

proposes to himself, purpose, deliberate resolution",² and it is generally translated 'purpose'.

One instance of its use in this way is the case of Barnabas, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with *purpose* of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). Similarly the Apostle Paul, using the same word, could say of himself to Timothy, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, *purpose*, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). Men like Barnabas

and Paul conducted themselves with spiritual purposefulness, conscious that they were at all times in the presence of the Almighty, the lesson of the shewbread. May we too live our lives as in the presence of our heavenly Father, that by His grace we may receive a crown of life at the appearing of the Master.

2. E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English Bible*.

A window on Israel today

Trevor Maher

The lessons of Tisha b'Av

THESE ARE a number of special days set apart in the Jewish calendar to commemorate events in the nation's history, such as Purim, Passover and Shavuot. Tisha b'Av, which fell due in July, is another. It seems that many in Israel still look back far beyond the Holocaust to the times of the Old Testament prophets and the time of Christ, but with a lack of insight and understanding, demonstrating that "blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. 11:25) as much today as in the time of the Apostle Paul. The following comment appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* this year:

"It marks the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and the Second Temple in 70 CE. Religious Jews fast, mourn and read the Book of Lamentations. Banks, public facilities and places of sport and entertainment close. Radio and television broadcast programs with historic themes and avoid commercials. Secular Jews go about their business as usual, but are likely to notice something

different, if only that the gym or restaurant is closed. This is a piece of being a people with a shared past, where history is a central ingredient in the tribal religion. The historical focus of Judaism also explains the importance of the Holocaust. It is a key ingredient in the culture, as well as rituals performed at national sites and in neighbourhood synagogues. It is too soon to know if the Holocaust will compete for prominence among religious Jews with the destruction of the Temples by Babylon and Rome. For some, Tisha b'Av cautions strength and actions to pre-empt those who would continue the work of Babylon, Rome and the Nazis. For others, it is a reminder of their people's longevity. Jeremiah saw destruction in his time as a product of Judea's failure to recognise the reality of Babylon's power. Josephus explained the destruction he witnessed by Jews' refusal to accept the might and attractions of Rome. We hope that Netanyahu will do better with Obama than his predeces-

sors did with Nebuchadnezzar and Titus".

Source: Ira Sharkansky, *Jerusalem Post*, 30 Jul. 2009.

Birds without borders

IN "[Gleanings from the Land](#)", October 2008, under the heading "Bird matters" (p. 250), comment was made on the choosing of Israel's national bird, the hoopoe. Earlier in May 2008, at Eilat, the Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) organised its fifth international World Leadership Conference to honour the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel. Over 150 delegates from around the globe arrived for the conference. During the first week of the conference, the participants experienced Remembrance Day for the fallen in Israel's wars and Independence Day celebrations in Israel. During the second week, they participated in tours and sessions in the south, focusing on some of the main KKL-JNF themes: water in Israel; global warming; research and development; the development of farms, communities, agriculture and parks; bird migration; roads and routes in the Negev and the



Among the many migrating birds that use Israel as a corridor from Africa to Europe and Asia, thousands of white storks make their way northwards through Israel in the spring, returning southwards in the autumn.

Arava. It was some comments in the address given on bird migration by Dr Yossi Leshem that caught the eye:

“We live at the crossroads between three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. From a geographical standpoint this could be seen as a catastrophe . . . On the other hand, Israel is unique in that it hosts a large variety of plant and animal life. Each year 500 million birds fly over the country—a unique international phenomenon”.

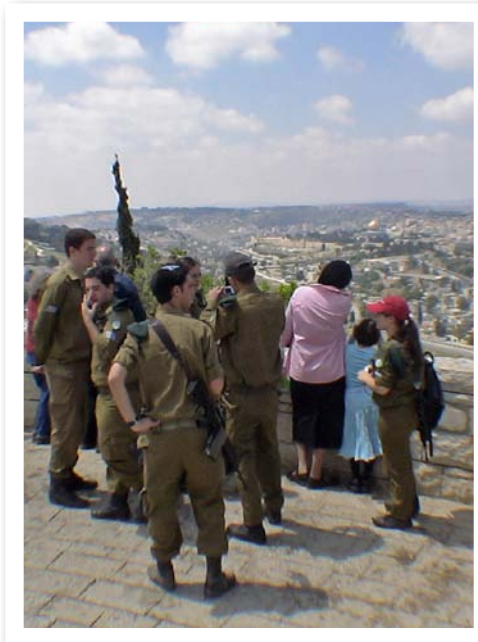
Dr Leshem spoke about a programme for establishing a bird-watching centre in the Brigades Forest, and noted that there is nothing more natural than cooperation with KKL-JNF for establishing such a centre:

“Birds are studied in approximately 3,000 schools in Israel. There is international cooperation in the area of monitoring birds, and the vision for the future is the establishment of a chain of schools in Jewish communities throughout the world to

study ornithology. Birds unite people. Birds know their routes and fly over borders. That’s the way people should be, too!”

