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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Israelis celebrate Jerusalem Day near City Hall, waving national flags in an atmosphere of festivity and unity. Jerusalem, Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

Jerusalem: A Cup of Reeling

The city of Jerusalem plays a central role in God's plan of redemption of the whole creation. In essence, God promised to bring the twelve tribes of Israel home to the land, and to restore Jerusalem in the end times. The word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem (Zion). The nations that oppose His purposes will be judged. Those that align themselves with God's plans will prosper. In short, Jerusalem will become a 'cup of reeling' and an 'immovable rock' for the nations.

This past month two events took place that epitomise the prophetic times in which we are living. In Jerusalem, the Jewish people celebrated Jerusalem Day—a day of rejoicing at God's miraculous reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, reveling in God's glory. At around the same time, Europe was celebrating 'Europe Day'—a day of rejoicing in what man has done, reveling in its own glory. The hatred of the nations (this hatred is notably strongest in Europe) towards the restoration of Jerusalem

is proof that the coming of *Messiah* is close at hand.

In *Zechariah 8* God says "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her. I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."

This restoration of Jerusalem will provoke the nations to jealousy and anger. In *Zechariah 12* God says of the last days: "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves."

Since 1967 Jerusalem has become a 'cup of reeling'. In 1967 Jerusalem was restored to the Jewish people. Ever since, the nations have been gathering against it, trying to divide the city. They have become increasingly angry

and confused. In trying to 'move' Jerusalem—ie. take it away from the Jewish people—they are being increasingly injured by their efforts.

Antisemitism has spiked in Europe since Islamists led by Hamas attacked Jerusalem on 7 October 2023 ('Operation Al-Aqsa Flood'). It is the means by which the nations are being injured. Quite simply, irrational hatred of the Jews is destroying Europe.

Commentator Fiamma Nirenstein wrote: "Antisemitism has once again become omnipresent—a stain spreading across the continent just as it did in the Europe of the 1930s, a Europe dazzling in beauty, culture and tradition before the plague of Nazism and fascism consumed it. Today's Europe, confused by a mixture of distorted human-rights ideology and Third World-ist progressivism, applies an obvious double standard... antisemitism remains the structural weakness of European thought—its recurring condemnation."

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Patience Will Be Rewarded



Colophon

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Mission

Our mission is to bring Biblical understanding in the Church and among the nations concerning God's purposes for Israel and to promote comfort of Israel through prayer and action.

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Shavuot: The Case for Sovereignty

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

This edition is being published soon after the Jewish Festival of *Shavuot*—one of the biblically ordained three pilgrimage festivals when Jews were called to celebrate in Jerusalem. *Shavuot* marked the wheat harvest in the land of Israel (*Exodus 34:22*). It recalls the revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai. On *Passover*, the people of Israel were freed from their enslavement to the Egyptians; on *Shavuot*, they were given the *Torah* and became a nation committed to serving God.

How Can Freedom and Law Be Compatible?

The answer has to do with the concepts of responsibility and sovereignty. As Michael Oren recently explained, “freedom without law, without limits, and without people taking responsibility for their actions, is not freedom but anarchy. And law without decision-making, without the freedom to make choices and take responsibility for them, is totalitarianism. Ideally, freedom and the law are in constant balance, mutually reinforcing, and preserving. Maintaining that equilibrium, though, necessitates a framework. To equitably apply the law and exercise freedom, a people needs a state. That is the message of much of the *Torah* after *Exodus 20-23*. Take, for example, *Deuteronomy 16*, in which the Children of Israel are told: “*You must appoint judges and sheriffs for yourselves in all your cities that God, your God, is giving you, for each of your tribes. They must judge the people by rendering fair judgments... Justice, justice must you pursue, in order that you live and take possession of the land that God, your God, is giving you.*” ...

Freedom and responsibility are not only the products of sovereignty but also its prerequisites. For the Children of Israel,



Kibbutz members take part in traditional *Shavuot* Festival celebrations. | Photo: Flash90

gaining freedom from Egypt and accepting the Law were insufficient. To fully relish the first and effectively enforce the latter, they needed to inherit the land. They needed to cease wandering, sink indigenous roots, and begin to take responsibility. In short, they had to be Zionists.

Zionism is hated by many secular humanists in the West. Their obsession with freedom as a goal in itself causes them to be blind to the truth that, because of human frailty, we humans need God's laws in order to experience the blessing of freedom. Those who hate Zionism hate the idea that God gave His laws to the Jews. They hate God himself.

This is connected to the vexed question of sovereignty over Judea and Samaria, often called ‘the West Bank’. Since the fall of the Ottoman empire in WWI, there has been a vacuum of sovereignty. Since 1967, Israel has exercised sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem (including the Old City and its environs), but (under international

pressure) has refrained from exercising sovereignty over Judea and Samaria.

The result of a lack of sovereignty is the chaos and vicious circle of violence we witness in Judea and Samaria today.

The problem is that the world—and even many Jews—are obsessed with preventing the Jewish people from exercising sovereignty over Judea and Samaria (the so-called ‘occupied territories’). At the same time, we see Israel increasingly asserting a kind of sovereignty over Judea and Samaria.

But at the end of the day, the people in the land—Jews and non-Jews—will only experience true blessing when the Jewish people exercise true sovereignty over the land.

The festival of *Shavuot* reminds us all—both Israel and the nations—that Jerusalem will no longer be a “stone of contention” and a “cup of trembling” (*Zechariah 8 and 12*), but “a house of prayer for all nations” (*Isaiah 56*), and the source of blessing for the world.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for Israel's protection against threats from Iran. As long as the hostile regime remains in power, Iran poses a major threat to Israel. There is still enriched uranium present in Iran which could be used for a nuclear bomb. Pray that this material will be neutralised.
- Pray that Hezbollah's role in Lebanon will come to an end. Pray that Israel will be successful in defending itself against attacks by Hezbollah and that a proper buffer zone between Israel and Lebanon will be established.
- “*I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all My heart and soul.*” (*Jeremiah 32:41*) Thank God that, even long before we were here, He promised that He would plant His people Israel in His land. Thank God that everything is in His hands.

Israel and the Nations

- Violent, hate-filled protests against Israel are spreading in many countries, with disturbing slogans and the glorification of violence. Pray for Israel's protection against this rising spirit of hatred and lies.
- “*The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day, there will be one Lord, and His name will be the only name*” (*Zechariah 14:9*). Pray that God's Name will be the focus of Israel, the Church, and the world.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks to all Christians worldwide who support Israel. Pray that the group of Christians who stand with Israel will continue to grow and that the connection between Jews and Christians will become stronger.
- Pray for a blessing on the work of those who are involved in the ministry of Christians for Israel worldwide.

For daily Prayer Points, go to: www.c4israel.org.nz

Iran's IRGC Takes Over Real Power From the Supreme Leader

■ Yoni Ben Menachem
JNS

Mojtaba Khamenei's elevation has sharply limited his authority, rendering his role largely symbolic.

Israel's intelligence agencies have assembled a comprehensive assessment of who truly controls Iran, senior security officials say. Evidently, Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei remains hidden at an undisclosed location, known only to a select few, due to fears he could be targeted by Israel.

Though seriously wounded, his mental faculties are intact, and he receives regular updates.

The killing of his father, Ali Khamenei, the previous supreme leader, occurred on 28 February, the first day of the current war, along with the deaths of other senior regime figures. This event led to a profound transformation in Iran's power structure.

Iran issues written statements in the name of Mojtaba, without images or recordings.

Defence Minister Israel Katz stated that Israel may soon target Mojtaba. On 23 April, after a security briefing, Katz said, "We await a US green light to eliminate the Khamenei dynasty and its successors."



Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops march through the streets during a public rally. | Photo: Shutterstock

dominant influence, in a system increasingly characterised by the absence of a clear, decisive authority.

Mojtaba Khamenei, the new supreme leader, remains at the top of the system. He was elevated by the Assembly of Experts, largely under pressure from IRGC commanders, led by Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi. Senior security officials say he owes his appointment to the Revolutionary Guards and has effectively become a 'rubber stamp',

shifting from a religious-theocratic model to rule by the security establishment, led by the IRGC, possibly meaning a harsher foreign policy and tighter domestic control.

A senior official said, "At this rate, Iran could become like North Korea."

Despite US and Israeli pressure, Iran's regime shows no signs of collapse.

Instead, an internal consensus has formed: avoid full-scale war, keep

providing legitimacy for their decisions. His responsibilities involve approving, not formulating, military decisions.

Real power lies with a hardline group operating through the Supreme National Security Council and the IRGC, which now shapes Iran's military and political direction.

This shift in power centres has slowed and complicated Iran's decision-making process. Leadership is fragmented, and responses to US-Iran negotiations can take days.

IRGC Commander Vahidi plays a central role in strategic decision-making, including ceasefire arrangements and negotiations. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf is sidelined, while Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi acts mainly as a limited envoy.

Israeli intelligence assesses Iran is

leverage—especially the Strait of Hormuz—and seek to exit the crisis stronger.

In conclusion, Iran's political system is marked by a shift; while formal authority rests with the supreme leader, real power now resides with the security establishment. The IRGC is not just an executive arm but the central force directing the country, with control concentrated among the military-security elite.

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Yoni Ben Menachem, a veteran Arab affairs and diplomatic commentator for Israel Radio and Television, is a senior Middle East analyst for the Jerusalem Center. He served as director general and chief editor of the Israel Broadcasting Authority.

