

# This Week in Jewish History

Highlights from "The Israel Bible"

## **2 Tevet 5708 (1947)**

### **The Arab Legion surrounded Jerusalem, isolating its 100,000 Jewish residents**

Following the approval of the UN partition plan in November, 1947, the Arab Legion began a siege around Jerusalem, preventing supplies from entering the city and blocking and ambushing the roads leading to the city. The Battle for Jerusalem lasted from December 1947 until July 1948, when the Jews and Arabs fought to control Jerusalem and its 100,000 Jewish residents. After the War of Independence, the city was split between Israel and Jordan.

The fierce battle for control of Jerusalem underscores the significance of this holy city. Its special status is reflected in the pasuk In Tehillim (87:2) which says "Hashem loves the gates of Tzion, more than all the dwellings of Yaakov", emphasizing that God's love for even the gates of Yerushalayim is more than any other dwelling place in Israel.

The wall currently surrounding Jerusalem's Old City, built in 1538 by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, has several gates around its perimeter, each of which is known by a different name. The gate at the southwestern corner of the wall is called "Zion Gate," or Shaar Tzion in

Hebrew, based on this verse. Thus, it has the oldest biblical name of any of the gates. However, the Arabic name for this gate is David's Gate, referring to the traditional location of David's tomb. The Zion Gate is also quite significant in modern Israeli history; it was through this gate that the Palmach Brigade of the Israeli army broke into the Old City during the 1948 War of Independence, releasing the Jewish quarter from its isolation. The Jordanians, however, re-conquered the Old City shortly afterwards, and Jews were forced to leave the walls of Jerusalem for the next nineteen years. Only after it was recaptured during the 1967 Six Day War were Jews again able to enter the Old City of Yerushalayim.

Jerusalem's walls are significant in ways beyond what meets the eye. On a simple level, of course, they provide protection for the city. But on a more mystical plane, these walls provide a separation between what is inside and that which is outside. Though Yerushalayim and its inhabitants are supposed to influence the rest of the world with holiness and spirituality, the walls remind us that it is also important to separate and focus inward. Everyone has an obligation to make an impact and a contribution to the rest of the world, but one must remember not to neglect themselves and their own needs in the process.

## **4 Tevet 2006**

### **Ehud Olmert became acting Prime Minister**

Ehud Olmert was born in Binyamina,

Israel in 1945. He is a lawyer and Israeli politician who served as Mayor of Yerushalayim from 1993-2003, and as Israel's 12th Prime Minister from 2006-2009. On January 4, 2006, Olmert became acting Prime Minister after Ariel Sharon suffered a stroke. He was officially asked to form a government on April 6, after his party won the most seats in the March 2006 elections.

Ehud Olmert's biblical namesake, Ehud son of Gera, was also a leader of the Jewish people and the second of the Judges. He is known for killing the Moabite king Eglon with a double-edged sword. Before killing Eglon, Ehud asks to meet him in private on the pretext that he had a secret message for the king:

And when Ehud approached him, he was sitting alone in his cool upper chamber. Ehud said, "I have a message for you from Hashem"; whereupon he rose from his seat (Shoftim 3:20).

Ehud tells the Moabite king Eglon that he has a message for him from God. Eglon stands up, and Ehud stabs him, thereby killing the oppressor of the Israelites. Although he delivered no verbal message, Ehud told the truth: Hashem had instructed him to kill Eglon. At its core, God's message is that ultimately, even if it takes time, He will always save the People of Israel from their oppressors. This true message that Ehud delivered to Eglon remains equally true in our time. Often the enemies of the Jewish people appear strong, and even claim many innocent victims. But God continues to send the

message that ultimately, those who oppress His people will always be destroyed. Over time, the Jews' persecutors all fade away, while the Nation of Israel lives forever.

"The Israel Bible" is edited by Rabbi Tuly Weisz and co-published by Israel365 & Koren Jerusalem's Menorah Books and was the #1 new release Bible on Amazon