



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 27, 2013

Plans Shaping up for 100-foot Jesus Statue in Muslim-Dominated Nazareth

A Christian resident of the Israeli city of Nazareth has come up with a plan to erect a 100-foot-tall statute of the community's most famous native son, Jesus Christ. The proposed monument, which would reportedly be similar to the one that towers over the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, is the idea of Bishara Shlayan, a merchant seaman who, reported [Fox News](#), "has seen the demographics of Nazareth change considerably in recent years, with the Christian community becoming a minority while the Muslim population has grown to 70 percent of the 80,000 residents of the northern Israeli town."



Shlayan, a Christian Arab, told Fox that "slowly, but surely, the Christian identity in Nazareth is beginning to disappear," pointing to signs that festoon the city's main square with decidedly non-Christian slogans such as "There is no power but Allah."

A group of Christians led by Shlayan has asked for permission from the Israeli government to erect the statue atop what is known locally as Mount Precipice, supposedly the locale, mentioned in the Gospel of Luke 4:29-30, where a mob of locals attempted to throw Jesus off a hill — but were prevented from doing so when Jesus, "passing through the midst of them, went his way."

While Shlayan has been busy raising funds for the project, Fox reported that he "recently got what may be even more important backing: Israel's Tourism Minister Uzi Landau gave him the green light, saying, 'Start it, and we will bless it.'"

The [Jerusalem Post](#) reported that Shlayan, who is considered something of a troublemaker by the local Muslim majority in and around Nazareth, "is also looking to found a Christian Arab political party, which he says is still being sorted out, but has settled on the name 'Bnei Habrit [Allies of the Covenant], the Christian party of Israel.'" According to the *Post* the party would lend its support to Israel as a Jewish state and lobby for national or military service for Israeli Arabs.

Fox News noted that the new party "has encouraged young Christians to join the Israeli military as a route to full integration into Israeli society. In 2013, the first year of their campaign, the number of Christians volunteering for military service has risen to 120 from 35, while the number volunteering for civilian national service has more than doubled to 500."

According to the U.S.-based Jewish news site [Algemeiner.com](#), among those who have joined with Shlayan in both the statue project and the Christian political party is high-profile Greek Orthodox priest Father Gabriel Nadaf, who said that "Christians who live here need to donate and to contribute, not just in talk, but with action.... We live here, and this country protects us, therefore we need to protect it."



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As Israeli tourism officials have obviously picked up on, the statue would be a draw for the millions of Christians who stream to the “Holy Land” from around the world. “Last year, some 3.5 million tourists visited Israel, of which 58 percent were Christians,” noted Fox News. “Mount Precipice is the starting pointing of the already popular Gospel Trail, a 37-mile pilgrim route that opened in 2011, winding down from the heights of Nazareth and ending at Capernaum, 680 feet below sea level, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Shlayan and others connected with the project anticipate churches and even international Christian groups to join in the effort, which has come together under an organization called Digei Habrit, or Flags of the Covenant.

Photo of Nazareth, Israel



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