

Israel Magazine

Volume 28 • No. 1 • January 2024

Balalaika

An Opened Door in
Chisinau, Moldova

Emergency aid Israel

“Rabbi” John Duncan

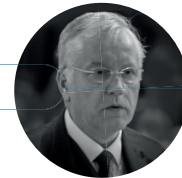
Pray for the Peace of
Jerusalem



BOARD FOR ISRAEL
OF THE NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

FROM THE EDITOR

Rev. A. Schot



Dear Israel friends,

A new year has arrived. There are things you wish you could leave behind on New Year's Eve. Sadly, this is not the case for the war in the Middle East. The war has a major impact on all Jews. We noticed this at the youth evening. The Jewish young people experienced the unconditional support on this evening as special.

The war brings enormous distress. Looking back on the emergency aid, a lot was given, for which we would like to thank you very much. This help comes into place through our channels. At the same time, we may say with Rev. M.L. Dekker: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Israel Day is behind us. We have been informed of developments in Israel and the work of the Board. The highlight was the presence of our guests from Moldova. The work in Moldova continues. Board members Mr. M. de

Geus and Rev. A.P. Baaijens visited Chisinau, the capital of Moldova. The RTS (Reformed Theological Seminary) work has started. They have experienced that there is an open door.

Special attention is paid in this issue to "Rabbi Duncan." You will be taken into his life story, after which there will be a report of the conferences in Romania and Hungary. "Rabbi" Duncan has been able to work fruitfully among the Jewish people in Budapest for quite some time. Our Board member Rev. P.D. den Haan wrote a review about the book, "People between eternity and loneliness" by Rev. P. den Butter, which is worth reading. So we can once again offer you an update of the work that is the love of our hearts. May the Lord bless it.

WORKERS ABROAD



ISRAEL

Family Rev. M.L. Dekker
POB 2156,
Nof HaGalil (Nazareth-Ilit)
1751508 Israel

An expression of support is very much appreciated!



HUNGARY

Family Rev. I.L. Zöld
Kishalom Street, 35.2
Budapest, 1163
Hungary

Birthday:

Mrs. Noémi Zöld March 11

COLOPHON

Israel Magazine is a publication of the Board for Israel of The Netherlands Reformed Congregations, for the proclamation of the gospel and diaconal aid.
ISSN 2589-8477

Editor-in-chief:
Rev. A. Schot

Editors:
J.J. de Jong, L. Vogelaar, A.C.H. van Vuuren

Children's pages:
T.M. Bruijnzeel-Lodder, M. Hoekman,
I.M. Janse, E. Oosterwijk

Contact:
Bureau voor Kerkelijke Dienstverlening
Houttuinlaan 7 - 3447 GM Woerden -
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 (0)348-489929
E-mail: info@boardforisrael.nl

Presenters:
J.A. Jobse, J.J. de Jong, A. Karens, and
H. Ligtenberg; appointments via the above-
mentioned telephone number or e-mail
address or via one of the ministers who are
members of the Board.

Financial contributions:
IBAN ING: NL10INGB0000338952
- BIC INGBNL2A
(for individuals)
IBAN ABN: NL49ABNA0461863723
- BIC ABNANL2A
(for consistories)
both in the name of Deputaatschap voor Is-
raël Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Woerden.

Last wills:
The 'address' of last wills for the benefit
of the Board for Israel must be written as
follows: Deputaatschap voor Israël voor
Evangelieverkondiging en diaconale hulp-

verlening van de Gereformeerde Gemeenten,
gevestigd te Woerden, zelfstandig onderdeel
van het kerkgenootschap van de Gerefor-
meerde Gemeenten

Translation:
A.P. Meeuse, MA

Design:
www.hrv-reclame.nl

Printing:
Fresh Design, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Photo front:
Rev. M.L. Dekker with
two soldiers for the
coffee shop in
Balalaika that is run
by employees from
the Church of
Nechama.



BOARD FOR ISRAEL
OF THE NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

"I'm amazed to be able to do this beautiful work"

“

A large number of volunteers is involved in the activities of the Board. Through this series of articles, the editors want to acknowledge these people, who often do important work in the background.

In this article, you can read about Mr. J. Seip, who has been involved in this work since 1995.

It was 1995 when a request came from Rev. C. Sonneveld to become a member of the Israel Committee, which was then part of the Mission Board. As a young boy, I once contacted a Jewish institution to go to the kibbutz. As a minor, my parents did not give me permission to do this, because one had to be vaccinated. The interest in the Jewish people did not go away and I was pleased to be asked to become a member of the committee from which the Board for Israel was created. In my daily life I was a self-employed entrepreneur, which allowed me to make time for the work of the Board in addition to my business activities.

I experienced and saw how the work was established and shaped from the start, through the efforts of men from the very beginning, such as Rev. C.J. Meeuse, Rev. C. Sonneveld, and Mr. G. Roos. I also saw how the Lord gave His blessing with a church in Nazareth with office-bearers led by Rev. M.L. Dekker, a congregation with a diversity of people with different backgrounds.

A special moment was the first baptism of an ex-Muslim by Rev. W. Silfhout. Recordings were made at the baptismal site. The person being baptized was afraid that the baptism ceremony would be recorded, because this could have serious consequences for him in his private life. When we inquired, it turned out that there was a technical malfunction that day, so there were no recordings. We noticed God's hand in this.

With respect to the congregation in Zhytomyr, we were standing on a piece of land with a wooden building on it. Rev. A. Margulis said to us: "The Lord has promised



that a church will be built in this place." Now there is a church building with a soup kitchen to help the poorest of the poor. It pleased the Lord to use this work. An ex-addict man told how he ended up in the soup kitchen while wandering the streets, how the Bible was opened during the meal, and there he came into contact with God's Word for the first time, and thus ended up in the church.

Another highlight was in 2004 with theological student Imre Zöld. After the conference in Cluj Napoca, where Rev. D. de Wit spoke about preaching the gospel among the Jewish people, he contacted us. Later, it turned out that love for the Jewish people had been worked in his heart. After a time of exploration and meetings, a path was opened as a result of which we are now able to work in Budapest among the Jews.

