sound effects and narration for a superb sub-system.

The Founder’s Theater holds another first—the longest indoor seamless surround projection system in a museum in Israel (24 meters). Its transparent LED multimedia onyx floor adds a surprising dimension to the storytelling. New to me were the handcrafted wooden figures digitally mapped with animated videos on each polygon of the sculpture’s design. The Visionaries Gallery features another first—a hand-drawn mural crafted by a team of artists, then digitalized and animated. The mural wall is comprised of 36 LCD screens with infrared sensor technology triggered by touch. When this still mural comes to life, 11 separate animations are activated on the largest interactive mural in Israel.

The Lights in the Darkness Theater uses digital rotoscoping. I

found it a moving experience to say the least. This theater is the first of its kind.

Visitors are able to see the visual content projected onto their own hands. That content features pictures of some of the Jewish people rescued by Christians.

The grand finale is a 3-D stereoscope with a custom silver screen. Wearing distinct polarized 3-D glasses, visitors see their own faces embedded in the show as a live feed.

How the Museum Will Impact Israel

More than 7,000 individuals from all over the world have already toured the Friends of Zion Museum. Perhaps the most moved of the visitors are the Israelis themselves. One elderly lady said, "Goose bumps, goose bumps. We are not alone."

The museum has purchased a second building. Erected in 1874, the building is one of the first homes built outside the walls of Jerusalem. Here the guests are given the opportunity to leave their impressions using highly advanced technology, comparable to that employed in the 9/11 memorial in New York City.

In the second museum building, guests enter one of three stations that record visitors' impressions. In the state-of-the-art recording facility, the guest is guided through an experience to share his impressions, complete with snapshot photos. The facility is equipped with the most advanced lighting, audio and technological programming to produce the guest's first, intimate and authentic impressions on different topics.

Guests' impressions are also presented in a gallery of framed portraits that cover the walls of the Reception Center. The Impression Gallery will also be available online. Personally, I found one of the most intriguing facilities in the museum Reception Center to be a multimedia broadcasting facility

which allows pastors to speak to their congregations live from Jerusalem.

Museum tours are available in 16 languages and online. One can take a virtual tour of the museum by going to [www.friendszion.org](#). The online tour tells the stories showcased in the museum and allows those who cannot travel to Jerusalem to benefit from the same experience free of charge. This tour has been translated into 13 languages.

The Friends of Zion Museum experience is a remarkable combination of cutting-edge technology, historical narrative and emotional inspiration. Tours, visiting academic groups and individuals will find the Friends of Zion Museum an exciting addition to their visit to Jerusalem. {eo}

Dr. Mark Rutland is a New York Times best-selling author of 15 books and many articles. His column appears in each edition of Ministry Today magazine. Rutland's weekly television program is broadcast on TBN Salsa, and he is heard on a daily basis in multiple radio markets. As the executive director of The National Institute of Christian Leadership, he teaches hundreds of church and business leaders from around the world. In the past, he has served as the president of two universities and as a megachurch pastor. He is currently the president of Global Servants, an international agency that, among other works, operates homes for tribal girls on two continents.

Take a sneak peek of what visitors will see in the Friends of Zion Heritage Center at [www.friendszion.org](#).