

75th Anniversary: The Miracle of Israel

Seventy-five years ago, from the ashes of the Holocaust, a miracle occurred.

After more than 2,000 years dispersed throughout the four corners of the world, without a homeland, without a native tongue, without an army to protect them, the Jewish people returned to their ancestral biblical home.

On May 14, 1948, a group of Jewish leaders gathered in Tel Aviv to sign the Declaration of the State of Israel – Israel's Declaration of Independence. This extraordinary document states, "By virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, [we] hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz-Israel*, to be known as the State of Israel."

And with that bold declaration, the modern state of Israel was born.

For my family and me, this day brings such deep pride and joy. My husband and I made *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) nearly two decades ago as new immigrants tentatively stepping into the unknown. Today, we are proud Israeli citizens.

My four children, all of whom were born in Israel, regard Hebrew as their mother tongue. We hike where our forefathers walked. We eat from the seven species of the land and enjoy the agricultural bounty from the desert that now blossoms. I rejoice that we have one of the world's best-trained armies, whose sole purpose is to protect its citizens and the state of Israel and all that the nation stands for.

I never take for granted that we are living in times that our ancestors only dreamed about. Indeed, God has done wondrous

things, and He continues to bring about daily miracles.

We Are Not Alone

It hasn't been an easy road. Israel's relatively short history as a nation has been permeated with wars brought on us by our neighbors and by the constant threats of terrorism. Yet the major difference between the early days of Israel and today and what brings me the most hope for Israel's next 75 years, is the fact that today, we are not alone. Israel and the Jewish people are supported and loved by Christian friends, many of them friends of The Fellowship, in a bond that only continues to strengthen.

My father, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, of blessed memory, recognized that bond, and 40 years ago, founded the International Fellowship of Christian and Jews to foster nonpolitical bridge-building between our two great faiths, build support for Israel and provide humanitarian needs outlined in the Bible for Jewish people in need around the world.

Through his efforts, we now have great Christian supporters and friends such as Governor Mike Huckabee. Gov. Huckabee was one of the first Christian leaders to reach out to me after my father died in 2019 and who supported me as I stepped into the leadership role as president and CEO of The Fellowship. He is a strong supporter of our work and mission, and I've had the honor of hosting him in Israel where we visited many of The Fellowship's lifesaving projects that are supported by Christians around the world.

A Life-Changing Experience

But what truly inspires and encourages me is Gov. Huckabee's great love for Israel. He has brought thousands of Christians to the Holy Land, and each time, he says, he learns something new. As he says, coming to Israel is a life-changing experience.

"I also love seeing Israel through the eyes of those who come with me for the first time," he says. "I watch with great emotion as I see people who have deep, profound moments of personal encounters with God at places that they've only heard and read about in the Bible," he said. "For some who have lost a loved one or who are going through periods of doubt and fear, I see them find closure or clarity—and I could never get tired of being a witness to that."

"The first time I came to Israel, most of what I saw was desert—just sand and rock and dirt. I have seen with my own eyes what the prophets foretold when they said the dry bones shall live again and the desert will bloom. The only explanation I have for that is God's hand is upon this country," he told me during a recent podcast interview.

Why does this matter? "All this rich history matters, and it matters because for those of us who believe God and the Bible, the very existence of modern Israel is a validation of the scripture," Gov. Huckabee said. "God has kept His promises, and Israel is the validation that His Word is trustworthy when very few things on this earth are trustworthy."

That is why, despite all the upheaval in this world, the existential threat Israelis face on a daily basis, I have hope.

As Israel celebrates its 75th anniversary and The Fellowship commemorates 40 years of bridge-building and blessing the Jewish people, I am confident of this: that the God of Israel, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, will neither slumber nor sleep. "This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118: 23-24, NKJV).

*As president and CEO of The Fellowship, **Yael Eckstein** oversees all programs and serves as the international spokesperson for the organization. With over a decade of nonprofit experience*

in multiple roles, Yael has the rare distinction “of being a woman leading one of the world’s largest religious charitable organizations. In addition to her weekly podcast on matters of faith, “Holy Land Reflections,: each month, Yael invites thought leaders to discuss Jewish-Christian relations and Israel’s significance on her podcast, “Conversations with Yael.” She is the 2023 recipient of the Jerusalem Post’s Humanitarian Award, and in 2020 and 2021, was named to the publication’s list of 50 Most Influential Jews. Born outside of Chicago, Yael is now based in Israel with her husband and their four children.

Mike Huckabee *is the former governor of Arkansas, a 2008 presidential candidate and longtime conservative commentator on issues in culture and current events. An ordained Southern Baptist minister, Gov. Huckabee was host of the No. 1-rated weekend television show “Huckabee” on the Fox News Channel from 2008-2015, as well as host, from 2009-2015, of “The Huckabee Report,” which aired three times daily on nearly 600 radio stations across the nation. A New York Times bestselling author, he hosts the popular weekly talk show “Huckabee,” which airs exclusively on TBN.*