The development in Moldova is encouraging. There are warm contacts with the Jewish-Christian congregation of Rev. Ivanov in Chisinau, where 250 people meet. Twelve participants have registered for the theological course. Several men, also from the consistory, travel into the country to visit people.

As far as my activities within the Board are concerned, I have had the pleasure of chairing the Information & Fundraising Committee for many years. Organizing Israel Days, theme days, women's mornings, and youth days, among other things, is part of the work of this committee. I also sit on the Eastern Europe and Finance and Personnel committees.

In addition to the Board for Israel, I am a member of the SOEGG Board. It organizes medical equipment that has been written off or is surplus, that meets requirements, and is technically checked and transported to hospitals. This work can also make a major contribution in good cooperation with the congregation in Zhytomyr.

Personally, I am grateful and amazed to be able to do this beautiful work.

”

A Reformed Voice

Amid the Violence of War

H. de Koning

“You cannot help with a lunch box without God’s Word.” This is what Elder M. de Geus said during Israel Day about the work that the Board for Israel does in Moldova. “We can offer a helping hand to the poor, but also a study program for the pastors there.”

“Teaching and Maintaining” was the theme of Israel Day, which took place on Thursday, December 28, in the Tricht-Geldermalsen church building. Among others, Rev. Yuri Maerskiy from Moldova, Rev. M.L. Dekker from Nazareth in Israel, and Rev. Arcadiy Margulis from Ukraine spoke for an interested audience.

It is always shocking when we see the poverty in Moldova compared to the great abundance in the Netherlands, said Board member De Geus. “That should make us humble.” At the same time, it is a joy to be able to help people. “We notice the sincere gratitude.”

The bond that has developed has created greater opportunity to spread God’s Word. “We feel an enormous need for this.”

Theological education

That is why, just like in Ukraine, a theological training course was started from the Board, by the name of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS), where twelve(!) men started their studies this year. De Geus says: “We are greatly thankful for this.”

What does this study at the RTS entail? “The Board aims to give the preachers there a biblically sound foundation in pastoral care and preaching.” In concrete terms, this means that the preachers there are given tools for preparing a sermon. “We use, among other things, the book *The Mind of the Spirit* (*Zin en mening*) by Rev. Moerkerken.”

The work on RTS is intensive. The Board is currently looking for a volunteer for this. The teaching material is in Russian, and the students’ work is done in Russian, but communication with the students is also sometimes difficult. “Translations have to be made every time, which is intensive work.”

Source of hope

Board employee Mr. A.C.H. van



A day for young and old



From left to right: Rev. Y. Maerskiy, translator Mr. A. Kortleven, Board member Mr. M. de Geus, General Secretary Mr. J.J. de Jong



Board member Rev. M.H. Schot

Vuuren told something about the Makor HaTikva school in Jerusalem. Makor HaTikva means “Source of hope.” The school for Messianic Jews was founded in 1991. The school currently has 160 students aged 6–15 years with 22 teachers. “During the current war, the school

also gives shelter to evacuees, young children from the vicinity of the Gaza Strip who cannot now go to school.”

The school has cooperated with the Board for many years. What is special is that the Board has put the principal of the school, Yoel Russu, in touch with Rev. D. (David) Zadok, director of HaGefen (De Wijnstok), publisher of Reformed books.

Mr. Russu and Rev. Zadok came to the Netherlands at the end of 2022 and visited Reformed primary and secondary schools here. During their visit they said: “We really want this.” “They missed a lot,” Mr.

Van Vuuren said. “They lacked the equipment for teachers, and they lacked the materials. They asked for help from the Board. We then started a project group.”

In April 2023, this group visited the Makor HaTikva School in Jerusalem. During that time, agreements were made for translations and for the introduction of the project. “We have focused on the development of part of religious education.”

This means that a number of books will be translated into Hebrew. The series *Names and Facts*, as well as *The Pilgrim’s Progress Told and Explained for Children*, will be translated. This work costs a lot of money, €75,000. “That is quite high, but translating and supervising takes a lot of time and work.”



A large savings box for the Makor HaTikva School is unveiled together with children.

"Remember these beloved for the fathers' sakes," Van Vuuren told the visitors. "If the Lord grants it, the Word may come even more into these schools, and a Reformed sound may be heard. That is truly a privilege."

Video message

Because there is currently a war in Israel, Rev. M.L. Dekker, minister in Nazareth,

will not be there on Israel Day. He addressed those present with a video message. "Despite the war, the work can continue."

Rev. Dekker emphasized the importance of prayer. Pray for the soldiers, but also for the church in Nazareth. Because Rev. Dekker is leaving the congregation in Nazareth and hopes to return to the Netherlands, he called for prayers for a successor. "We hope and pray that there will be someone who can take my place."

"Pray also for the hostages who are still in captivity and in the dark tunnels of Hamas. May the light of the Lord Jesus shine in those tunnels, that the light of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may shine in their hearts. Pray for peace for Jerusalem."

Rev. A. Margulis delivered a video message from Ukraine. He said that there are difficult times at the moment, also because of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, he thanked for the support that his congregation "Beth Emet" (House of Truth) received from the Netherlands for the soup kitchens and the camps that could be organized for



There is a lot of interest in the children's program.



the children and refugees from the regions of Kherson and Kyiv. "It's undeserved grace."

Children's story

At the end of Israel Day, Eric Oosterwijk, member of the Board's education committee, told a story for the children about the Israeli soldier David. "All Israel relies on the army and David is part of this."

"It is not known how the story ends; Israel is still at war," Mr. Oosterwijk said. "David trusted the army and his gun, but you can't rely on that gun and the army. You can trust the Lord. The strongest weapon of all is prayer. We may expect much from

that. May there be peace in Israel and in your hearts."

Musical contribution

There were various musical contributions during Israel Day. Led by Marja van Bruchem, a children's choir sang about "The existence - the struggle - the prayer and the

redemption of Israel." Psalms 79:6 and 130:4 were sung, among others, but also Hatikvah, the Israeli national anthem. In the afternoon, there was a musical contribution from children's choir "De Kleine Lofstem" from Tricht-Geldermalsen. They sang, among other things: "Pray for peace" and "Hine Ma Tov."



