

# Questions *Questions*



Land



Jews



Bible



Friends



Arabs

**Five mini articles**

helping Christians understand  
the significance of **Israel**

# Who cares

## about the land?

God does. That's why he refers to it so many times in the Bible as "My land" (Joel 3:2, Isaiah 14:25, Ezekiel 38:16).

God created the whole earth, but he has singled out the land of Israel as home for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - whom we know today as the Jewish people (*Genesis 24:7*). God has given it to them as an everlasting covenant (*Psalms 105:8-11, 1 Chronicles 16:14-18*).

But the Jewish people haven't always been allowed to live there. Because of disobedience they have twice been exiled from the land - and twice brought back. Actually, even during those two periods of exile there were always some Jewish people living in the land (*Zechariah 7:14, Jeremiah 40:12*).

The second return got going around 1881, and was strongly supported by many leading Christians in Britain, including Spurgeon and



Wheat field near Bet Guvrin kibbutz

Wilberforce. The Bible contains hundreds of references to this second return from exile, which is still ongoing today (*Ezekiel 28:25*).

The land area promised to the Jewish people is larger than today's State of Israel. In fact the disputed 'West Bank' is the heartland of Israel, known in the Bible as Judea and Samaria, with Jerusalem at its centre. The Jewish right to the whole land was internationally recognised at the San Remo Conference in 1920, when Britain was given responsibility for establishing a Jewish homeland in an area then called Palestine. Confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922, that international agreement has never been annulled and is still in force today, with Israel being its fulfilment.

One day, Jesus will return to this land, to establish his kingdom on the earth. He will reign from Jerusalem, inheriting the throne of his forefather King David.

No surprise, then, that Jerusalem is at the centre of the land dispute, and no wonder that God cares about his land.



Overlooking Galilee

# Why care about the Jews?

Jesus said, “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). So we can’t just take the salvation and forget about the Jews. The problem with this idea is that the living God says he has an eternal covenant with the Jewish people. They are in relationship with him. So, if we are in relationship with the living God, we are in relationship with the Jewish people too. The only question for us to decide is what kind of relationship will it be?

For a thousand years before Christianity began, the Jewish people were witnesses to the power of a God who saved them from slavery in Egypt by a miracle of deliverance. To the present day they remain living witnesses to his grace and power.

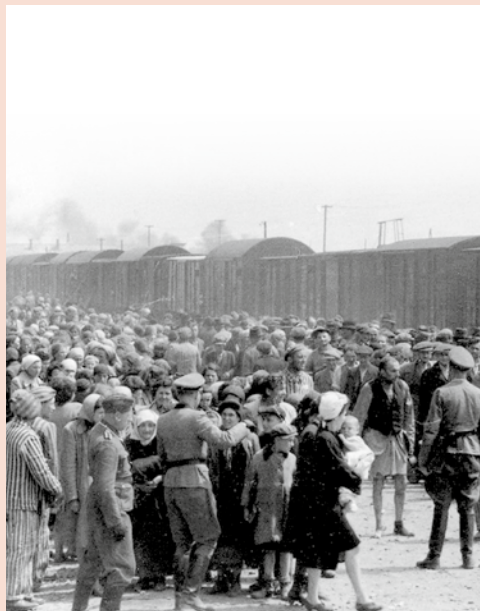
In his letter to the church in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote of the Jews: *‘Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!’* (Romans 9:4-5).

All we know about the living God comes to us through the Jewish people and yet for centuries they have been persecuted in Britain as in other lands. The horrors of expulsion from one English town



Jewish scribe copies Holy Scripture in Hebrew

after another in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century were followed by expulsion from all England in 1290, expulsion from Spain 200 years later, and then the Holocaust. At last the conscience of Christians in Europe awoke to the result of centuries of hostility towards the Jews. Isn't it time we cared about the Jews?



Auschwitz Birkenau arrivals in 1940's occupied Poland

# What does the Bible say?

God loves all people and desires them to be saved through believing in Jesus

*(1 Timothy 2:3)*

God shows no favouritism, but has chosen the Jewish people for a distinct purpose and reason

*(Romans 2:11, Deuteronomy 14:2)*

God's plans for the Jews did not end when Jesus came, it continues today

*(Romans 11:1-2)*

This truth is a "mystery", however we are instructed not to be ignorant of it

*(Romans 11:25)*

God consistently preserves Israel

*(Malachi 3:6)*

There are many promises about Israel including their national return to the land

*(Ezekiel 36, Deuteronomy 30, Isaiah 11, Amos 9, Jeremiah 16)*



The Jews did not have their own independent nation from AD 70 until 1948, yet many held on to God's promises and prayed for their return to the land

He says he will do this for the sake of his holy Name

*(Ezekiel 36:22)*

God's grace in giving the Jews their ancient homeland is not dependent on their belief in Jesus, however the number of such Jews living in Israel has increased every year since Jerusalem was reunited in 1967



# Are we friends or enemies?

A Gentile friend of Israel is found early in the Bible. Her name is Rahab and her friendship is recorded in the book of Joshua. Rahab recognises God's giving of the land, then known as Canaan, to Israel. She says, *'I know the LORD has given this land to you'* (Joshua 2:9). Rahab's rightness is commended later in the Bible by James (*James 2:25*) and in Hebrews (*Hebrews 11:31*). She is also included in Jesus' family tree, along with her daughter-in-law Ruth - also a Gentile friend of the Jewish people (*Matthew 1:5*).