Short News

Israel Overtakes the Diaspora



A new report by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research indicates that for the first time in modern history, Israel could become the home of the majority of Jews worldwide within the next decade. The global Jewish population currently stands at around 15.8 million. Of these, roughly 49% already live in Israel. While Jewish communities in the Diaspora are shrinking or stagnating, Israel's population continues to grow steadily. The main driver is the country's high birth rate. | Photo: Flashgo

Jerusalem Has 1.063 Million Residents

Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is the largest city in the country, and on Jerusalem Day, its number of residents is estimated at 1.063 million. This is according to the data released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. At the end of 2025, 56.6% of Jerusalem's residents were Jews and others, 38.4% Arabs, and 4.9% foreigners.

Jerusalem Honours Residents

The Jerusalem Municipality honoured 12 residents with the 2026 Yakir Yerushalayim ("Worthy Citizen of Jerusalem") award — the city's highest honour — at a ceremony ahead of Jerusalem Day celebrations. Established after the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, the award recognises residents aged 65 and over for exceptional long-term contributions to the city. Mayor Moshe Lion said the recipients reflected "the human, moral and professional mosaic of Jerusalem."

AI Responses Shift Across Borders

An Israeli study comparing identical prompts submitted from Israel, the United States, Turkey, and Spain found notable differences in ChatGPT's responses. The prompts addressed topics including Israel's actions in Gaza, international law, self-defense, occupation, and alleged war crimes. Although the core information was similar, the tone, framing, and emphasis varied by language and geographic location.

Iran's leadership has undergone a dramatic transformation since Ali Khamenei's death, with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps now emerging as the dominant force behind political and military decision-making, sidelining the supreme leader and steering the regime toward a harsher military-security model of rule.

Now, after two months of war against the United States and Israel, Iran is no longer governed by a single leader wielding undisputed authority. This marks a break from the political tradition that has prevailed since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, a shift that could lead Tehran to adopt more hardline positions as it weighs the possibility of reaching an agreement with Washington.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the political system revolved around the figure of the supreme leader, who held ultimate authority over all major decisions.

That reality has now fundamentally changed. Iran has entered a phase in which the centre of power has shifted to the Supreme National Security Council, where commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps hold

UAE, Saudi Covert Strikes on Iran

■ JNS Staff

The United Arab Emirates reportedly conducted direct military strikes against Iran in April, targeting a refinery on Lavan Island in the Persian Gulf. The attack sparked a major fire and crippled the facility's operations, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Iran admitted at the time that the refinery had been hit and launched missile and drone strikes against the UAE and Kuwait in retaliation, *the Journal* said.

Although the attack took place around the time of the ceasefire, the United States didn't mind as it welcomed active participation by the UAE, one source told *the Journal*.

Speculation about the UAE's direct involvement in the conflict has intensified since mid-March, when footage emerged of an unidentified fighter jet that didn't belong to the United States or Israel operating over Iran.

The Emiratis have a capable air force, including French Mirage fighters, advanced F-16 jets and Chinese Wing Loong drones, US Air Force Lieutenant General Dave Deptula who planned the



US President Donald Trump is greeted by UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, 15 May 2025. | Photo: Shutterstock.

air campaign for Desert Storm, told *the Journal*.

"They are very strong in terms of precision strike, air defence, airborne surveillance, refueling and logistics," said Deptula. "If you have that capable of an air force, why would you sit back

and absorb attacks from Iran without responding?"

Israel recently added to the UAE's capabilities, sending an Iron Dome system with attendant troops to help protect the country, marking the first time Israel had sent an air defence

battery to another country.

Its strong military has made the UAE the most combative of the Gulf States. It lobbied forcefully for a UN Security Council Resolution to open the Strait of Hormuz. On 5 May, the State Department announced it was proposing such a resolution.

Saudi Arabia also launched covert retaliatory attacks against Iran, *Reuters* reported recently, citing two Western officials briefed on the matter and two Iranian officials.

The attacks by the Royal Saudi Air Force are reportedly the first time that Riyadh has targeted the Islamic regime militarily on its soil and are estimated by the Western officials to have taken place in late March (the recent US-Israeli joint operation was active from 28 February to 8 April). One official said that they were "tit-for-tat strikes in retaliation for when Saudi (Arabia) was hit."

Saudi Arabia warned Iran in advance of retaliatory strikes and followed with intensive diplomacy and threats of further action, prompting both sides to reach an informal understanding to deescalate, according to the Iranian and Western officials.

Trump: Iranian Response "Totally Unacceptable"

■ JNS Staff

Tehran "has been playing games with the United States, and the rest of the world, for 47 years (delay, delay, delay)," he said.

(11 May 2026). The Iranian regime's response to the latest US proposal to end hostilities was "totally unacceptable," US President Donald Trump said.

■ Trump accuses Tehran of 'playing games' after rejecting US proposal.

"I have just read the response from Iran's so-called 'representatives.' I don't like it—totally unacceptable!" Trump wrote in a post on his *Truth Social* platform.

Iran's state-run *IRNA* news agency reported earlier that Tehran's response to Washington's plan had been submitted to Pakistani mediators.

According to the regime outlet, Iran's response sought to end "the war in the region." Tehran's proposal conditions any future understandings with Washington on reaching a ceasefire with Hezbollah in

Lebanon and lifting restrictions on Iranian oil exports, according to separate reports in Arab media.

In another post, Trump had accused the regime of "playing games with the United States," warning the mullahs they would be "laughing no longer."

"For 47 years the Iranians have been 'tapping' us along, keeping us waiting,

killing our people with their roadside bombs, destroying protests, and recently wiping out 42,000 innocent, unarmed protesters, and laughing at our now great again country," Trump wrote on his *Truth Social*.

The Islamic Republic "has been playing games with the United States, and the rest of the world, for 47 years (delay, delay, delay!)," he charged.

According to Trump, the regime "finally hit pay dirt" when Barack Obama became president in 2009 and pushed

through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which lifted sanctions in return for limitations on Tehran's nuclear programme.

"He was not only good to them, he was great, actually going to their side, jettisoning Israel, and all other allies, and giving Iran a major and very powerful new lease on life. Hundreds of billions of dollars, and 1.7 billion dollars in green cash, flown into Tehran, was handed to them on a silver platter," he said. Trump withdrew from the deal in May 2018.

The mullahs "had never seen money like this, and never will again," the president vowed.

Trump warned that 'Operation Project Freedom' in the Strait of Hormuz could be resumed and expanded if Tehran doesn't agree to a deal to end the war.

"We'll go a different route if everything doesn't get signed up, buttoned up," Trump told reporters at the White House. "We may go back to 'Project Freedom' if things don't happen, but it'll

be 'Project Freedom Plus,' meaning 'Project Freedom' plus other things."

Trump launched 'Operation Project Freedom' on 4 May to safeguard merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz following a series of Iranian attacks in the vital waterway. Tehran has largely blocked the strait since the start of the war, triggering a spike in global fuel prices and putting pressure on financial markets.

The operation was suspended two days after its launch at the request of Pakistan, which is mediating talks with Tehran.

Trump's most recent threat followed an exchange of fire between US and Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz, fueling uncertainty over the temporary ceasefire that Washington claims remains in place.

Trump told journalists that he would "see what happens" with the negotiations, adding: "Look, they have no military, they have not a lot left."

"We'll find out soon enough," the president said.

The Reunification of Jerusalem

■ Canaan Lidor

Israeli-born Journalist

As the Jewish holidays of 1967 came to an end, Boris Shapiro decided to celebrate them in a way that had been impossible for centuries: as a citizen of a Jewish state in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Shapiro, an Israeli from present-day Azerbaijan, was 17 at the time. He wanted to celebrate Simchat Torah on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, captured by Israel from Jordan just months earlier during the Six-Day War.

The trip was exciting and historic, Shapiro recalls, but he found the experience spiritually unsatisfying. "There was euphoria and curiosity, but it was mainly about buying knickknacks from Arab sellers. I felt little reverence around me. The synagogue service was uninspiring, even compared to what I remembered from our synagogue in Baku," he says.

Religious Revival

Shapiro's impressions of Jerusalem after reunification are shared by many Israelis of his generation. They reflect the change that Israeli society has undergone since then: a shift away from its secular-socialist founding principles toward greater religious engagement and recognition.

On Jerusalem Day, which began this year on the evening of 14 May, thousands of people marched through the Old City carrying Israeli flags during the so-called Flag Dance. Jerusalem Day is celebrated annually on the 28th day of the Hebrew month of *Iyyar*, the day on which Israel took the eastern part of the city and reunited it with West Jerusalem. Both the Flag Dance—which once began as a modest nightly walk by a handful of Jews—and other new traditions are part of a broader development in which Jerusalem gradually became the center of a religious revival in Israeli society, especially since the 1990s.

Before that, the Jewish autumn festivals—*Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot* and *Simchat Torah*—only resulted in a limited increase in the number of visitors to the Western Wall, a remnant of the Jewish temple. Today, the holidays attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, not only during those periods—with up to fourteen large prayer services—but also during *Passover*, *Hanukkah* and *Shavuot*. Israel's two chief rabbis also organise mass prayers at the Western Wall on special occasions, including a 2023 prayer gathering for Israelis held hostage by Hamas.

In addition, there is the pilgrimage to the Temple Mount itself—the holiest site in Judaism. Where the place was once strictly forbidden territory for Jewish prayers and religious gatherings, the situation has changed dramatically under the current government. In 2025, more



The Flag March on Jerusalem Day. | Photo: Flash90

than 80,000 Jews visited the Temple Mount: 30% more than the year before and more than twice as many as in 2021. Jews are now allowed to pray, sing, bow and even completely prostrate themselves—an act of humility called *hishtachavah* in Hebrew. Just a few years ago, even speaking Hebrew could be grounds for removal by the *Waqf*, the Islamic religious authority that effectively exercised control over the area until 2023.