Children's choir "De Kleine Lofstem" of the congregation of Tricht-Geldermalsen



AN OPENED DOOR

in Chisinau, Moldova

trip report

Last October, after a long absence, Board members Rev. A.P. Baaijens and Mr. M. de Geus visited Chisinau, the capital of Moldova, to visit the brothers of the congregations with which good contacts are maintained. After all the restrictions due to COVID-19 and then the tensions in the first year of the war in Ukraine, it is a reason to be thankful that we were able to meet again on site.

M. de Geus



In Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, COVID-19 has left deep wounds, including in both congregations, where dozens of members have died.

The soup kitchen work also had to be interrupted for a while. The sharply increased costs of living and energy are putting much pressure on the congregations and their pastors. Altogether, there are about 450 people who are wholly or partly Jewish, or who have strong bonds with the Jewish people.

The visitation trip was entirely devoted to starting a large group (of twelve men) who want to be educated in Reformed theology. Initially, six men registered in May of this year, but the group has now doubled! Equipped with a new laptop, they will be able to follow their studies via the Internet in the coming years.

It was a big surprise when on Tuesday, October 24, a real classroom was furnished with desks and chairs that had arrived from the

Netherlands via SOEGG just a week earlier, donated by a primary school in Renswoude. The remaining chairs, tables, cupboards, etc. are given a second life at a primary school in Chisinau, where they have been gratefully received.

Back in school

How would it go? We were looking forward to it with some tension, especially since the students speak no other language than Russian and sometimes Romanian. We were able to use the services of translator

Board member M. de Geus
with the Burlacu couple





Pastor Grigorii Burlacu in conversation with Board member M. de Geus

Marina Livitsky, who translated smoothly and was able to supplement and clarify from her own knowledge.

There they were, now eleven men because one had been hospitalized. Although they differ in age, background, and level of education, they have one thing in common, the urge to lead and assist their church members with Word and deed.

How our Board had been looking forward to this moment! Board member Mr. M. de Geus started the day with a meditation on Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye

are saved)."

An indispensable knowledge for every person, but especially for those who stretch out their hands and spread the Gospel. The origin and the way through which the triune God gives and works out salvation through the hand of Christ was put to the heart at the start of the study.

Writing and leafing through their Bibles, they respond, and we can detect something of approval, but it also appears that they hear new things and listen to things more in context. When Rev. A.P. Baaijens gave an introduction to the origins of Holy Scripture and the canon as the unchangeable testimony of God, it opened up a different perspective for them that leaves no room for their own time-related explanation.

What then about the conversion of our fellow man with and to whom we speak? It is believed that it is our power of persuasion that at least cooperates. What a wonder that conversion does not depend on this! "What should the attitude of a hearer be like?" was one question. Well, very simple. Faithfully, prayerfully, come under the Word and read that Word. And the seed we sow must be scriptural, because, most

importantly, that's what the Holy Spirit is pleased to work through.

May the Word go forth

This morning, Rev. Baaijens was given the opportunity to address the congregation, of which only a part was present, because of the time, to speak about the mystery of the Divine Trinity. This was requested by listeners during a trip in 2019. It is an extremely educational argument about a delicate matter, which culminates in the need to take a personal part in it. After all, the work of the triune God and personal knowledge of this is the foundation, but also the miracle of salvation.



Rev. A.P. Baaijens translated by Marina Livitsky

Afterwards, a student asked some questions to the listeners, and it appeared that they had listened well. The call was made to hear more about this in due course. If the Lord wishes to crown the simple work with His blessing, then the efforts will be repaid beyond measure, and He alone will receive the honour. As is customary locally, Pastor Yuri made a summary of what was heard in the classroom and also here in the church hall. He expressed his hearty approval.

To be continued, the Lord willing.



Classroom with RTS students

"A Feeling of Unconditional Support"

Noortje van der Slikke and A.C.H. van Vuuren

On Thursday evening, November 23, the Board for Israel, in collaboration with the Youth Association (Jeugdbond), organized an evening attended by approximately 150 Reformed young people and 15 Jewish peers. The preparation for this evening was special. One of the Jewish young people, Alyssa Pais, immediately wrote about it in Nieuw Israëlisch Weekblad (New Israeli Weekly): "Last week I was allowed to visit the headquarters of the Reformed congregations and for the first time, there was no need to defend myself. Instead of a demand for an explanation, I got a feeling of unconditional support for the Jewish community. Let's not get distracted looking at the screaming crowd, because soon we will have our backs to the people who want to support us." The tone was set.

“It is good to inform and encourage each other,” said Mr. A. Karens at the start of the evening. He opened by reading Psalm 46 and pointed to God’s protection and deliverance: “God is our refuge.”

Afterwards, there were short introductions from the Jewish young people from Amsterdam. They had come especially to Hoornbeeck College in Gouda to talk about how the war has turned their lives upside down since October 7.

Raona Italiander said: “On October 7, I stood at my best friend’s door to tell him ‘something very bad happened in Israel. I don’t know anything else.’ On October 7, I made a decision. Without knowing anything about the situation, I did not go to my synagogue that morning, simply for my own safety. On October 7, a nightmare started for us that we are still in today.”

The young people honestly shared that they now experience more fear than before. But amid those intense stories, there was also

recognition and hope. “Just like you, we are a small group,” said Michael van de Kamp, “but a close-knit group. I saw a bright future for myself in the Netherlands. From October 7 onwards, I felt lonely for the first time, because I felt little support in my environment. But when I see so many people who have come especially for us tonight, I actually find it bizarre that there are so many who want to support us. We Jews feel at home with you, and I will never forget that.”





Ari Wolff talked about the tension and struggle of living the Jewish way. "I think this sounds familiar to you too. You do not have the same norms and values as others around you. Oh, I am different from the rest; I live very differently." Ari wanted to share that it is about the question: "How am I going to live my life the way God wants it?"