These comments by Dr Leshem are both interesting and—although he may not be aware of it—a little prophetic as well!

Israeli soldiers on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Pictures such as this contribute to the perception of Israel as a war-torn country.



There will come a time when people will know the route to Jerusalem, and will be able to travel there without restriction (borders being of little value in the Kingdom) that they might worship God.

Extract from a report given by Dr Yossi Leshem, internationally known ornithologist, at a KKL-JNF conference in Eilat. *Jerusalem Post*, May 2008.

Israel’s lack of peacefulness

IN a recent index compiled by the think tank Vision of Humanity 2009 Global Peace Index, Israel was placed 141st out of 144 countries, only Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia being placed below Israel. Amazingly, countries placed above Israel included the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Lebanon, North Korea and Iran. The survey uses twenty-three different indices to measure ‘peacefulness’ in any given country. Israel was given derisory scores in indices such as

'organised conflict', 'relationships with neighbours', 'respect for human rights', and 'perception of distrust in others'. The only areas in which Israel gained credible scores were 'political stability', 'low criminal violence', 'charitable donations to the UN', and 'hospitality to foreigners'! Such illustrious names as the ex-Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Anan, the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and former US President Jimmy Carter, all endorse this survey. So the view presented to the world of Israel is one of a belligerent, war-torn country with a divided society going about in fear and mistrust of one another. But is this a true window on Israel and on the majority of people living within its borders? Or is it another of those organised propaganda activities, by people prejudiced against the Jews and Israel, designed to portray Israel in a bad light and keep world opinion against them?

We know from Scripture that, prior to the revealing of Christ in glory and the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth, Israel will be dwelling securely/confidently and be prosperous, before the northern host invades and overruns the land (Ezek. 36:9,10; 38:8,12). So, if the picture presented by this report is true, major changes have still to take place before the Lord comes. Scripture also teaches that true peace can only come once righteousness has been established in Israel and among the nations. Centuries ago, when Abraham came to the Land and Melchizedek reigned in Salem, there was presented a foretaste of what will be. For Melchizedek, whose name means 'King of Righteousness', ruled in Salem, which means 'Peace'. And he who is a king-priest after the



Picture: Ivan Carter

Modern Tel Aviv.

order of Melchizedek will come to reign from Jerusalem/Salem. Then will come to pass the prophecy of Isaiah: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (32:17,18).

There is, however, another window on Israel that presents a different picture on life in Israel today, and that is commented on next.

Source: Vision of Humanity 2009 Global Peace Index. Analysed by the Economic Intelligence Unit. Reported on in the *Jerusalem Post*, 31 Jul. 2009.

Israel's view of itself

MANY nations around the world have suffered socially, industrially and financially because of the 'credit crunch' brought about by the disastrous activities of major banks and their greedy and ill-advised management. The exception to this in the Western world appears to

be Israel. Reading financial and industrial reports and articles in the Israeli press, it appears that the troubles besetting major economies in Europe, USA, Japan and China have had nowhere near the same impact in Israel. The bankruptcy rate in Israel is currently the lowest in the civilised world. (It increased by 19% in the first six months of 2009, whereas in the USA it was 45%, in Spain 58% and in France 75%.) The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange is still at its September 2008 level. A journalist wrote:

"It is a country of 7.4 million people, where the stock exchange and the economy are humming along quite nicely and the citizens revel in their chic Mediterranean lifestyle".

