

# Israel Newsdesk

with BPF Secretary Steve Lloyd

News concerning Israel - March 2022

***if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)***

As we look at events unfolding around the world, we can, as Christians be encouraged that it is just as Jesus foretold it would be. His plan is unfolding before our eyes.

Ukraine - Obviously the last few weeks news has been dominated by the war between Ukraine and Russia. Being a superpower, Russia looked as though it would overrun the Ukrainian people in a matter of days, but no. Not only does the Russian Army appear to be in disarray on the ground with fuel and food running out, but they also did not take into account the sheer grit and courage of the Ukrainian forces and people.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has become the heroic centre of Ukraine's resistance. This unlikely hero, has shown a personal flair and resilience in the face of overwhelming odds. As cruise missiles and ballistic missiles have pounded Kyiv, he has taken to the streets and shared videos of the capital city that is still standing and resisting. His predecessors have been targeted by Russia for assassination or have been sent to prison by previous pro-Russian governments in Ukraine. He knows the fate that awaits him if Ukraine loses.

Three years ago Zelensky was playing a president in a popular television comedy but today he is Ukraine's president. He is a man proud of his Jewish identity and history. Reports say that relatives were killed in the holocaust and others served in the resistance against Nazism. Elected in 2019 with 73% of the vote. His stance has made him an unlikely hero and he has perhaps become to the Ukrainians what Churchill was to the UK, or perhaps a modern Maccabee. Only time will tell.

Russian missiles and shells have struck the site of Babyn Yar, where tens of thousands of Jews were massacred during the Holocaust. Babyn Yar is a ravine on Kyiv's outskirts where German troops shot dead, with the help of Ukrainian collaborators, 33,771 Jews in September 1941. Ukrainian politicians have accused Russia of deliberately targeting the site. The memorial rests on the site of a mass grave containing the bodies of the 33,000 Jews slaughtered there.

Israel - As you would expect, there is a lot of support for Ukraine in Israel, as there is believed to be some 150,000 Ukrainian Jews.

The Israeli Government is expecting 10,000 Ukrainians to flee the country and emigrate to Israel. Minister Pnina Tamano-Shata has assembled a team to remove bureaucratic hurdles for potential immigrants and to issue immigration visas digitally in light of a drastic increase in applications. The Jewish Agency is opening six aliya processing stations at Ukrainian border crossings with four countries - Poland, Moldova, Romania and Hungary. Minister Tamano-Shata told Ukraine Chief Rabbi Moshe Asman in a phone call: "The gates of the State of Israel are open to you - Israel is your home. We will help any Jew who wishes to emigrate".

Israel is also erecting a field hospital to treat the injured in Lviv in western Ukraine. In addition, Jerusalem is building aid centres for refugees - Jewish or not - on the war-torn country's western border. These are among the forms of aid which Israel is providing. The field hospital will include maternity and paediatric wards, an emergency room and a telemedicine area that will allow doctors in Israel to help refugees over the internet. Israel has also ordered 6 large generators for the hospital in Lviv to allow it to operate continuously

without electrical shortages. They have also sent 17 tons of medicines and medical equipment.

Europe - Not since the Holocaust have there been this many Jewish refugees in Europe. In the continent's worst refugee crisis in 80 years, Chabad-Lubavitch has swung into action to absorb and assist thousands of Jewish refugees running for their lives. Arriving with little more than a carry-on bag, their lives have been upended by the war in Ukraine with no word on when - or if - they'll ever return.

It has been estimated by relief agencies that up to March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1.8 million people had been displaced internally in Ukraine and more than 1.5 million Children had left Ukraine according to UNICEF.

Finland - As a direct result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finland is making a substantial investment in air defence systems - from Israel.

Russia - Russia has not been out of the news for weeks now. But were you aware that hours before its invasion of Ukraine, Moscow found the time to have a pop at Israel over sovereignty of the Golan Heights. "The Heights are an inalienable part of Syria," Russia's UN envoy Dmitry Polyanskiy told a Security Council briefing on the Middle East.

Moscow's desire for Israel to give the Golan back to Syria were made known hours after Israel released a statement voicing support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity...without mentioning Russia by name. Jerusalem was trying hard not to anger Moscow, which has allowed Israel to operate with a large degree of freedom in its attacks on Iranian targets in Syria.

To close, some good news in Israel.

Tourists of all ages will be allowed into Israel regardless of vaccination status. This began on March 1<sup>st</sup>. However they will still be subject to a negative PCR test before take-off and after landing. Prime Minister Bennett announced the decision to ease the coronavirus restriction after consulting his health and tourism ministers. The new plan will also end isolation policies for unvaccinated Israelis entering the country subject to a negative PCR test upon arrival.

Please continue to pray for Israel, Jerusalem and the Israeli Defence Forces as they seek to keep the people of Israel safe.

Maranatha.

Steve