Finally, the Reformed youth Jaap Jan Speksnijder spoke about the question of how Christian young people

should view Israel. He addressed the question of how we should relate to Israel in these times of increasing tensions. "Are you firmly behind Israel? Do you have a response if you hear an antisemitic statement on the street? Do we also defend our friends? In our society, love for God's covenant people seems to have disappeared like snow in the sun." Jaap-Jan also pointed to the promise of Genesis 3:15, where the only consolation lies. "That promise still stands."

After this reflective moment, there was a short break during which everyone could discuss this topic with each other. The group was then split into smaller groups, so that there was room to ask the Jewish young people questions about what they had said or simply

about their daily lives. The Christian young people were enthusiastic and listened curiously to the stories of the Jewish young people. The Board looks back on a valuable evening, in which meetings between both groups of young people provided a special experience for everyone who was there. This evening can therefore be seen as one of the ways in which we can support the Jewish people in their fight against antisemitism. At the top of the back wall of the auditorium of Hoornbeeck College is written: "They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations" (Psalm 72:5). That is the hope for all young people to whom the Word was opened this evening.



FOR THE CHILDREN

“Shalom,
boys and girls!”



WAR IN ISRAEL

Shalom is a greeting in Israel, just like we say hello or hi. However, *shalom* has a deeper meaning than saying hello. It means peace! What exactly is peace? Actually, peace has two meanings.

meaning

1

Peace means there is no war. That's what people wish for each other in Israel. You've probably heard that it's not *shalom* in Israel at the moment. It's not peace; it's war! It's been going on for three months now. What happened? On October 7, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel from Gaza. They killed many Israelis and also captured many people. These were all civilians who had no weapons to defend themselves. They were also children like you. How brutal and cowardly! Of course, Israel wanted to defend itself. You may think Israel must be angry and want to punish and kill everyone in Gaza. Then you're

wrong. Do you know how Israel wants to punish Hamas? It calls first before they bomb a building, so people can flee. No other army in the world is so polite to its enemies! Enemies who use hospitals to hide behind. Hamas has built rocket installations next to hospitals. Hamas digs tunnels underneath that they use to hold the hostages.



meaning

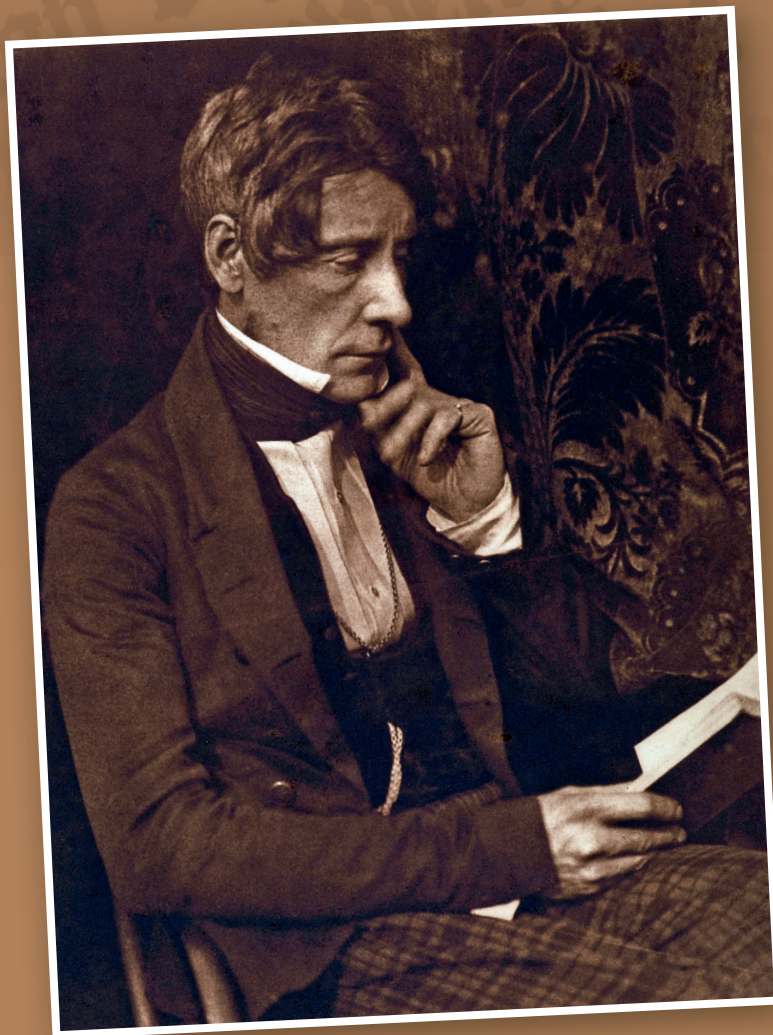
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But *shalom* means something else: Peace in your heart. The people in Israel also wish that to each other. How do you actually get peace in your heart? All people are sinful, ever since they are babies. So they do not live in peace with the Lord. When the Lord shows that to you, then you will grieve over that sin. You see that you no longer belong to the Lord. But by grace you can belong to the Lord again! Through the Lord Jesus. If He forgives your sin, you can live in peace with the Lord again. You will understand that you will be very grateful for this to the Lord.



How sad that there are still many Israelis who do not yet believe in the Lord Jesus. How then can they receive shalom? Peace in their hearts? We have just celebrated Christmas, the birth of the Lord Jesus. Will you pray that the Lord Jesus may also be born in the hearts of the Israelis, but also of the fighters of Hamas? And the residents of Gaza? And for yourself?

"RABBI" JOHN DUNCAN (1796-1870)





“Rabbi” John Duncan! Was he a Jewish rabbi? No, Rev. Duncan was a Scottish preacher, who was called “rabbi” because of his special appearance, his great knowledge, and his warm love for the Jewish people. On behalf of the Board for Israel, the English-language biography by David Brown, *Life of Rabbi Duncan*, has been translated into Hungarian. This translation was presented in two ministerial conferences of the Hungarian Church with the aim of arousing love for the Jewish people. The publication can be viewed digitally at www.bibleandbookministry.com.

Why this attention?

John Duncan was a preacher who brought scriptural and experiential truth. In addition, he developed a special love for the Jewish people. He worked among the Jews in Budapest for quite some time. And now, after so many years, with the support of our Board, Rev. I.L. Zöld is doing his work there.

