

Apples of Gold

Zvi Kalisher's life-changing spiritual conversations

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FIFTY YEARS...AND COUNTING

This year we are celebrating 50 years since Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948.

I immigrated to Israel after passing through the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe. I came here hoping to make a new life for myself after losing my entire family in Hitler's gas chambers.

But, only days after I arrived in Israel, eight Arab countries attacked us. We were thrust into a new Holocaust, a new destruction. Our enemies thought they would win because of our small number. They came against us with millions of men and their best weapons, but they failed. At that time, I did not know the Lord. Then one day I was given a Bible. I read the account in 1 Samuel 17 of King David's victory over the Philistine hero, Goliath. I then realized that little Israel was just like the shepherd boy before the giant. Goliath said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" (1 Sam. 17:43). We had gone against our Arab enemies with only sticks compared to their sophisticated weapons. I realized that, just as the Lord fought David's battle, the Lord fought for Israel against the Arabs. As Psalm 124:2-3 says, "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive."

Many Israelis think our own strength defeated our enemies in 1948. But we never could have defeated our enemies in our own strength.

A few weeks ago, some high school students asked me about the War of Independence. They had received a homework assignment requiring them to interview a veteran of that war. One asked, “How could such a small nation make such a great victory?”

I answered by reading Deuteronomy 7:17–18: “If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’ You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt.”

I told them we did not win this victory alone. In 1948, we were a destroyed people after the Holocaust. Most of us had not yet learned to speak Hebrew, so we had difficulty even communicating with one another. I showed them pictures of the old weapons Israel used in the war of 1948 and said, “They were nothing compared to the powerful weapons the Arabs used. But in spite of our small size and lack of weapons, the Lord fought for us then, just as He does now.”

Finally, we came to the subject of faith. One asked, “Why do you speak so much about the Bible?”

I said, “It is impossible to speak about war without reading in God’s Word about the great things the Lord has done for us. Without the Lord’s help, King David, who was only a child at the time, could not have fought a beast like Goliath. But what did David say to him? ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied’ [1 Sam. 17:45]. Today we also stand before our numerous enemies. If you do not say in your report that the Lord was on our side, you will be lying.” Each of the young students then asked for a Bible. I pray the Lord will open their eyes to the truth and they will see Him as the great Defender of His people Israel.

Fifty years have passed since I came to Israel, and the Lord has protected me through many battles. But, most important, He saved my soul and has given me the great privilege of being His servant here in His Holy Land.