Emotion and Great Joy

For religious Jews, the reunification of Jerusalem was obviously a very different experience. Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, now 91 years old, visited the Wailing Wall six days after the liberation of the Old City, during *Shavuot*—another important Jewish holiday. "Masses of people came from all over the country. We crowded at the entrance. Many cried with emotion," Nebenzahl recalls. "The joy was enormous. I went in and prayed the *Musaf* prayer [an additional prayer for holidays and special occasions]. That prayer is clear in my mind to this day."

The joy, he added, "was twofold: first because we had liberated the Temple Mount, and then because we had been saved from our enemies." He was referring to the great fear of a destructive Arab invasion in the days before Israel's pre-emptive strike that began the Six-Day War.

An estimated 200,000 Jews visited Jerusalem's Old City during *Shavuot* in 1967. Yet it took decades for the traditional *Shavuot* march through the Old City—held a few weeks after Jerusalem Day—to become an annual tradition. Today, tens of thousands fill the Old City's alleys in a procession reminiscent of that first 1967 pilgrimage. Shapiro visited the Temple Mount in 1967, shortly before Israel handed over control to the *Waqf*, in an effort to accommodate the local Arab population

and the broader Muslim world. He remembers seeing the Foundation Stone, which, according to Jewish tradition, marks the spot where Abraham bound his son Isaac—a central story in both Judaism and Christianity about obedience and faith.

Shapiro, father of one son and grandfather of three, has become more religious over the years. On every visit to Israel, he travels to the Old City of Jerusalem. "I remember visiting the Temple Mount and then descending to see the Foundation Stone. I took it in, but maybe I was too young to really understand the meaning. Perhaps Israel as a society was also too young at the time to fully realise the miracle of our return to this place."

Reunification & Reconstruction

Jerusalem, especially the eastern part of the city, has many Arab residents and is often the scene of terrorist attacks. Much of the Arab world views it as the future capital of a Palestinian state, while many countries recognise it as Israel's capital. Yet Shapiro believes that Israel will be able to essence has succeeded in reuniting the city. He points to the relatively peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs, despite the ongoing tensions.

"Especially since it became possible again to walk on the Temple Mount, I would say that we have Jerusalem both symbolically and practically reunited," says Shapiro. "But it has taken time for many of us to get the full meaning of it."

Rabbi Nebenzahl says that it is a source of joy and gratitude to be able to visit and visit the Old City of Jerusalem. living. "But that is precisely why it hurts all the more that the Jewish temple is still has always not been rebuilt." At the same time, he adds, "rejoice those who mourn the destruction of the temple also remember that Jerusalem is being rebuilt all around us."

Short News

Recovery in the Gaza Envelope



Most residents of the Israeli border area with Gaza who were evacuated following the 7 October massacre and the subsequent war against Hamas have now returned to their homes, representing around 92% of the original population. In addition, approximately 3,000 new residents have moved to the area. Significant investment and the development of new infrastructure have played a central role in the region's recovery and renewal. | Photo: Flash90

Not Enough Rockets

According to *Palestinian Media Watch*, the Palestinian Authority's official daily newspaper criticised Iran for not launching more rockets at Israel during the war that began on 7 October 2023, arguing that Hamas had been left to fight alone. The paper claimed that had Iran not 'abandoned' Hamas, the outcome of the war would have been different.

Rare Roman-era Archaeological Find



An 8-year-old Israeli boy discovered a rare 1,700-year-old statuette fragment dating to the Roman period while hiking with his family in the Ramon Crater in the Negev Desert. The fragment, measuring about six by six centimeters, depicts part of a human figure draped in flowing folds of fabric resembling a cloak. Archaeologists date it to approximately 1,700 years ago. Although the fragment lacks identifying marks, however archaeologists believe it may depict the Roman god Jupiter or Zeus-Dushara, a Nabatean deity associated with Zeus. The Ramon Crater lay along the ancient Spice Route linking southern Arabia and the Far East with Mediterranean ports. | Photo: Flash90



The *Bnei Menashe* Return to Zion



The India–Israel journey in pictures. | Photos: Jewish Agency for Israel

On Thursday, 23 April, a flight from India arrived at Ben Gurion Airport carrying members of the *Bnei Menashe* tribe on their long-awaited journey home to Israel. After years of historical and religious research, Israel's Chief Rabbi officially recognised the *Bnei Menashe* as Jewish in 2005, although some members of the community had already emigrated to Israel before then. Today, approximately 6,000 *Bnei Menashe* still remain in India, and the current plan is to bring them to Israel over the next five years—around 1,200 people each year.

Frank van Oordt of C4I Netherlands travelled alongside 240 members of the *Bnei Menashe* community from India to Israel. Reflecting on the journey, he shared how deeply moving their conversations were. “Both young and old spoke about one great desire: to celebrate the *Sabbath* freely, observe the biblical feasts, and live in the land of their ancestors. At the same time, there is a strong determination to contribute to Israeli society—to learn Hebrew, work, and serve their new homeland.”

The journey itself was emotional and demanding. Leaving behind homes, possessions, and familiar surroundings is not easy. Yet throughout the trip, Frank witnessed remarkable determination and hope among the travellers. “Before departure, we were able to take some of the young people shopping for a few essentials—new shoes, a neat polo shirt, a power bank. Small gestures, but for them they meant so much.”

Background of the *Bnei Menashe*

The *Bnei Menashe*—meaning ‘Sons of *Manasseh*’—are believed to be descendants of the biblical tribe of *Manasseh*, one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. For

generations, they lived in the remote northeastern region of India near the borders of Myanmar and Bangladesh. Despite centuries of separation from the Jewish world, many of their customs remained remarkably rooted in biblical tradition. They observed the *Sabbath*, kept *kosher* dietary practices, and celebrated biblical festivals.



After careful investigation into their history and traditions, Israeli religious authorities formally recognised them as Jewish in 2005. Since then, their longing for Zion—the land of their forefathers—has only grown stronger.

A Warm Welcome in Israel

Frank van Oordt comments about the moment of arrival: “Upon arriving in Israel, the group received a heartfelt welcome. Tears of joy, embraces, and singing the Israeli anthem *Hatikvah*. The name of this *Aliyah* operation is Wings of Dawn. The words of Psalm 139 came to life: “God has preserved them to this day and is bringing them back from the land of the dawn, bringing them home.”

“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.” (Psalm 139:9-10)

The group was welcomed at the airport by the Minister of Absorption, and the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Doron Almog. The mayor of Nof HaGalil, near Nazareth, also extended a warm welcome to this group of *Bnei Menashe* from India. Future groups are also expected to settle in Kiryat Gat. | Photos: Omri Dagan/Jewish Agency for Israel

Please Help!

There are still six thousand *Bnei Menashe* waiting. Your support will enable them to make this journey too. Please help them make this long journey—covering thousands of kilometres and lasting several days—to finally be home! To support the *Bnei Menashe*, please complete the donation coupon on the back page.





Origin of the Jewish population in Israel

The Jewish population in Israel has roots across the globe. Through successive waves of migration, Jews from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Ethiopia, the Americas and other regions came together to build a shared national home.

Top 10 countries of origin (since 1948)

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. 🇷🇺 Former Soviet Union | 6. 🇪🇹 Ethiopia |
| 2. 🇲🇦 Morocco | 7. 🇺🇸 USA |
| 3. 🇮🇶 Iraq | 8. 🇫🇷 France |
| 4. 🇷🇴 Romania | 9. 🇦🇷 Argentina |
| 5. 🇵🇱 Poland | 10. 🇻🇪 Yemen |

Timeline migration waves

1948-1960
A massive influx from Iraq, Yemen, Morocco and Egypt

1960-1980
Influx from North Africa and the Middle East

1980-present
Ethiopian Jews and smaller groups from Western countries

1990s
Around one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union

Today
The vast majority is born in Israel

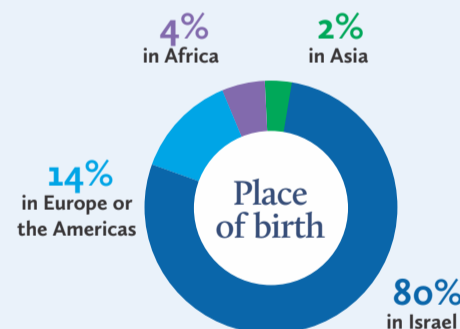
1880-1948
Migration from Eastern Europe and Russia

Europe ± 45%
Ashkenazi Jews mainly Eastern and Central Europe

Former Soviet Union
large wave of immigration in the nineties

Americas ± 3-5%
Constant inflow including the US, Argentina and Brazil

Spain & Portugal ± 15%
Sephardic Jews
Later spread across several countries



Middle East & North Africa ± 15%
Mizrachi Jews
Including Iraq, Iran, Morocco and Yemen

Some facts: ① Jews in Israel come from more than a hundred countries. ② Almost half of all Jews worldwide live in Israel.

Figures are indicative; origin lines partially overlap.



Once in Israel people receive their residence permit.



Scapegoats in the Biblical Land

■ Leon Meijer

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
Netherlands

A week of travelling through Judea and Samaria—speaking to dozens of Israeli settlers—reveals that ‘500,000 violent settlers’ is a myth, and that the truth is both more nuanced and more troubling.

They are portrayed as fanatics, arsonists, half a million people who wake up every morning eager to terrorise their Arab neighbours. In the Western media, the word ‘settler’ has become virtually synonymous with ‘violent extremist.’ But is that picture accurate? After spending a full week travelling extensively through Judea and Samaria—the Biblical names for what the media calls the West Bank—and speaking to dozens of Israeli settlers across the region, my answer is unequivocal: no.