A man

“Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be a man! Made so exalted, fallen so low, capable of being raised again so high!” Duncan once wrote. He was also a man, learned and often distracted. He learned that he could not do it with his learning. Duncan was much tormented and plagued by struggles and doubt, but he also learned to rest on the only Rock, Jesus Christ. Duncan was a great blessing to many of God’s children, especially the “beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (Romans 11:28). John Duncan was born in 1796 in Aberdeen, Scotland. He lost his mother early on. John did not want to become a shoemaker like his father and went to university. There atheism took root in his heart. Nevertheless, he continued to study theology. However, he could no longer settle into the spiritual climate of his father’s church and

moved to the Church of Scotland. The real cause was his enmity against the doctrines of free grace. After that, John falls into a terrible depth of doubt. During this period, Dr. Mearns is the means to turn John from his atheism. Duncan says: “I first saw clearly the existence of God in walking along the bridge at Aberdeen. It was a great discovery to me, and I stood in an ecstasy of joy.” However, that was it for the time being. Later, someone asked him, “How could you be admitted to office?” “Because I was a hypocrite,” he replied.

Conversion

At that time, John had a converted college friend, David Brown. He talked to him about his struggle to believe in the Deity and the atonement of Christ. David treated him fairly: “This devilish pride of ours must be cast down, and,” he said, “you must become a little child to be taught, or you will have no part in the kingdom of heaven.” David Brown gave him this counsel: “Submit only your soul to Christ in the Gospel.” In 1826, the Swiss preacher César Malan visited Scotland. In his preaching he urged a personal decision. His words were used to bring John Duncan to Christ’s feet as a poor sinner.

Exercises

“Rabbi” Duncan knew fourteen languages, but in the exercises of grace he had to confess his ignorance. He depended on the power of God’s Spirit. And he was given something of that through the Word: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Initially, John was assured of his portion in Christ. Later, many storms and waves of doubt passed over it. He had relied too much on his assurance and too little on the ministry of God’s Spirit. That became a lifelong struggle.

The Jewish people

In 1839, Duncan gave a lecture on the words: “Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 39:29). From God’s Word, he saw a rich future for the Jewish people. The impending conversion of the Jews was a subject of study and prayer in those days. The Church of Scotland commissioned four ministers to investigate conditions among Jews in Israel and on the European continent: Dr. David Black, Dr. Alexander Keith, Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, and Rev. Robert Murray M’Cheyne. They became acquainted with the lack of spirituality of the service of Islam and with the obstinate unbelief of the Jews.



New College, Edinburgh, where Duncan was Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages for 27 years

Yet there was hope based on God's Word. Their destination was not only Israel, but they also had to orientate themselves towards Eastern European countries. At first, they decided to ignore countries under the rule of the Roman Austrian emperor, because they expected opposition from him.

The way to Budapest

However, God's ways were different. Dr. Keith had fallen asleep on the back of a camel and fell off the beast onto the ground. The best option was that he would travel back via a shorter route. Together with Dr. Black, he would travel back to Western Europe via the Danube. Against all expectations, they traveled through the area of Austria-Hungary. Their steamboat called at the city of Pest and when they noticed that there was a large Jewish colony there, they decided to go ashore. However, Dr. Keith became seriously ill and suffered from high fevers. Dr. Black was very concerned about his friend, but eventually became ill himself. An English lady informed the Archduchess Maria Dorothea. Who can fathom God's wise policy in this? In her earlier days, Maria Dorothea was pleased with excess and impious pleasures. But God intervened, so that she received deep impressions of the transience of this life. She suffered deep trials, especially when her eldest son was

taken from her, and Satan cornered her. However, by grace, Maria Dorothea was given to know the Saviour from the Word of God. In all of that, one wish remained. For seven years, she prayed that the Lord would send her an ambassador of the cross to instruct her further in the way of salvation. The Lord showed that He heard the cry of His afflicted one. She heard about the two preachers and decided to go to the care hotel without notice. There she met the very weak Dr. Keith. He took his French Bible and read some passages to her. The Holy Spirit applied these words to her soul. Now, however, a door was also opened for missions among the Jews in the Roman cities on the Danube, Buda and Pest (which were united into Budapest in 1873). The Scottish Church, under the protection of the Archduke, was given permission to preach the Gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Duncan in Budapest

In 1840, the Church of Scotland decided to appoint John Duncan as the first missionary to the old covenant people in Buda and Pest. At that time, about 100 workers were working to connect Buda and Pest with a bridge. When Duncan arrived there, he saw with sadness the decline of the Reformed Church in Hungary. He therefore first focused his work on restoring the church. Jews also came under the audience

of "Rabbi" Duncan, whose appearance resembled a Jewish rabbi. They were amazed at his knowledge of the Hebrew language. They noticed that there was a completely different spirit in him. They did not understand, for there was a covering over their faces. Yet their curiosity was aroused, not so much by his learning as by the humble and godly conversation of him who brought the Word. Not by might or by force, but by God's Spirit, hearts of Jewish hearers were renewed. The time came when God began to work mightily among some Jews. They were caught in the Gospel net. Among them was the famous Israel (Alexander) Saphir, a learned Jew who was powerfully convinced of his lost and sinful existence and was brought by grace to the Saviour.

Love remained

Due to his health conditions, Duncan later had to leave Budapest. It hurt him, but he knew that the Lord would care for the flock. Some helpers stayed behind and the Lord continued to work. Duncan was given new duties in Scotland. His expectations for the old covenant people remained. "Salvation is of the Jews, and consequently we must all become Jews, which means entering into the Jewish heritage and tracing the channel through which all our great blessings have come to us." Duncan later visited Budapest. He remained involved in work among the Jews. John Duncan passed away on Thursday, February 24, 1870. His last words were: "There is a fountain filled with blood."