In "[Gleanings](#)" last year Brother Tony reported the comments of Shlomo Maital, Academic Director at the Technion Institute of Management and a columnist for the *Jerusalem Report* magazine, who claimed that Israel was a divided society in education, income, wealth and religion because of financial inequality

(Oct. 2008, p. 251). Yet it seems that that is not the view of the ordinary man or woman, and that prosperous, material standards of living are enjoyed by many in Israel today. A report in *Israel Opinion* set out the way Israelis see themselves:

“Nowhere else on the globe does there exist a greater discrepancy between perception and reality than Israel. The press portrays the country as a savage land racked by war and terrorism. The reality is, though, that life goes on. The Western newspapers just don’t notice. Israel today has become a vibrant functioning jewel of a nation tucked into the Eastern flank of the Mediterranean. Tel Aviv looks more like San Diego or Barcelona than Baghdad or Kabul. On a recent five-mile run along Tel Aviv’s Gordon beach I saw Israeli yuppies cycling the boardwalk on their \$1,500 Italian mountain bikes, teenagers in full wetsuits surfing the breakers . . . rows of high-priced yachts in the marina, and an endless stream of private planes on final approach to the small Sde Dov Airport . . . Israel enjoys top universities, upscale restaurants, million-dollar homes, hoity toity architecture and the like”.

The report goes on to compare Israel’s economy with what is happening elsewhere in the world, pointing out that, when the global economy went into free-fall, Israel’s annual quarter-over-quarter rate of GDP was only 0.5% off the best figure in the industrialised world. (The USA was off 6.3% and Japan 12.1%.) It boasts that its economy has held up in spite of losing a prime minister due to a stroke, the war in Lebanon, losing another prime

minister over corruption, the war in Gaza, and eventually, just recently, replacing the government in an election. The writer says:

“Through all this we have maintained a stable, micro-economic structure and high tech sector, no mortgage crisis, a current account in surplus since 2003, negligible inflation, prudent government fiscal policy and healthy integration into the world economy”.

There is, of course, no mention of God or His will and purpose in any of this. Confidence in their own ability and the presumption that they can continue to enjoy the good life and build up the economy so that it is better than that of most countries, especially their close Middle East neighbours, will, of course, be their undoing. When Israel entered the Land under Joshua they were warned about the dangers and distractions of materialism, and subsequently in seeking to be like the nations around them (Deut. 8:3,18; 1 Sam. 8:4-7,10-17,19,20).

The healthy integration into the world economy that they are so proud of is a two-edged sword. If nations get together and boycott Israel then they will find their economy falters. On the other hand, it may well be that increased prosperity and an increased secularisation of a society hooked into ever-increasing materialism weakens the resolve and unity of the nation. Ultimately their preoccupation with these things will bring them further judgements from God, because, as Ezekiel indicates, they “trespassed against Me [God]” (39:23-26).

Source: “Israel—economic, cultural powerhouse”. Article in *Israel Opinion* by Yoram Ettinger, 8 Jul. 2009.

A ribband of blue

DR Shimon Gibson is the archaeologist who heads the University of North Carolina’s current dig in Jerusalem. The excavations began on 14 June at the same site where previous archaeologists had probed the earth searching for clues to Israel’s history in the 1970s.

This time around, structures from the First and Second Temple periods were discovered, including a ritual pool left almost completely intact, a vault, and a room with two ovens. Buildings from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods were also uncovered, as well as numerous coins, intact lamps, ceramic and glass vessels, bits of jewellery and similar items. However, one discovery takes us back even further. Uncovered were at least half a dozen Murex snail shells with holes drilled through them. “Prior to our excavation one or two



Murex snail shells.

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such shells had been found in all of Jerusalem”, Gibson said. “That so many would be found at our site further supports our supposition that we are in a priestly residential area”. Murex snails were cultivated in ancient times at sites along the Mediterranean Sea, and a royal blue dye was extracted from them.

“According to some experts this blue colour was used for the priestly garments, as well as the *tzitzit* or threaded tassels

worn by all pious Jews of the period”, Dr Gibson explained in his report, referring to the Biblical blue (*tekelet*)—the thread of blue that God had instructed Moses to command all male Jews to include in the ritual fringes on the corners of their garments:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments

throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband [thread] of blue [*tekelet*]: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them . . .” (Num. 15:38,39).

Such fringes are worn by observant Jews to this day, although in

most of them the thread of blue is no longer included, since the precise technology for making the dye has been lost. However, in recent times rabbis have overseen a modern re-creation of the technique for making the blue dye, and some Jews have begun using blue in their fringes again.

Source: *Israel National News*, 30 Jul. 2009.