More than 500,000 Jews live in the West Bank alongside an estimated 3 million Palestinians. They live separately—in their own towns and villages—but share the same roads, petrol stations, and roadside markets. No other conflict zone on earth attracts comparable media attention, driven in no small part by the remarkable imbalance of United Nations resolutions directed at Israel compared to every other country combined.

The Oslo Accords and the Question of Legality

Those who declare the Jewish settlements flatly ‘illegal’ overlook a crucial fact. The Oslo Accords of 1993, signed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, explicitly agreed that no final decision would be made on the status of the Jewish communities in these areas. Nor did those accords prohibit the natural growth of existing settlements. Families grow, children reach adulthood and need homes—that is no different in Judea and Samaria from anywhere else in the world.

Beyond the headlines, Judea and Samaria tells a far more nuanced story.

The International Court of Justice recently ruled that Jews may not live on the West Bank at all. Yet that ruling sits in direct tension with the Oslo Accords, which are themselves part of international law. It is deeply troubling when an international court sets aside a binding treaty, signed by both parties, in favour of rules it finds more convenient. For a Christian reader familiar with Scripture, there is an added dimension: Judea and Samaria are, by their very names, the heartland of the land promised to the people of Israel—a reality that rarely receives a fair hearing in diplomatic forums.



One of many encounters in Judea and Samaria. | Photo: Dr Leon Meijer

Three Hundred Troublemakers, Half a Million Scapegoats

Let me be clear: the violence is real. That must be stated honestly. A group of roughly three hundred young men—drawn from settlements, but also from cities such as Tel Aviv—does indeed set fire to cars and occasionally to houses belonging to Arabs. They are troubled young people who, in another country, would likely find their outlet in the hooligan fringe of an infamous football club. In Israel, they channel their aggression into raiding Arab villages in Judea and Samaria. They are known as the Hilltop Youth.

What the media consistently fail to report is the response of the other 499,700 residents. In the course of my week travelling through the region and speaking to dozens of settlers—farmers, teachers, security coordinators, mothers, young professionals—I did not meet a single person who defended or excused this violence. Every one of them condemned it in the strongest possible

terms. Soraya, a resident of a settlement near Ramallah, is personally involved in programmes designed to give these young men constructive alternatives. “We are being identified with this group, while we distance ourselves from them as clearly as we possibly can,” she told me. “This does nothing but harm us.” The settlers also understand the context. Many of these young men are children of fathers who spend months at a time on reserve duty in Gaza or along other frontlines. While their mothers have a hard time taking care of their younger siblings, they are frightened, bored, and vulnerable—and

are sometimes deliberately exploited by far-right Israeli figures who encourage them to commit acts of violence. The Israeli Defence Forces and the Police are struggling to contain the problem. Dealing with this small group demands scarce military resources at a time when active combat is ongoing on multiple fronts, and these same youths are destroying the very security infrastructure the army has installed to protect the settlements from terrorist infiltration. There is a further legal obstacle that compounds the frustration: under the rule of law, security forces cannot arrest a person simply because they suspect he may cause trouble. An individual can only be apprehended once a crime has actually been committed—caught in the act, in *flagrante delicto*. You cannot detain someone for what he might do. That principle, fundamental to any just legal system, means that known agitators cannot be stopped before they strike, leaving the army and police perpetually one step behind.

Coffee with the Neighbour

The reality on the ground is far more complex than the simple narrative of oppressor and oppressed. A security coordinator at one settlement told me he regularly receives phone calls from Arab neighbours warning him when they know someone is planning to infiltrate the settlement. “I have coffee with them on a regular basis,” he said with a shrug. In several areas I visited, the day-to-day relationship between Jewish and Arab communities was, by any reasonable measure, functional and at times genuinely cordial.

But there are also places where tensions run high—and not always through the fault of the settlers. In recent years, increasing numbers of Arab shepherds have encamped around isolated Jewish

settlements, deliberately intimidating the Jewish residents. Their tactics are varied and calculated: they drive their flocks right up to the perimeter fence, photograph the layout of the settlement and its security infrastructure, and have been known to damage fences, cameras and other security systems. This is not casual trespass—it is systematic harassment, and residents described it to me as a daily source of stress and fear. These shepherds are sometimes supported by Western volunteers who arrive under the banner of solidarity but whose actions go well beyond peaceful protest. On more than one occasion, those volunteers were caught feeding dates laced with rat poison to the settlement’s cattle. Meanwhile, a striking double standard exists in construction policy: Jewish villages require explicit permission from the Israeli authorities for any new building, while in some Arab villages in Area C—where Israel holds civil and security authority—houses have been built without any permit, and in some cases funded with European taxpayers’ money. The Israeli Supreme Court has repeatedly ordered these structures demolished, but the Israeli government has so far declined to act, apparently unwilling to endure the international backlash that would follow.

Correcting a Distorted Picture

Can I claim to offer a fully objective picture after one week? No—and I do not believe anyone can, because we are always dependent on the stories people choose to tell. But I pressed beyond the first answer, refused easy summaries, and kept asking until the picture became clearer.

What I know is this: the narrative that there are 500,000 violent settlers is a falsehood. It is a caricature that reduces half a million men, women and children—farmers, teachers, security coordinators, and neighbours who drink coffee with Arabs—to the actions of a small band of neglected and manipulated young men. That caricature serves no one, and it certainly does not serve peace.

As Christians, we are called to pursue justice—and justice begins with truth. Scripture commands us not to bear false witness. Uncritically repeating a media narrative that criminalises hundreds of thousands of people without nuance or evidence is precisely that: bearing false witness. There is real violence in Judea and Samaria that must be confronted and condemned. But the people condemning it most loudly, and working hardest to stop it, are the settlers themselves.

Dr Leon Meijer travelled extensively through Judea and Samaria over one week, speaking to dozens of residents of Jewish settlements across the region.

From Resurrection to Restoration

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

Between Easter and Ascension Day, we encounter two important questions posed by the disciples. But it is debatable whether these questions have always been properly understood.

The first question comes from the two disciples who, on the day of the resurrection, are travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are talking amongst themselves about Jesus' death and are shocked that things have ended this way for Him. They had great expectations of Him, but it all seems to have been in vain. When Jesus joins them, they do not recognise Him. The text literally states that their eyes were kept from recognising Him. When He asks them what they are discussing so earnestly, they ask Him whether the events of *Passover* have perhaps passed Him by. And they recount the crucifixion with the lament: "But we had hoped that He was the one who would redeem Israel!"

Through Suffering

And then, after listening to them, Jesus says: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart, that you do not believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer in order to enter into His glory?" We must pay attention to what Jesus does not say. He does not say that they did not understand the prophets or that they have a wrong idea of the *Messiah*. Jesus merely says that they did not believe everything the prophets had said. What those two expected was entirely justified. But it had to go through suffering. And then Jesus explains the whole Bible, the books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings—in short, the *Tanakh*.

I would have liked to have heard his explanation. Perhaps he should read the Bible in this way so they could discover it for themselves? Perhaps the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery but eventually exalted, and who ultimately saved the whole world from famine. Or David, who was anointed king over all Israel, but had to flee for years before his coronation. Or *Psalms* 22 with that beautiful ending: "All the ends of the earth shall turn to God." Or *Isaiah* 53: "When He has offered His life as a sin offering, He shall see the light."

The Redemption of Jerusalem

As they eat, their eyes are opened. When Jesus stretches out His hands, they see the marks of the wounds. When He breaks the bread, they recognise him. But the truth remains: He will redeem Israel!



| Photo: AI

Easter was not the end of the story, but the beginning of God's promised restoration, redemption and coming Kingdom for all nations.

What Mary and Zechariah sang, what Simeon prayed for and what Hannah testified to, has not been rendered obsolete by Jesus' death. He has risen to do just that: the redemption of Jerusalem!

Restoration of the Kingdom

The second remark takes the form of a question—the one posed by the twelve disciples about when Christ will restore the kingdom to Israel (*Acts* 1:6). This is not an inappropriate question. After all, Jesus had spent forty days teaching them about the kingdom in its fullness. It is not as though the disciples still understood nothing; to suggest that would imply that Jesus' teaching had no effect and that the apostles were unprepared for their calling. If that were the case, Jesus could hardly depart—he would need to begin again. Rather, this is their final question, and perhaps the most pressing one from their perspective. After all, Jesus had promised during the *Passover* meal that they would rule over the twelve tribes of Israel! It is only natural, then, that they now ask: when will this come to pass? When will it be brought to completion?

They are ready and equipped for their task. What remains is the power of the Holy Spirit, to truly fulfil their calling in practice, in the authority of Jesus. The proclamation of the kingdom must now go forward. What Jesus began is to be continued—first among the Jews in the diaspora, and extending to the Gentiles as well, who are invited in. And then comes the fulfilment, which includes the redemption of Israel: Jerusalem restored as a city of praise on the earth, the centre of God's Kingdom. There Jesus will take His seat on the throne of David, and there the apostles will become kings.

Easter Is the Beginning

The question is whether we, as the Church, have truly grasped this. Have we become so focused on life after death—on heaven—that we thought Easter was enough? It is not finished yet, Easter is the beginning. Easter assures the fulfilment of all that the Lord has promised. The best is yet to come, and it is destined to unfold here as well, including the restoration of the kingdom for Israel.

Poor in Spirit

In this series, we examine the Beatitudes and how they guide us in experiencing true happiness in God's Kingdom.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." *Matthew* 5:3

"Blessed, happy, are the poor in spirit." That is how Jesus begins; and in doing so, He sets the tone, as it were. Who are they? The expression 'poor in spirit' was very familiar in the Bible and in Jesus' time, and it had a certain resonance. Certain groups in Israel who wanted to live very close to God and His commandments, such as the community at Qumran, called themselves that: the poor in spirit. They do not necessarily suffer material deprivation.