Sources: 'Life of Rabbi Duncan,' D. Brown and 'De Rotssteen van mijn hart,' L.J. van Valen

Women's Aid Association, De Kandelaar, Meliskerke

On September 14, 2023, Mr. A. Karens, presenter of the Board for Israel, was the speaker at our association evening. The theme was "Food in Biblical Times." What was used during the meal? What was Jacob's red lentil sauce made of? What can a Jew eat? Where does the name St. Peter's Fish come from? What happened at Passover? We were also shown a PowerPoint presentation, with photos of people, animals, trees, and plants in Israel. It was fascinating. At the end of the evening the speaker was far from finished.

On September 28, together with Mrs. M.A. Goedegebuur, teacher at Hoornbeeck College, we had some practical activities. We thought about kosher food and created Haman's ears and falafel together. First, the theory, for example, about the dietary laws from the books of Moses. The people of Israel had to adhere to this and because of this, among other things, became a separate people.

Of course, much was said about kosher food. We reflected on the festival of Purim, from Esther 9:28: "And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their

seed." People then baked all kinds of goodies and ate sweets during the commemoration, including "stuffed Haman's ears." We as a women's aid association also prepared them. To finish off, we made a falafel sandwich together. In Israel it is just "street food." It was a beautiful, educational, and very enjoyable evening.





The Lasting Influence of "Rabbi Duncan"

CONFERENCES IN ROMANIA AND HUNGARY

This is a new highlight, according to Rev. I.L. Zöld and the Board members who were present at the conferences last October. The conference was held in Oradea (Romania) on October 24 and in the Hungarian capital Budapest on October 25.

We previously organized a conference in Oradea. Many ethnic Hungarians live in the Transylvania region of Romania. The Hungarian Reformed Church is strongly represented here. The congregation in Oradea is active in many areas, including assistance to the

homeless and addicts. The meeting was held in the church center of one of the city's conservative congregations.

Serving

The bishop of the district opened by reading Matthew 20:28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for

many." He applied this to the attitude of a servant who may serve as an office-bearer in His church today. He warmly welcomed everyone, especially the speaker Prof. Kovacs, Rev. Zöld, and the Dutch Board members. About 50 participants were present.



Rev. I.L. Zöld presents David Brown's booklet about Duncan



Rev. I.L. Zöld with the Dutch delegation in front of the Scottish Mission building

The work among the Jews

In his lecture, Prof. Kovacs emphasized the importance of John Duncan, not only for the work among the Jews, but for the entire Hungarian Reformed Church. Under the influence of Duncan and other Scots, a revival took place in the church in the nineteenth century, the consequences of which are still noticeable. General secretary Mr. J.J. de Jong then reflected on the lessons we can learn from Duncan's work among the Jews.

After the joint lunch, Rev. Zöld talked about his work. The audience was very interested and asked many questions. Rev. Zöld himself also comes from Transylvania and for him, in his own words, it felt like coming home. We may note that work among Jews has been given a place in these congregations.

Budapest

This is also the case in Hungary and the capital, Budapest. Although the number of visitors was lower, the involvement was high. Moreover, the church authorities, such as the bishop, had taken note of the conference with interest in advance. Although he was unable to attend

due to a trip abroad, the bishop showed his sympathy. That is a fairly new development. The original skepticism from across the church seems to have been largely overcome. This is especially encouraging for Rev. Zöld. Prof. Kovacs also spoke during this conference. On behalf of the Board, Rev. A. Schot emphasized the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel among Israel.

Rich blessing

Looking back, we may note that Rev. Duncan had a far-reaching influence in Hungary. He only worked there for a few years, but his work has been richly blessed not only for Jewish people, but also for the Hungarian Church.

The Lord says to Abram in Genesis 12:3: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Do we see something of this when, after Duncan's labour among the Jews, there is a heyday in the Hungarian church? Let us, according to God's command, do good to Israel – and that is, first and foremost, preach the Gospel to them – and beg the Lord to bless our congregations as well.



Attentive audience during the conference



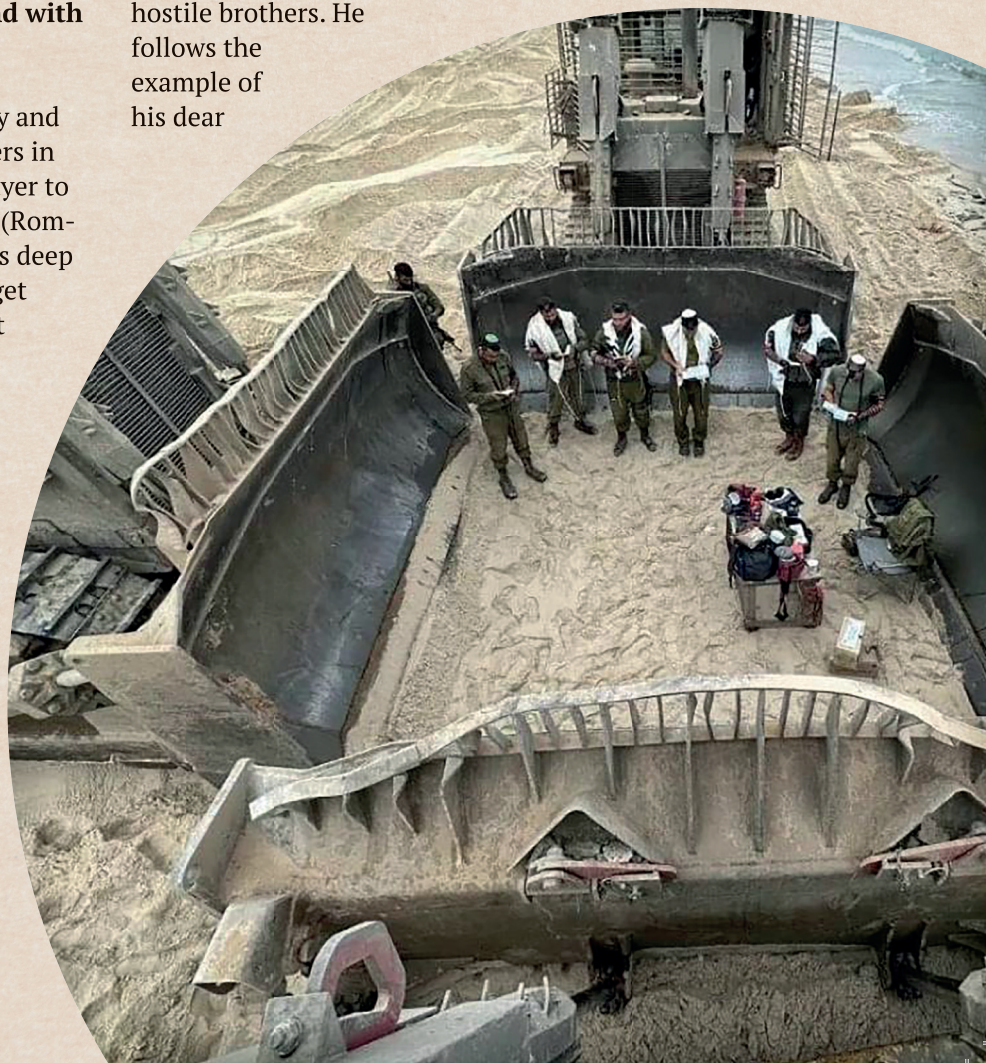
Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

