

Prophetic Fulfillment? Israel Breaks Ground on First Settlement in 25 Years

For the first time in 25 years, the Israeli government broke ground on a new community in Judea and Samaria. It's meant to replace a disputed community evacuated earlier this year.

"When we came to Amona, there was nothing there. It was just an empty hilltop with nothing there," said Elad Ziv, a resident of the former Amona community. "The only things that were there historically were the ruins of our ancestors."

That was in 1996. Since that time, Israelis built homes, and families moved in, including Ziv and his wife, who lived in Amona for 18 years and raised seven children there. Then in February of this year, the Israeli government uprooted all 42 families who lived in the Samaritan community. Israel's Supreme Court ruled it had been built on private Palestinian land. "In any other rational place in the world where there is a dispute over land, you do not go out and throw out people for nothing," Ziv said. "If someone proves that the land is his, and you have assets on that land, you compensate the one who has the land." One glitch here: it's against Palestinian Authority law to sell land to Israelis. Those who have done so in the past have often been murdered.

Now, Ziv's six children share a room in a girls' dormitory where all the Amona residents live. He and his wife live in another room. They have a small sink for a kitchen. "You have to understand, we are sitting here in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. Our forefathers came here 3,500 years ago," Ziv said. "All the Bible is talking about these areas. We are in a struggle of coming back to our own homeland."

And that struggle could soon be over for these families. There's a new settlement in the works with room for 100 families.

It's called *Amichai*, which means "my people" or "my nation lives." The former residents of Amona chose the name as a reminder that Amona also is alive.

"The Jewish people are coming back to its land, and this is why it's making a big fuss, and this is why everyone is against it," Ziv said.

That includes some Israelis, like the European-funded organization Yesh Din, which spearheaded the legal battle to remove Amona.

"We believe that as long as there will be an occupation in the West Bank there is no real way to secure that the Palestinians will enjoy their full rights," Yesh Din spokesman Gilad Grossman told CBN News.

"I don't believe in the Bible, and even if I did believe in the Bible, I don't see how that's [the] basis to what is happening right now" Grossman said.

Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria are one of the most contentious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian talks.

President Trump asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "hold back on settlements" at their White House meeting several months ago. But some, like Avihai Boaron, think Trump's visit will actually be good for settlements in the end.

"I think that President Trump understand[s] that Israel must be strong here in the Middle East in order to have more stability in this region," Boaron told CBN News.

Boaron is the spokesman for the Israelis from Amona. He thinks

Trump realizes that Israel needs Judea and Samaria to be strong.

“If you will cut off Judea and Samaria from the State of Israel it will [make] Israel a tiny state, a tiny strip of 20 miles [wide]. It will weaken Israel, and he must stop it and not let it happen,” Boaron said. {eoa}

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