That would be the suggestion in Luke, though, who omits the phrase 'in spirit', which leads one to think of people living in poverty. But 'the poor in spirit' expresses that they long for God's presence, for God's nearness, in all things. They know that they need God's help and presence in everything. Moreover, when compared with other expressions found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (such as 'the poor of Your salvation' or 'the poor of grace'), one might even say that it is even more powerful: they may well be poor, but they do have the Holy Spirit.

We should probably consider the Beatitudes against the backdrop of *Isaiah* 61, and in particular verses 1 to 3, the words which, according to *Luke* 4, Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has

anointed Me to preach good news to the meek..."

The word 'meek' in Hebrew is very similar to the word 'poor' (more on this in the third Beatitude). The Beatitudes are a first proclamation of the fulfilment that Jesus is about to bring to this prophecy.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. By this, Matthew means nothing other than the Kingdom of God. Luke states this quite plainly (*Luke* 6:20). But Matthew adheres to the Jewish way of speaking, in which 'Heaven' is a reference to God.

God's kingdom is therefore already present in the poor in spirit. They have accepted God's rule in their lives, and they long for the visible breakthrough of God's kingdom, on earth as it is in heaven.

Recommended Reading

The Arab Case for Israel

by Hussain Abdul-Hussain

Book review by Kees de Vreugd

The author introduces himself as a Muslim-born Arab who grew up in Lebanon and Iraq, who transformed from an ardent opponent of Zionism to a staunch supporter of the State of Israel, which he sees as an asset to its predominantly Arab neighbours and the broader Middle East.

In the opening, title chapter, he describes his upbringing as the child of an Iraqi father and Lebanese mother. Raised in a Sunni environment in Iraq and later in Shia-majority Baalbek under Hezbollah's influence, his perspective broadened after moving to Beirut and attending the American International College, where he encountered Sunnis, Shias, Christians and Druze. Friendship with a Christian classmate sparked his interest in the Bible and history, leading him to study history at the American University of Beirut. His curiosity also led him to learn Hebrew and speak with Israeli soldiers along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

The author openly admires Israel while advocating a pragmatic, non-ideological approach. Chapter titles such as *"The Myth of Ancient Palestine"* and *"Zionists Plan the Future, Palestinians Cling to an Imagined Past"* reflect his detailed analysis of Palestinian and broader Arab history, politics and psychology.

Most Arab states, he says, are failed states, autocratic and dictatorial. His basic argument is that the innovative technological lead of Israel over the surrounding Arab states is proof that the Arab world would be better off, in every sense, if the Arab worlds would normalise relations with Israel. He observes that a growing number of Arab states are putting (or wishing to put) their own interests first, by leaving aside the Palestinian cause and seek normalisation with Israel.

The Abraham Accords are a model for peaceful coexistence. He notes that there is no coincidence, that the Emirates are one of the few successful Arab states.

To the Palestinians he has a clear and simple message: they would be far better off if they would forget about a Palestinian state and accept the State of Israel instead. There is no need of another failed state. By prioritising peace over historical grievances, the region would move forward with stability, economic growth, and mutual respect.

Israel Has Been Hardened in Part

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

In this article we continue our study of Romans II, focusing on the 'mystery' referred to in Romans 11:25.

"...Hardening has come upon Israel in part, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved..."
Romans 11:25

This brings the apostle Paul to the content of the mystery: There is an indissoluble connection between the salvation of the non-Jewish nations and the salvation of Israel.

Israel's hardening is neither complete nor permanent. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, God's redemptive purposes for Israel will ultimately be fulfilled.

First, we recall what Paul said in the first part of the chapter: Through the fall of Israel, the possibility of salvation was opened to the Gentiles (*verse 11*). The Jewish people had to reject their *Messiah* so that he could become the Saviour of the Gentiles.

But this hardening of Israel for the sake of the non-Jews does not, on the one hand, encompass the entire Jewish people—"hardening has come upon a part of Israel"—and, on the other hand, it is limited in time: "Until the full number of the Gentiles has been saved."

When the 'fullness' of the Gentiles has been saved, "the temporary hardening of a part of Israel has fulfilled its purpose and no longer plays a role" (Wengst, 371).

The 'fullness' or 'completeness' (*πλήρωμα/pleroma*) is that which makes something imperfect perfect, the 'filling,' the 'full measure,' the 'contents' that fill a particular vessel or space. A *πλήρωμα/pleroma* always presupposes "a vessel into which the filling takes place according to purpose and nature or necessity" (Philippi, 516). As long as the measure is not full, the *πλήρωμα/pleroma* is not reached.

An old, torn dress, for example, lacks the *πλήρωμα/pleroma*. The 'full number' or 'fullness' that makes the old garment complete is in this case to be translated as 'rag' or 'patch.' The *πλήρωμα/pleroma* of the *Torah*, which makes the *Torah* perfect, is love (Romans 13:10). And when a certain 'space of time' is 'full,' that is, when 'the time is fulfilled,' then the New Testament speaks of the 'fullness of time,' of the *πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου/pleroma tou chronou* (Galatians 4:4) or *πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν/pleroma ton kairon* (Ephesians 1:10).

The word *πλήρωμα/pleroma* also appears in the New Testament when describing

the relationship between God and Jesus and between Jesus and his Church. In Jesus dwells "the whole fullness of the Godhead bodily." "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace," confesses Jesus' disciple John (John 1:16). Therefore, Paul can also set before the church in Ephesus the goal of being filled 'with all the fullness of God'. Paul leaves open what exactly is meant by the 'fullness of the Gentiles' in Romans 11:25. In any case, there is a certain amount that must be filled.

Perhaps there is a certain number of Gentiles who must come to faith.

trampled on by the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). But perhaps it is also a combination of these quantitative, qualitative and chronological possibilities.

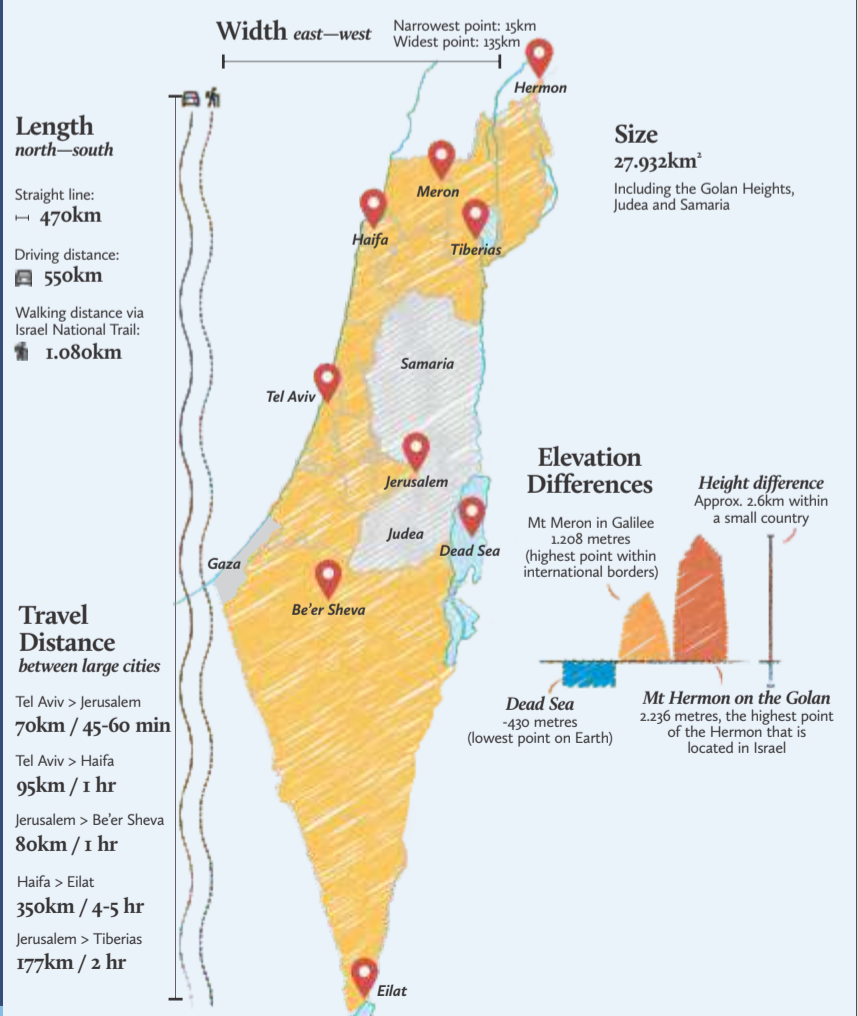
The crucial point is that Israel's hardening is not final. When the measure appointed by God for the non-Jewish world is full, ... all Israel will be saved, ... (Romans 11:26)

Israel has a future! All of Israel will be saved. The 'all of Israel' is related to the 'part of Israel' in the previous verse. Therefore, it 'cannot be understood in

any other way than by the totality of the people of Israel.' This refers to those people, some of whom have previously experienced hardening. Furthermore, the overall context of Romans 9-11 uses the terms 'Israel' or 'Israelite' to refer to the Jewish people, which is why it must be ruled out that this is referring to a 'spiritual' Israel that is to be saved.