“

Today is Saturday, December 2. If you are reading this column, the new year has already started. Everything I write now is then old news. That is why I want to focus in this column on the most important thing that Israel needs and that is prayer. During this war, much action was taken for Israel. There were moving sing-in evenings, youth evenings, panel discussions, much was collected, and wonderful amounts were raised. That is heartening. We stand with Israel! Unconditionally!

But... do you also pray for Israel? Personally and officially? Paul writes to the church members in Rome: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Romans 10:1). From these words we sense Paul’s deep love for the people of Israel. He cannot forget his brethren. There is no hatred in his heart because he is thrown out of the synagogue every time. Paul is not a bitter man when he repeatedly encounters the enmity of his own people against the one Name unto salvation. The Lord has taught Paul that His people are not cast away. “Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. ... God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew” (Romans 11:1-2).

Paul can testify with boldness that God’s sovereign good pleasure is the guarantee that the Church will be built from Jews and Gentiles. God did not cast away the people of Israel. Anyone who examines Romans 9 to 11 exegetically and prayerfully cannot help but come to the conclusion that God’s good pleasure continues to extend to Israel. And that is why Paul can bow his knees in all humility and love for the sake of his hostile brothers. He follows the example of his dear



Master: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

Dear Israel friends, there is a lot of confusion today about the war in Israel. Many who turn against Israel make the mistake of skipping over the horrific attack of October 7. The enormous one-sidedness of the vast majority of the Dutch media hurts. Time and time again, Israel is portrayed as the aggressor. And all this while the country has to defend itself against an Islamic terrorist organization that aims for the death of every Jew.

Do we realize this enough in our Reformed circles? The picture is not going to tilt in favour of the Palestinian cause for us, is it? Yes, but those poor Palestinians! Certainly, we sympathize with those people who have been so indoctrinated by a satanic regime. In our congregation there is much prayer for the Palestinian people. Also for Hamas, we ask the Lord to bring them to confusion and to overthrow them, or to convert them like the wicked King Manasseh. Would anything be too wonderful for the Lord?

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! How do we speak about Israel? Superciliously? Or from our prayer room? Because that makes a big difference. That does not mean that we blindly approve of everything the State of Israel does.



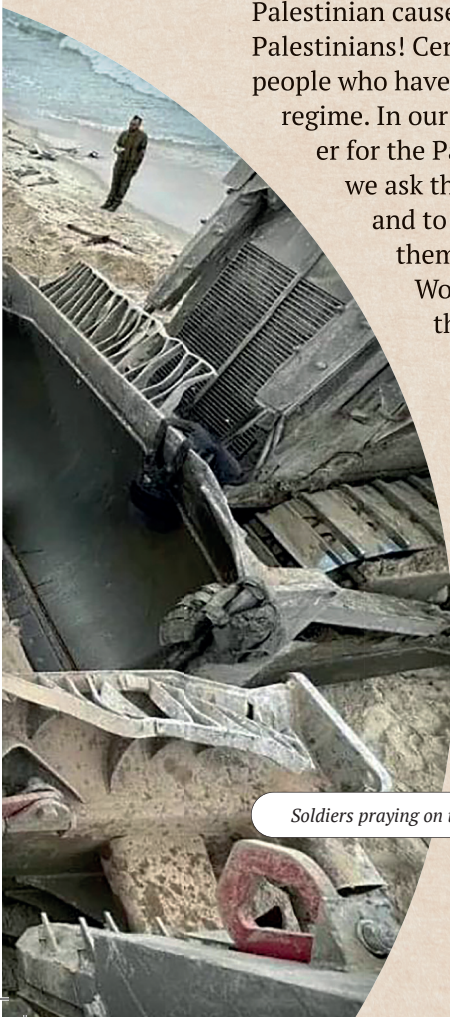
Rev. Dekker and his wife with some soldiers

The Lord is a God of justice and righteousness. But what is your prayer in this war? If you have come to love the God of Israel by grace, then does not love also burn in your heart for His people, as with Paul? Have we wept in love for Israel, as the Surety wept for the unbelief of Jerusalem? Have we struggled and prayed for her peace? Because in Psalm 122 it is not a recommendation, but a command from the Lord!

What a blessing it would be if our congregations would sigh and struggle for the peace of Jerusalem in domestic and official prayers as in Rev. R.M. M’Cheyne’s time in Scotland. “Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles” (Psalm 25:22). For the peace of the Prince of Peace will bring peace throughout the world!

Anyone who prays for the peace of Jerusalem actually also prays for the peace of the Palestinians.

”



Soldiers praying on the beach of Gaza



People Between Eternity and Loneliness

On the day I started writing this review, I read in the newspaper that Rev. P. den Butter died at the age of 85. This gives all the more weight to the republication of his book *Volk tussen eeuwigheid en eenzaamheid* (People between eternity and loneliness).

With this book, the Free Reformed Church minister in 1978 was one of the first within the Reformed denominations to draw attention to the lasting special position of the Jewish people in God's acts of salvation.