There is another Gentile friend of Israel, mentioned in Luke's biography of Jesus. He was a centurion. The Jews describe him in the following way, *'He loves our nation and has built our synagogue'* (Luke 7:5). The centurion clearly demonstrates his love for the nation through practical action and his faith is commended by Jesus who says, *'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel'* (Luke 7:9).

A Gentile enemy of the Jews is found early in the Bible during Israel's exile to part of King Xerxes' vast empire. A man called Haman,



Excavations in Jericho

an elevated noble, planned to destroy the Jews. A brave Jewess, Esther, was used by God to influence the king and turn the plan of Haman upon himself.

In Ephesus, during the Acts, we see other Gentile enemies of the Jews, during Alexander's defence of the faith: *'When they realised that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours'* (Acts 19:34).

It is worth remembering that the very identity of the Jews is God ordained, by his very own choice of them as a people through whom to express his character.

Throughout Bible-times and over the years there have been both friends and enemies of Israel. The question is how are we going to respond today?

*"I know the LORD has given this land to you"*

# How about the Arabs?

Abraham had two sons whom he loved, Isaac and Ishmael. God chose Isaac to be the ancestor of the Jewish people through whom his covenant promises would be fulfilled. At the same time, however, God also made special promises concerning Ishmael which in most respects paralleled those made concerning Isaac, apart from the promise of the Land.

Historically the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac have lived together peacefully, albeit in different parts of the region, and it is only in recent times that serious enmity has arisen. Islam took hold among the Arab people in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century and its extremes have become a force of hatred against the Jews.



Arab Shepherd with his flock near Bethlehem



We believe however that God has a wonderful plan for countries in the region together in his purposes, and that they should bless each other and also be a blessing in the earth.

There is a remarkable passage in Isaiah which speaks of God's promise for a day yet to come, referring to both Jew and Arab being a blessing on the earth.

*"In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.*

*In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth, who the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.'"*  
(Isaiah 19:23–25)

CFI encourages prayer to this end that all peoples be reconciled in Jesus the Messiah, know the Lord and fulfil their joint calling of being a blessing in the region.

# Can we help

from the UK?



Christian Friends of Israel  
United Kingdom

**Encouraging**  
Understanding

**Challenging**  
Prejudice

**Assisting**  
Community

**Christian Friends of Israel UK** endeavours to lift up the name of Jesus in all we do, to bless his Jewish brothers and share the message of his love both for Israel and the Church. We focus on three main strands.

**Encouraging**  
Understanding

encompasses our desire to help the Church understand 'Israel in Context', which is the title for our booklet series under five headings: Bible, prayer, heritage, history and current affairs. We produce, present and distribute a 10-week course called 'Keshet Making the Connection' which looks at the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, Israel and the Church; also available on DVD.

We also stock a wide range of books, teaching DVDs and CDs, have stands at several Christian festivals including Christian Resources Exhibition, New Wine and Big Church Day Out and arrange speaking tours and conferences across the UK.

In the UK we are agents for the Centre for Judaic-Christian Studies, publish a Middle East Report, our free quarterly magazine as well as prayer support material.

**Challenging**  
Prejudice

includes activities such as a Parliamentary Lobby Day dealing with issues of concern to both the Jewish community and our own Christian constituency. Subjects have included university campus anti-Semitism in the UK, Media bias, and persecution of Christians in the Middle East. We also jointly remember Holocaust Memorial Day and take part and encourage Jewish cultural activity.

**Assisting**  
Community

takes the form of humanitarian aid work channelled mainly through the CFI Jerusalem office and includes assisting Holocaust survivors, new Jewish immigrants experiencing poverty, plus terror victims suffering loss and trauma. We also assist projects directly which help the full cross-section of society in Israel, to include the provision of specialist medical care to children in the surrounding region and a pro-life organisation.

# Further Information

cfi.org.uk

After reading this leaflet, you may be interested to use our website, where there are teaching articles on these subjects and more, plus details of resources and podcasts available. Recommended resources:



**A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND**  
Chris Mottershead



**ISRAEL MATTERS**  
Gerald McDermott



**ISRAEL'S TREATMENT OF MINORITIES**  
Shadi Khaloul



**A FRESH UNDERSTANDING OF ISRAEL**  
Jacob Vince & Adam Raffell



## KESHER COURSE - MAKING THE CONNECTION

A 10-session DVD course that covers in more detail subjects raised in this booklet. Each session is approximately 60 minutes long and includes a Hebrew word study.  
[www.cfi.org.uk/keshar\\_dvd](http://www.cfi.org.uk/keshar_dvd)

## Contact us

We are Christian Friends of Israel UK, a non-denominational Christian charity who seek to serve the Church, showing God's purposes for Israel and the Hebraic heritage of our faith and to be a blessing to Israel with practical and moral support.

See our website for more information on what we do, subscribe to our free quarterly literature by email or by post, or visit our stall at a range of Christian festivals.



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