Perhaps the Gentile Christian church needs to reach a certain spiritual quality before Israel becomes jealous and then returns to its God. Another possibility might be, however, that it refers to a measure of time that must be 'filled up,' comparable to the case when God explains to Abraham that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16). Jesus speaks of Jerusalem being

Facts Speak

Israel Measured
From the lowest places on Earth to peaks just hours away

Tisha B'av—Mourning for the Destruction of the Temple

■ **Kees de Vreugd**
Theologian | Christians for Israel
International & Editor | Israel & the
Church

A year ago I wrote: “It is a day that receives great attention in Jewish tradition but is unknown in Christian tradition, the 9th (Hebrew: *tisha*) of the Hebrew month of *Av*. Christians do not commemorate the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.”

9 *Av* is the day commemorating the destruction of both the first and second temples. This is done by fasting for a day (like *Yom Kippur* from evening to evening). In the synagogue, the book of Lamentations is read, which sings of Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians.

How should I, as a Christian, from a Christian viewpoint, reflect on *Tisha B'Av* and the destruction of the Temple? I first try to listen again to a Jewish voice. In his book *The Jewish Way; Living the Holidays* (1988), Rabbi Irving Greenberg reflects on the impact of the destruction of the Temple and the responses to it. The loss of the Temple caused a change in Jewish religion. The destruction of the Temple was not the end of Judaism, “it could only mean a call to serve God in a new way”, Rabbi Greenberg writes. The two answers were rabbinic Judaism and the rise of Christianity. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai escaped Jerusalem to set up the study house in Yavne (Yamnia), where eventually the canon of the Hebrew Bible was finally decided on. The focus shifted from the sacramental service of the priests to the priestly service of the Jewish people. The daily prayers of the community and the individual, accompanied by acts of loving kindness, replaced the sacrifices in the Temple, including their atoning power. In a sense, Jewish worship was secularised (as Rabbi Greenberg puts it) and popularised. Secularised, because the focus no longer could be the presence of God in the temple, but finding God and serving Him in every aspect of daily life—a secularisation that paradoxically leads to the sanctification of life. Rabbi Greenberg calls this shift from priests to people a renewal of the covenant: now, the covenant people became fully responsible as covenant partner.

Christians—that is to say, the Christian authors whose writings have survived—could not or would not go along with that. Early in Christian tradition, the destruction of the temple was seen as evidence of God’s final judgement on Israel. Yet, as Greenberg observes, the early Christians were using traditional



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, A.D. 70. Oil on canvas by David Roberts | Source: WikimediaCommons

Jewish categories in their response. They accepted the events of Jewish history as normative. But once they perceived the Destruction as a sign of the end of the Jewish covenant, the logic of the new situation turned them to a new road. “Rejecting some Jewish beliefs, spiritualising the old promises by transferring their focus from the land and people of Israel to personal salvation, yet preaching the basic religious love and consolation of Judaism to the world, they created Christianity.”

On the other hand, historians such as Daniel Boyarin today say that in practice, even until the fourth century, the dividing lines were not that sharp. There was much more interaction between Christians and Jews, than the religious leaders deemed desirable.

Rabbi Greenberg called the Jewish reaction the ‘paradigm of response’. That is a main characteristic of Judaism. How do we respond, as Christians?

I listen again to Jewish tradition. The temple was destroyed, it is taught in the *Talmud*, because the people were driven by baseless hatred. How is that with us? How much baseless hatred towards Judaism has there been in Christianity? How much baseless hatred exists still today, even among Christians themselves?

Jesus taught the fully Jewish, i.e. Biblical, principle of loving each other. That should also guide our relationship with Jewish people. Did He announce God’s final judgement over Jerusalem? There is certainly an element of judgement in His speech: “Look, your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38), but that is not the final word. There is an ‘until’: “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (verse 39). When *Messiah* comes in glory, Israel will return and the ‘House’ (the temple) will be filled again with the Glory of the Lord.

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

The Prophetic Pivot

Last month, as the sun dipped below the horizon and the somber sirens of Memorial Day gave way to the vibrant lights of Independence Day, a specific ancient melody rose from synagogues and homes across the world. It was *Psalm 107*—a prophetic song chosen by the first Chief Rabbis of Israel to serve as the spiritual anthem for the modern state.

While the echoes of those celebrations have now faded into the routine of our daily lives, the message of the Psalm remains more relevant than ever. To the casual observer, celebrating a state that still faces internal division, external threats, and spiritual shadows might seem premature. However, the wisdom of Isaiah and the structure of the Psalms teach us a different lesson: Redemption is a process, not a singular event.

The Three Layers of Promise

This process is built upon a foundation of ancient certainty. The ‘Ingathering of the Exiles’ is not a modern political invention; it is a three-layered Divine commitment. It began with the promise in the *Torah* (*Deuteronomy 30*), was amplified by the Prophets (*Isaiah 43*), and was finally set into a song of thanksgiving in *Psalm 107*.

Isaiah 43 famously demands that the North ‘yield’ and the South ‘not hold back.’ Today, we are the first generation in two millennia to see these words move from ancient parchment to the tarmac of Ben Gurion Airport. This return of millions from the four corners of the earth—a feat never achieved by any other nation—is the very ‘Banner for the Nations’ Isaiah promised.

However, the beauty of this national banner often competes with the noise of our current reality, leading many to question the validity of the miracle itself.

The Light and the Shadow

The most profound challenge of living in the wake of the 78th year is acknowledging this ‘partial redemption.’ Critics argue that without total spiritual perfection, the State lacks religious significance. However, we must remember the Song of the Sea. The Israelites sang their greatest song of praise before they received the *Torah* at Sinai and before they entered the Land.

To wait for perfection before offering thanks is not piety; it is a lack of faith. As we move forward from this 78-year milestone, our call is no longer just to witness this redemption from the sidelines, but to accelerate it through an active, daily partnership with God.

The Iran War: Who's Winning?

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Note: By the time this article is released, active combat in Iran and the Persian Gulf may have ceased. But will that cessation conclude the war? And what will winning look like, anyway? That's what this article is about.

A famous revolutionary's army conquered a major country and took control of its governance. A few years later, he was asked by a foreigner if his party was winning the peace, as they had won the war. He allegedly replied that it was too soon to tell.

This man was an example of taking the 'long view' or playing the 'long game.' While westerners don't look past next year, month, or week, the long-view people look into the future, long after their natural life has ended.

As we examine the 2026 American-Israeli war against Iran (more specifically, the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps]), 'winning' to one side means something different to the other. Even the definition of war is changing: it is becoming more asymmetrical, so that the little guy can win, like David against Goliath.

Warfare has moved from the battlefield to the office, from 'eye-to-eye combat' to long-distance. Today, there is armed warfare, cyber warfare, information warfare, media warfare, and propaganda warfare. It is possible to win the military battle yet lose the war. That's what the IRGC is hoping for.

The War Begins

The recent fighting commenced on 28 February 2026, but the war began when the Islamic Republic of Iran was founded on 1 February 1979. From the outset, Shia Iran condemned America as the great Satan and Israel as the little Satan. These two nations were seen as an impediment to its long game, which is the hegemony of the Middle East and the entire Muslim world—Sunnis included. The destruction of America and Israel was proclaimed and planned for.

Iran backed up its words with action, and the chosen method was terrorism. Sleeper cells and terror proxies, like Hezbollah and Hamas, were put to work. An empire of terror was assembled, called the Shia Crescent. Stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, the Shia Crescent consists of Iran-funded and aligned terror proxies, including Iraqi militia, Assad's Syria (he was deposed in December 2024), Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the Houthis in Yemen. These proxies were Iran's foot soldiers in its war for supremacy and defence insurance if attacked.



| Photo: Adobe Stock

America destroyed its navy and air force—now propaganda and cyber warfare are Iran's weapons.

The IRGC was the regime's secret weapon. Described as a parallel economy with soldiers (800,000), the IRGC controlled 30–40% of Iran's pre-war economy. They owned a variety of businesses and were completely loyal to the Supreme Leader. Their goal is to actively resist Israel and the United States.

After the assassination of the late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on 28 February 2026, it is unclear who is running the country. Neither the President of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, nor the new Supreme Leader, Khamenei's son Mojtaba, appear to be in charge, though they hold the two most powerful positions in the government. The consensus is that the IRGC, in whole or subdivided into a mosaic, seem to be the puppet masters.

Their weapons include ballistic missiles, which can carry a nuclear weapon. And with a range of 2,500 miles or 4,000 kilometres, an Iranian missile can reach anywhere in Europe, including London. Sophisticated drones, expert cyber warriors, propaganda and the media are now Iran's most formidable weapons, since America destroyed its navy and air force.

Who's Winning?

To answer this question, it depends on what the objectives are. For the United States and Israel, their goal is to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons, strip them of their missiles and other lethal weapons and to defund their terror proxies. In other words, to stop

future danger?

One of the key reasons for the American-Israeli attack at this time is that Iran has never been weaker. Inflation is sky high, and the economy is teetering. Public support for the regime is near zero, and Iran has been mostly forsaken by its allies, Russia, China, and the proxies.

It has sustained much damage in two recent wars. Plus, Iran has a super serious water shortage. The timing for a military strike seemed ideal.

Since the 28 February attack, the IRGC has had to contend with the regular Iranian army (made up of conscripts), the mullahs, and the Iranian people. And while the future is frighteningly uncertain, Iran's regime has a few 'cards to play.' They have weapons-grade enriched uranium, enough to make eleven bombs; long-range ballistic missiles; the capacity to close the Strait of Hormuz; terrorist sleeper cells, cyber hackers, and propaganda outlets. Most of all, they have a 'long game' vision of Islamic and global hegemony. Their immediate goal, like Hamas recently, is not to have a military victory but regime survival. To remain intact would be a 'victory.' Iranians are pragmatic and patient: the US could proclaim success now, walk away, and Iran can reconstitute, rebuild, and live to fight another day.