The revised edition was created with the thought that the message of this book still deserves to be heard. When I put the 1978 edition next to it, I was struck by the similarity. The Word has remained the same and so has the message of the book. After all, Rev. P. den Butter attempts to convey the message about the lasting special position of the Jewish people in an honest manner and with accurate exegesis. His deep respect for the Word is also reflected in this book. If I have to mention differences, they are mainly practical in nature. For example, the notes that were at the end of the chapter have been added to the text or placed at the bottom of the relevant pages. This improves readability. The described time conditions were also logically changed to our time.

The title of the book requires an explanation. What does the writer mean by "People between eternity and loneliness"?

At the end of the second chapter, the author returns to the title of the book. "Israel is the people of eternal election. Israel is also the people of great loneliness. It makes its way through this world between those two poles. Until God achieves His purpose. And that will certainly happen" (Quote from page 83).

Particularly at the end of the book, the author answers this question. "People between eternity and loneliness. That's Israel. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3) (Quote from page 292). This people will



dwelt alone (Numbers 23:9). It is located in that very special place. Can't be compared with any other people. Between eternity and loneliness. With all its consequences. But this is how God carries out His plans, and Israel has a great place in them. Israel serves to shape God's salvation. Despite all the loneliness, there is still reason for this peculiar people to sing. And they will sing when, looking back into the past and looking forward to the future, they discover nothing more than God's eternal goodness. Yes, then the old exhortation is understood: "O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 118:1).

Seven v's

This book has a nice layout. Using seven words, God's dealings with the people of Israel and the place of the people of Israel in the history of redemption are explained from God's Word. These words all start with a "v" in Dutch: election, persecution, blinding, expectation, gathering, redemption, fulfillment. In the 1978 edition, the seven v's are clearly linked to the seven-armed "menorah." In the 2023 edition, I could no longer find this connection, although the "menorah" is still on the cover of the book.

When it comes to the election of the people of Israel, the writer points out that God's Word presents Israel to us as the people of God's choice. That determines everything we say or think about this people. Because this people are God's people, they are still here. And the country is still there. And the bond between people and country is still there. And the calling is still there. And the promise is still there. And also the blessing and the threat: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12:3).

In the chapter about persecution, the writer points out how every time in the history of the existence of the people of Israel, attempts are made to exterminate the nation. It is surprising that no one has succeeded yet.

Replacement theology

In the third chapter, about the blindness, the writer explains that the rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah has been

the bankruptcy of Judaism. Blindness is a spirit of deep sleep, a covering on the heart. Such was and is the condition of Israel (page 124).

In chapter four, the writer thoroughly and honestly distances himself from "replacement theology" (the church in the place of the people of Israel). In my opinion, that is entirely correct.

In the chapter about the gathering of the people of Israel, the writer points to the land promise. Of this promise, not only the spiritual meaning remains, the heavenly Canaan that is promised to all the elect. Is it not true that the literal meaning was also fulfilled in the establishment of the State of Israel?

In the sixth chapter, the writer points out the interaction between the fullness of the Gentiles and the fullness of Israel. From Romans 11, he declares that God will care for Israel as a whole (see page 260).

The last chapter is about fulfillment. Here the writer says that we should not curiously inquire into the circumstances under which this conversion will take place. Let it suffice for us to know that the Spirit of grace and of supplications will be poured out on Israel.

I could only point out a few things. It is a very readable book, especially if you want to delve deeper into the place of the Jewish people in God's acts of salvation. Highly recommended.

Volk tussen eeuwigheid en eenzaamheid

Author: Rev. P. den Butter

Pages: 296

Publisher: De Banier, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands

ISBN: 9789087189310

Price: € 19.95

Ezra for Israel

The following is the first of three installments of the meditation on Isaiah 27 by Rev. J. De Kok during the "Crescendo Sings Psalms" sing-along concert.

We have just read Isaiah 27 together. At the end of the first verse, we read about "the dragon that was in the sea." What was that dragon?

It was a huge, cruel beast that lived in the sea. Sometimes you didn't see it, but you knew it was there. Suddenly it could appear, quickly crawling out of the water, with its scaly tail slapping the water so fiercely that it churned, scattering foam in all directions. With its enormous mouth full of razor-sharp teeth, it would grab its prey, dragging it along and devouring it. Children, it was a beast to be afraid of. Just imagine it to be the most terrible monster you can think of. In verse one that beast has a name. It is called Leviathan. Don't expect me to explain what kind of a creature it was, because in the Bible it is only described as having a mouth full of teeth, being covered with scales, and living mostly in the sea but sometimes also on land. It is pictured for us as a terrible monster that seizes and devours its prey.

However, Isaiah sees him; he sees that terrible monster in the sea of nations. And, what else does he see? He sees a sword, a large sword, a hardened sword, a strong sword. It is the sword of the LORD (written in capital letters). We just read it together: "In that day the LORD with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Isaiah sees the sword of God that kills the dragon. It is over and done with him; it is over. However, then Isaiah also sees that something else happens, something which we are going to experience in a small measure tonight.



What does Isaiah see? He sees that the people of Israel sing as if they are amid a vineyard of red wine. They sing by turns, which we are also going to do tonight. We have done that somewhat already, for after the men of Urk sang Psalm 32, we joined them in singing the last verse. But in a little while, the men will sing by themselves, and the women will also sing by themselves; they will sing by turns. Now, when Isaiah sees that monster (perhaps still twitching in its last death-convulsions), then beside it he sees the people of Israel singing by turns, singing their song of joy!

(to be continued, the Lord willing)

Did you miss the sing-along on January 19?

Scan here
to watch the concert
on our website.



Thank You!

Ezra for Israel is very pleased to inform our readers, that you have helped us obtain our yearly budget! We have sent an additional \$5000.00 to Rev. and Mrs. Dekker to help those in need in Nazareth.



Would you please consider supporting this worthy cause?

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Contact info:

Ezra For Israel
PO Box 178
Diamond City, AB T0K 0T0

Telephone: (403) 553-3582
Cell Phone: (403) 308-0083
Email Address: info@ezraforisrael.ca

Israel Magazine

Volume 28 • No. 1 • January 2024