

Cause for Israeli Celebrations: Coincidence or Divine Providence?

This week, Israel celebrates two separate milestones of events that took place a generation apart, but which are interrelated and part of God's promise being played out before our eyes. Or maybe they are simply interesting coincidences. See what you think.

First, on May 14 1948, the day Israel declared independence, Israel's modern founding fathers anchored the rebirth of the Jewish state in God's promise, the voices of our prophets, and our history in a document that included this passage:

"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books..."

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of 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; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations ...

Placing our trust in the Almighty, we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the provisional Council of State, on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel-

Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948)."

Coming out of the ashes of the Holocaust, seeing the rise of the third Jewish commonwealth in the Land of Israel, might be miraculous enough. Certainly, amid the catastrophe that befell the Jewish people in the first half of the 1940s, it might have been unimaginable to think that just years later, after the murder of six million Jews, the Jewish state would be reborn. I'm not sure anyone would have bet on it, but then again, it's never wise to bet against God.

Further miraculous, despite the horrors of the Holocaust, it's clear for thousands of years that God's promise to the Jewish people is, and always will be, valid. He never gave up on the Jewish people, and because he is faithful and does not break promises, He never will. The simple reality of the Jewish people surviving and thriving over the centuries might not have been what any bookmakers would have taken bets on, but the reality is clear.

It's not that the ensuing 67 years have been easy. We've lost almost as many victims to terror and war as the number of days since our independence. Sadly, that doesn't look to change any time soon. But then again, while we don't know what God has in store, I wouldn't be betting against Him, or us.

Then, in 1967, on the 28th of the Jewish month of Iyar, this year observed on May 17, God revealed He had more in store. Only two days into what would be a triumphant victory of the Six Day War, Israeli troops restored sovereignty to all of Jerusalem, which had been torn in two since 1949. The entire Old City including the religious sites of Judaism and Christianity had been occupied and desecrated by Jordan until that point.

Jews could only pray to pray at the Western Wall, much less ascend to the Temple Mount. Access to Christian holy sites

was limited. There was certainly no freedom of religion for Jews or Christians in the city of peace, founded by King David, that once housed Solomon's Temple, and in which Jesus worshiped and preached.

Was Israel's reunification of Jerusalem merely the product of superior military might or strategy? Was it just the triumph of wills by a people motivated by prayers for thousands of years to be able to return to and rebuild our capital city? Was it simply a coincidence? Or, was it an act of God, reminding us that His hand is in everything as he continues to fulfill His timeless promise?

While it is only a coincidence that these anniversaries fall only three days apart this year based on the solar (Gregorian) and lunar (Biblical) calendar, these events are certainly no coincidence. One could say, borrowing a baseball analogy, 1948 was making contact, and 1967 was the follow through. Now, we continue to watch the ball arching and sailing 400, 500 feet out of the park. I can hear the announcer, "Another home run for God, No. 1 on the winning team, leading the league once again, and always. The crowd is going wild!"

It's no little thing that only under Israeli sovereignty that all faiths have access to their respective holy sites in Jerusalem with the one profound and glaring exception that non-Muslims are not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. Not yet.

It's no little thing that Israel is the home of the persecuted Baha'i minority, and that it's the only country in the Middle East where Christians are not only not threatened, but are thriving, can worship freely and are increasing in numbers.

For the past few years, much has been said, written and preached about the Blood Moon phenomena, and how this year is the second of two in which there will be two consecutive blood moons, each falling out on the Jewish festivals Passover and

Sukkot (Tabernacles), just like 1948-49 and 1967-68. Some claim to know what this means. I don't. I just know it's not a coincidence. The same way Israel's Declaration of Independence in May 1948 was not a coincidence, and Israel's victory and reunification of Jerusalem in 1967 was not a coincidence.

This year, there's also something new, at least as it relates to the U.S. Several people have declared their candidacy for president in the election that will take place in 2016. Many, if not most, are clearly pro-Israel. For each of them, this week ought to be a natural time to express their clear commitment to Israel and Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Regardless of whom you support, please share this and ask them to use these milestones to express their unequivocal support and solidarity with Israel.

What do you think? Are these coincidences, or are they divine providence?

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