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SIX LESSONS TO UNLOCKING THE TRUTH  
TO GOD'S HOLY LAND



International Fellowship  
of Christians and Jews® 



## LESSON 4

# I.S.R.A.E.L. — *Aliyah* (Immigration to Israel)

### INTRODUCTION

Today's lesson comes from the letter "A" in "ISRAEL."

*Aliyah* (al-EE-yah) is a Hebrew word meaning to immigrate to Israel, or return to the Jewish people's ancestral homeland.

**Think about a time** you've returned to a place that has special meaning for you — perhaps a high school reunion, or maybe returning to your hometown after many years. What prompted your return? What emotions did it evoke? How did going back to this place impact you?

**Now think of the history of Israel**, including how it was given to the Israelites as an inheritance from God, and how they were expelled from their land, not once, but twice. What emotions do you think going to Israel would evoke for a Jewish person? If you've been to Israel, what emotions did it evoke for you?

### KEY VERSE:

*Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back.*

— DEUTERONOMY 30:4

### MAIN TEACHING POINT

God always intended for His people to return home to Israel, the land He promised to Abraham.

Through *aliyah*, hundreds of thousands of Jews have been able to return to their promised homeland, fulfilling biblical prophecy.

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

**Reflect upon a time someone made you a promise. Did the person fulfill the promise or not? Write down how you felt.**

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**Now, think of a time when a promise from God's Word has been fulfilled in your life or your family's life. How did you feel? How did the fulfillment of the promise strengthen your faith?**

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**Read the following verses and write down what God had promised His children Israel**

Bible Verse	God's Promise
Deuteronomy 30:4	
Isaiah 11:12	
Isaiah 43:5-6	
Ezekiel 34:13	

**How is the existence of the State of Israel today an indication of God's fulfilling these promises? How does knowing this also impact your faith?**

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*Keep those feelings in mind as you complete today's lesson.*

## Going Deeper

**When Joshua and the Jewish people conquered the land that God had promised to Abraham, there were 12 tribes of Israel**, named for the 12 sons of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh. They were united as the Kingdom of Israel until after King Solomon died. Then they were divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom called Israel which consisted of 10 tribes (Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah which consisted of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

**Around 722 BCE, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered** by the Assyrians and exiled from their land. They became known as “The Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel because no one was sure where they had gone. But many people believe that we are finding these lost tribes today. For example, many believe the Ethiopian Jews are descendants of the tribe of Dan, and the Jews from India are descendants of the tribe of Manasseh.

**The Southern Kingdom, comprised of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah**, remained intact a bit longer. They were exiled from their land around 586 BCE by the Babylonians, who had conquered the Assyrians. This was considered the Jewish people’s first exile from the land of Israel and the first time their Holy Temple was destroyed, along with their beloved city, Jerusalem.

Almost 800 years later in 70 CE, after the time that Jesus had lived, the Romans exiled the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, from Israel and destroyed the Second Temple that the people in the account from the book of Ezra had rebuilt. The Temple has never been rebuilt in Jerusalem to this day.

**The tribes of Judah and Benjamin were never lost.** Instead, after being expelled by the Romans, they spread out to all parts of the world — many to Europe, to Russia, and much later to America where many Jews still live today. However, even though most Jews lived outside of Israel for thousands of years, there were always some Jews in Israel. And throughout the centuries, Jews in every generation have made *aliyah*, returning to their homeland.

The Bible has many accounts of the first exiled Jews and how they were mistreated (see accounts in Daniel, Esther, Isaiah, and Jeremiah). Yet, Israel remained a very important part of the people’s history. Many shared stories with their children about the Promised Land and passed on traditions from their faith even when they were in foreign lands.

**Why do you think it was important for Israelites in exile to share traditions with their children and tell them about Israel?**

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**READ FROM THE BOOK OF EZRA****Read Ezra 1:2–3.**

**At the opening of the book of Ezra, God moved the heart of King Cyrus, ruler over Persia, who had conquered the Babylonians and the exiled Jews.**

**Why do you think Cyrus would allow the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple?**

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**What do you think ran through the minds of the Israelites when King Cyrus said he wanted to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem?**

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**Read Ezra 1:4-11**

**Where did the Israelites get material to rebuild the Temple?**

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**What did King Cyrus do with the articles from the Temple that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem?**

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**In total, 50,000 Israelites returned to Jerusalem because God moved Cyrus' heart.**

**How do you think the people felt about God's promise to return them to Israel after Cyrus' orders? How do you think it impacted their decision to go back to Israel?**

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**Read Ezra 3:1-3**

**What was the first thing that the people did once they arrived in Jerusalem?**

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**Why do you think it was so important for the people to build an altar upon arrival in Jerusalem?**

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**Read Ezra 4:4-5**

**As the people worked to rebuild the Temple, it took about two years for them to gather all the materials, get workers, and start to rebuild. Their enemies were not happy, however, and worked to discourage them.**

**How did Israel's enemies try to discourage them?**

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**Why do you think they did not want the people to rebuild the Temple?**

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**Read Ezra 4:12-16**

**Israel's enemies sent this letter to the new king, Artaxerxes.**

**What reasons did they use to encourage the king to stop the Israelites from rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple?**

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**Read Ezra 6:3-5**

When Darius was King of Persia, the Israelites asked him to search for the decree by King Cyrus (Ezra 5:17). After King Darius searched, he did find the order.