Bible prophecy, the greatest long-game of all, speaks of the 'ultimate win' of a kingdom that triumphs in battle and war, and can never be overthrown. As *Obadiah 1:21* says, "... the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

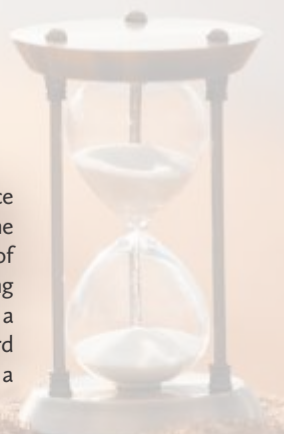
The Bible Speaks

God's Purpose Will Stand

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please...' (Isaiah 46:9-10 NIV)

The Lord oversees history from beginning to end. Or vice versa: From the end He looks back and oversees the present and the beginning. The Great End Goal draws all of history toward itself like a magnet. That goal is the coming of God's Kingdom—and the coming of its King. It is a divine force that both pulls and guides everything toward its destined fulfilment, leading not only to an end, but to a new beginning.

In the Bible God has revealed who He is and given us insight into the future of humanity and the world. Through Scripture, we learn to trust that His purpose stands firm and that His plan is unfolding exactly as He intends.



Short News

A Ban on Demonstrations?



In the UK, calls have been made for a ban on anti-Israel demonstrations. The call comes from a lawyer who assesses the British government's anti-terrorism legislation and opposition leader Badenoch. The reason for this are the countless antisemitic incidents, including the stabbing of two Jewish men in the London borough of Golders Green. Badenoch: "It is time to ban these demonstrations. It is clear that they are being used as a cover to promote violence and intimidation against Jews." | Photo: Shutterstock

UNRWA and Hamas

According to USAID, the US agency responsible for overseeing foreign aid, there are four additional UNRWA staff members who may be linked to the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023. These include three teachers and a social worker. The US Department of State is investigating how the four can be barred from working for (future) US-funded aid organisations.

Arrow Production Increased



Israel is set to significantly expand production of the Arrow missile defence system following approval by a ministerial committee, according to the Ministry of Defence. The move is aimed at strengthening Israel's protection against ballistic missile threats. Manufacturer Israel Aerospace Industries will increase both production capacity and output of the system, which was jointly developed by Israel and the United States. The Arrow system is designed to intercept long-range ballistic missiles and has been widely used in response to attacks launched from Iran and Yemen, Defence Minister Israel Katz said. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

European Jews:
Jewish Nationalism—Part 3

■ Edda Fogarollo

Historian | President | Christians for Israel Italy

Last edition, we looked at the beginnings of Jewish immigration to what was then called Palestine, driven by rising antisemitism in 19th-century Europe. Settlements were established in remote areas, but this did not yet lay the foundations for a national state. Zionism—the longing for a state of their own—was still waiting for a leader.

In Western Europe during the 19th century, as previously mentioned, Jewish communities lived in a rather privileged way. They enjoyed equal rights in Germany, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Italy, in Switzerland and in Scandinavia. In 1858, the first Jew was elected to the British House of Commons and some others filled government posts in France, the Netherlands, Italian and German states. Benjamin Disraeli became Prime Minister in Great Britain. As the dream of assimilation came true in the West, the gap with the Jews of Eastern Europe grew wider as they failed to benefit from the French Revolution or Napoleonic campaigns.

It was Theodor Herzl who turned the Zionist dream into a nationalist movement that rekindled hope for a Jewish homeland.

Zionism did not reflect nationalism and the various nationalist movements, but has been unique in the history of nations: the emancipated and well-assimilated Jews of Western Europe intended to mitigate the difficult conditions of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe through large-scale immigration to Palestine, making it public and giving it political vigour. The uniqueness of Zionism is also evident for its origin: it emerged from a dispersed and variegated people who, apart from religion, had nothing in common. It was Theodor Herzl who, thanks to his personality and overwhelming energy, succeeded in turning the Zionist dream into a coherent nationalist movement that included all the different philanthropic, humanitarian, religious and political tendencies necessary to rekindle the hope of a Jewish homeland. He managed to build a bridge over Western and Eastern Judaism, gave the Zionist association precise directions and achieved responsibility and credibility from the rest of the world watching this movement.

Theodor Herzl and the Zionist Movement

Born into a wealthy family in Budapest,

Herzl (1860-1904) moved to Vienna in 1878 to study law. He was well respected by Viennese society and did not represent the typical stereotype of a Jewish businessman or investor in European stock exchanges, or the poor Jew escaping from the Russian pogroms. He was indifferent towards many of the problems that affected his people. He loved theatre and composed some works that never achieved great success. But he wasn't to know that his life was itself about to take centre-stage in the world's political theatre.

His commitment to the Zionist movement started in Paris where he worked as a correspondent for the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. He was sent to write an article about the case of the artillery captain of the French army, Alfred Dreyfus, of Jewish origin, who was unjustly accused of espionage and publicly degraded. From the notes that Herzl regularly wrote in his diary, it appears that it was the dramatic events in France that aroused his awareness of the antisemitism that was reaching a crescendo in Western Europe. Books had been published with



Leader of the Zionist movement Theodor Herzl.
| Photo: Public Domain

attending certain hotels. In Russia and Romania, some of us are put to death. In Austria and Germany, antisemitism has a major impact on public life. And in Algeria there are travelling antisemitic agitators."

Herzl understood that antisemitism developed from Jewish emancipation and that undoing it would mean going against the mentality of the time. However, the Jews' social mobility and economic situation only increased hatred towards them. "The consequence is inevitable: We are one people—our enemies have made us one without our consent. Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves."

Herzl's Proposal for a Jewish State

Herzl's great plan was simple and comprehensible to everyone, 3,000 copies of his book were published and it spread all over Europe, drawing the attention of both Jews and antisemites. In the five chapters of *Der Judenstaat*, he clearly and deliberately tackled the needs of a people.

With regard to the place where the state should be founded, Herzl left the yet-to-be-formed political body 'Society of Jews' free to decide. A very attractive place—for its wide and open spaces and mild temperatures—was Argentina, where some Jews had already purchased land. On the other hand, Palestine "is our ever-memorable historic home", declared Herzl. The name Palestine was a powerful call and, as Herzl believed, if the Sultan gave the land to the Jews, they could create a defensive bastion of Europe in Asia.

the aim of uniting European people under a common hatred towards Jews and, for the first time in Europe, the German city of Dresden hosted an antisemitic conference. Herzl duly understood what was happening and set out on a mission to save a humiliated people—the Jewish people to whom he also belonged. He immediately composed his work *Der Judenstaat* ('*The Jewish State*') published in Vienna in 1896 in which he clearly stated his objective of developing an old idea: restoring the Jewish state. The basis of his work was founded on his faith in the strength of his people and the fact that the world needed a Jewish state, one of the reasons why it was finally established. He claimed that the Jewish question was not primarily social or religious, but national—and, as such, should be treated as part of international politics.

Studying Antisemitism

By examining antisemitism, Herzl declared: "No-one can deny the gravity of the Jews' situation. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. Also in parliaments, we are attacked by politicians and even barred from

Myth: 'Israel Occupies East Jerusalem'

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

Faced with a barrage of misinformation, distortions, and blatant lies, supporters of Israel are constantly challenged to defend their position. We continue addressing this issue, bringing information and resources to combat these myths. Oscar Lohuis of the Netherlands has written specifically on this topic, and we thank him for permission to use his work in this section.

Myth: 'Israel occupies East Jerusalem'

In 1000 BC, King David captured the city from the Jebusites. It was, in fact, more of a palace coup, as David did not kill the Jebusites, but instead incorporated them into his court and army. Thus, as early as three thousand years ago, Jerusalem became the capital of Israel. It remained so until 70AD, when the Romans destroyed the city. Jerusalem has never served as the capital of any sovereign nation other than Israel. Even after 70AD, for the Jews in the diaspora, Jerusalem remained their capital and the deepest longing of their hearts. The descendants of Israel have always continued to say at their celebrations: "Next year in Jerusalem", and in every synagogue around the world, they have continued to pray facing Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem Occupied by Jordan

In Jerusalem's three-thousand-year-old history as the capital of Israel, the city was divided into a western and an eastern part for nineteen years, from 1948 to 1967. This division occurred when, in 1948 the country of Jordan captured the heartland of Israel (later referred to as the West Bank) and East Jerusalem. This happened during the War of Independence, which broke out after the State of Israel was declared on 14 May 1948. East Jerusalem was subsequently occupied by Jordan. As a result, all Jews were forced to flee or were killed. Due to this occupation, Jews were no longer allowed to pray at the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall), or visit the ancient tombs of their ancestors on the Mount of Olives. Until then, Jews had lived in East Jerusalem, including the Old City, and the Siloam neighbourhood (the original City of David), and had always been able to access these holy sites. From 1948, the Jordanians began destroying the entire Jewish quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, including the centuries old Hurva Synagogue and dozens of other synagogues. Some of the remaining synagogues were repurposed as stables, chicken coops, or even toilets. Of the 50,000 Jewish tombstones on the Mount of Olives, 38,000 were removed or destroyed. The reason the current Jewish Quarter in the Old City appears so new, compared to other areas in the Old City, is that it had to be completely rebuilt after 1967, following the destruction during the Jordanian occupation.