What do we find out in these verses?

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How do you think the people felt when King Darius authorized their work on the Temple and the Holy City?

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Why do you think they prevailed through so much opposition?

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**Read Ezra 6:8-12**

What else did King Darius do for the people? Make a list below:

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**The account in Ezra reminds us of God's faithfulness and ability to use others** — even those who opposed Israel — to rebuild the Temple and the city. God is still faithful to His people today, and *aliyah* is one of the ways we witness the fulfillment of God's promise to the Jews to return to their sacred land.

## Think About It

**Why is it a joy for Christians to see God’s promise fulfilled to the Jews through *aliyah*?**

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**What characteristics of God can we see through *aliyah*?**

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**The people making *aliyah* have never lived in Israel before; how do you think they know about it and its importance?**

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### READ PSALM 137:4-6

**The Jewish rabbis worried that the Jews might forget Jerusalem, so they established many customs**, like saying the verse from Psalm 137, “*If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill*” (v. 5) during celebrations such as weddings. Psalm 137 is also said as part of the “Grace After Meals.” Jewish prayers, said three times a day, include many pleas to return to Jerusalem. Jewish homes were required to have an unfinished part or some other reminder, such as a missing brick in the wall, of Jerusalem. These, among other customs, helped the Jews remember their true identity and homeland.

**Why do you think it was so important for the Jewish people to remember their heritage?**

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**Why is it important to share history in your family? What messages do you want your family to recall and remember about your history?**

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**What are some things people may need as they make *aliyah*? How can you help them?**

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**For more teaching about *Aliyah***, watch the video featuring *The Fellowship* founder and President Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, and his daughter, Yael Eckstein, Executive Vice President.



## Apply It

Programs such as *The Fellowship's On Wings of Eagles* focus on providing plane tickets and stipends for moving expenses for Jews journeying to Israel. With the help of others, including non-Jews, people are returning to the Holy Land. People are partnering with God to fulfill His promise.

**Read the following Scriptures, and write down how Gentiles (non-Jews) are part of God's great plan to bring His people home:**

Scripture	Lesson
Isaiah 14:1	
Isaiah 49:22	
Jeremiah 31:8	

**How does it feel knowing you can partner with God to fulfill the promise of *aliyah*?**

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**What are some ways you can help Jews return to Israel?**

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Hebrew Words for Lesson 4

Hebrew Word	English Spelling	English Meaning
עליה	<i>Aliyah</i>	Immigrate to Israel
עולים	<i>Olim</i>	Immigrants
חדש	<i>Chadash</i>	New
שפה	<i>Safah</i>	Language
תרבות	<i>Tarbut</i>	Culture
מטוס	<i>Matos</i>	Airplane

## Devotional Reflection — On Wings of Eagles

*“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” — EXODUS 19:4*



Between June 1949 and September 1950, Israel ran a secret operation known as “Operation Magic Carpet.” Three hundred and eighty flights were made to Israel, rescuing over 49,000 Jews from Arab countries where they were oppressed.

**When the Jews being rescued boarded the planes that would fly them to Israel, they were sure that the Messiah had come.** Why? They had never seen airplanes before! They were sure that these huge mechanical birds were the “eagles” spoken of in the Bible by the prophet Isaiah: *“They will soar on wings like eagles”* (40:31). To these Jews, those airplanes were God’s eagles that would carry them home.

In time, Operation Magic Carpet became more popularly known as “Operation Wings of Eagles.”

**These Jews weren’t completely wrong.** Although the Messiah had not yet come, they were experiencing the miracles foretold by the prophets. The Jewish people were on their way home, and like eagles, they took flight.

**The children of Israel who left Egypt for Israel went on “eagles’ wings,” too.** In the book of Exodus, God says: *“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”* (19:4). The children of Israel certainly didn’t fly on airplanes, so just what did God mean?

**The wise Jewish scholars who studied the Bible explained that passage in the following way:** All birds carry their babies in their claws because they are afraid of high-flying predators that soar above them and could otherwise harm their babies. But no bird flies higher than the eagle. The eagle only has to worry about men below. So the eagle puts its babies on its wings. The eagle places itself between its children and any danger.

**Just like an eagle, no one is higher than God. And like an eagle, He protects His children with love.** When the Lord took the children of Israel out of Egypt, He placed the “pillar of cloud” between them and the Egyptians. The Egyptians would have to get through the cloud if they wanted to reach the Israelites. But God would not let them. He miraculously kept them safe from harm.

**Today, God still carries His children on “wings of eagles.”** This is true of the Jews God is bringing home to Israel today, and it is true for so many of us who simply benefit from God’s love, help, and protection.

Whether we know it or not, God shields us from harm every single day. There are so many bad things that *could* happen to us, but *don’t* because of God’s protection. Whether we can feel His hand in our lives or not, God is carrying us to where we need to be through the people and experiences we encounter each day.



## ON WINGS OF EAGLES

Even if we aren’t sure things in our life are going the right way, we can be sure that we are on “*wings of eagles*,” and that God will bring us to the places, people, and opportunities that are meant for us. God can carry us through anything and we must trust Him with everything.