No Occupation

The resettlement of Jews after 1967 in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, in East Jerusalem or in the neighbourhoods like Siloam (or Silwan) cannot be regarded as a form of occupation or colonisation. In 1948, all Jews were expelled from these areas, and their homes were taken over by Arabs. When, after 1967, Jews asked those residents to leave, this was not an act of confiscation or theft, but rather a reclaiming of property that had originally belonged to them. The ability of Jews to once again pray at the Western Wall is not something new, nor the result of dispossessing others. It represents a return to a historical norm that

existed for centuries, even millennia. Photographs from the early 20th century showing Jews praying at the Western Wall testify to this longstanding tradition. What is new, however, is that the State of Israel now has sovereignty over all of Jerusalem, including the eastern part, the Old City, and even the Temple Mount. This was not the case prior to 1948, and only partially true from 1948 to 1967. So, in terms of governance, the shift has been from Ottoman (Turkish) control, to British, to Jordanian, and now to Israeli control. In this context, the change is not about replacing Palestinians or Arabs with Israelis. The region known as Israel/Palestine was not Arab, and (East) Jerusalem did not belong to the Arabs.

The Green Line is Not a Border

The 'border' between so-called East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem has never been a true (international) border. What was agreed upon in 1949 was an armistice line—the so-called Green Line—but an armistice line is not a recognised border. When Israel gained control of the entire city of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967, that armistice line effectively ceased to exist. In that conflict, Israel drove out the Jordanians from the eastern part of Jerusalem. Jordan had no legitimate claim to the West Bank or East Jerusalem, not even under international law. The fact that Jordan did not establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank during the 19 years it controlled the area is also revealing. It shows that the Arabs were not focused on establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but rather on the destruction of Israel itself, a goal that has continued to define the Palestinian leadership's agenda since that time.

The People of Jerusalem

Who has the right to the city of Jerusalem? This is a question that can be viewed and answered from many different perspectives. As Christians, we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and in it we read clearly about Israel's history in Jerusalem and God's past, present, and future plans for this city. We believe it is the 'City of the Great King', and therefore belongs to the people of this King, Israel.

But let us also consider the question from a different angle: the demographic composition of Jerusalem over the past few centuries. If we broadly categorise the population into Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the historical figures are as follows:

- Around the year 1700, Jerusalem had only about 5000 inhabitants, mostly Jews, with some Christians. Under Ottoman rule, Jerusalem remained poor and somewhat isolated.
- In 1844, before the rise of Zionism, the city had 15,510 inhabitants. Of these, 7,120 were Jews (46%), nearly half. The rest were Christians and Muslims.
- In 1847, Dr John Kitto wrote: "Although we usually regard Jerusalem as a Muslim city, not more than one-third of the population consists of Muslims."
- By 1870, Jerusalem's population had grown to 22,000, with 11,000 were Jews (50%), 6,500 Muslims and 4,500 Christians.
- In 1890, the city had 40,000 residents, including 25,000 Jews—62% of the population.
- In 1905, out of 60,000 inhabitants, 40,000 were Jews (66%).
- In 1917, the population was 60,500: 32,000 Jews (53%), 13,500 Muslims, and 15,000 Christians.
- In 1948, the city had 149,000 residents: 84,000 Jews (56%), 40,000 Muslims and 25,000 Christians.



Jews in front of the Western Wall in the 1900s, Jerusalem.
| Photo: The Library of Congress

Even when Jordan occupied East Jerusalem, Jews remained the largest demographic group in the city.

- In 1967, Jerusalem had 263,300 inhabitants, including 195,700 Jews (74%).
- By 1976, the population reached 365,000, with 260,000 Jews, (71%).
- In 2024, Jerusalem has grown to nearly one million residents, approximately 65% being Jewish.

The idea that the Jewish State of Israel is 'occupying' Jerusalem because it is primarily an Arab or Muslim city is clearly refuted by these demographic figures. No other people on earth has a longer-standing historical and cultural connection to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem than the Jewish people. Despite the centuries-long dispersion of most Jews around the world, Jerusalem has remained a city with a predominantly Jewish population for centuries.

The Knesset is Also Good for Arabs

When Israel took full control of Jerusalem in 1967, it did not expel Muslims or destroy mosques. Israel has consistently demonstrated a far more humane and inclusive approach than many of the countries or Palestinian organisations that harbour hostility toward it.

It is therefore not surprising that a recent survey conducted by a Palestinian organisation(!) indicates that 93% of Arab residents of Jerusalem prefer Israeli rule over Palestinian rule. Today, many Jews and Arabs live side by side in Jerusalem in peace, a coexistence that stands in stark contrast to cities and villages in the Palestinian-controlled territories, where all Jews have been expelled.

Conclusion

Turkey, Britain and Jordan have no rightful claim to East Jerusalem. For centuries, the Jews have been the largest population group in the city. Under Israeli governance, all residents of Jerusalem enjoy greater stability and quality of life than those living in the Arab countries or the current Palestinian territories. The incorporation of East Jerusalem into Israel in 1967 should not be seen as an act of occupation.

Find Oscar Lohuis' book on Amazon:
<https://www.amazon.it/-/en/Oscar-Lohuis/dp/9082000369>





First Home in the Homeland Update

Support and Friendship will Overcome Everything



Olim from kibbutz Revivim with their first Hebrew books. | Photos: First Home in the Homeland

Over the past months, uncertainty became a constant companion for many of our participants, and bomb shelters briefly turned into the places where people gathered more often than around a festive table. Yet even in those challenging moments, something remarkable happened: our community's spirit grew stronger, day by day.

Our programme coordinators stayed in close contact with every participant, doing everything possible to maintain a sense of routine and stability. Against all odds, we succeeded in opening every planned *Ulpan* group (intensive Hebrew language course)—including online classes for those who were unable to reach Israel due to flight cancellations. It

mattered deeply to us not to delay the process even though they could come to Israel, but to support them, encourage them, and help them begin building a meaningful connection with Israel from afar.

Dedication and Community

Those who were already in Israel showed extraordinary dedication. Some even brought their textbooks with them into the shelters when the sirens sounded. Their determination to learn, grow, and move forward became a source of inspiration for all of us.

As always, First Home in the Homeland is not only about studying. It is also about creating a home, building a community, and sharing experiences together. Also during difficult days, participants found ways to uplift one another. In Kibbutz Merhavia and Hinnanit, for example, participants organised activity stations inside the shelter—playing guitar, crafting with

children, and creating moments of joy and calm for everyone.

New Families

Among the new families were Katya and Kirill from Ukraine arrived in Afula and, thanks to Koen Carlier, joined our programme in Kibbutz Mashabei Sadeh. They received a heartfelt welcome, found temporary jobs, and began studying Hebrew online almost immediately. “We managed quite well,” Katya shared. “Our heads were spinning from the studies, but thank God, we began to succeed. We are grateful for your support. In a city it would have been much harder for us. We felt safe.”

Another Ukrainian family—Gennadiy, Yana, and their son—joined us in Hinnanit at the end of February. They, too, quickly found comfort and belonging. “Both adults and children felt safe here. Our son made new friends quickly. We had excellent coordinators and were surrounded by very good and kind people.”

Acts of Kindness

Throughout this period, we witnessed countless acts of kindness. Children created crafts together, adults exercised and studied side by side, and coordinators opened their homes for tea, conversation, and reassurance.

Today, it feels especially important to stay connected with you—our partners, supporters, and friends. Your generosity made it possible for us to continue our mission even in the most uncertain times. You helped ensure that every participant felt seen, supported, and safe.

Life goes on. Am Israel Chai!



Activity stations in the bomb shelter, Merhavia



Katya and Kirill in their First Home in Israel.

Patience Will Be Rewarded

■ Koen Carlier

Aliyah Fieldworker | Christians for Israel Ukraine

From the moment the ceasefire between the United States and Iran came into effect, Jews from Ukraine were once again able to depart for Israel. Before the war involving the United States, Israel, and Iran started, Jewish travelled to Israel via Moldova. Once the ceasefire came into effect, we assisted the first group of immigrants with their journey to Israel via Bucharest, Romania.

Fortunately, flights from Moldova resumed shortly thereafter. Since then, the immigration of Ukrainian Jews has continued steadily, just as it has over the past four years since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. To date, 19,200 Jews have left Ukraine for Israel since February 2022.

Recently, we assisted a young couple from the Kiev region and their six-year-old son, who has autism, in making this journey. Their hope is to settle peacefully in Israel and reunite with family living in Haifa. At the same time, we have reached out to Shalva—an organisation dedicated to supporting children and young people with disabilities—to explore care options for their son. If necessary, the family is prepared to relocate to Jerusalem so he can receive specialised support.

Hesitation

We also recently assisted a couple in their seventies. It was clear they were anxious and under considerable

stress. As we spoke with them, the conversation seemed to ease their tension. We gently asked why they had not left Charkov earlier, given the ongoing drone and missile attacks on the city.

Juliya, the wife, candidly shared that it had been her hesitation that delayed their departure. “My husband has wanted to leave for years, but I wasn’t ready,” she explained. “Our entire family is already in Israel—we were the last ones still in Ukraine. We discussed it many times, but at some point I asked myself: what are we still doing here? I was stubborn, but eventually I realised—we have to go. My husband was right.”

Courageously Moving Forward

In the coming weeks, many more journeys are planned, and preparations are in full swing. As *Ecclesiastes 3* reminds us, there is a time for everything. This truth also applies to those who now choose to begin their personal exodus from the ‘land of the north’ and make their way to the Promised Land, as described in *Zechariah 2*.

Despite the challenges, we move forward with courage and gratitude.



The young family and their six-year-old son. | Photos: C4I Ukraine



The couple from Charkov before departure.

We continue our practical help in Ukraine to assist them with their *Aliyah*.
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- First Home in the Homeland - \$765
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- Arab Christians (First Baptist Church in Bethlehem)
- For Zion’s Sake
- Israel Alzheimer’s Centre

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ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

- Christians for Israel 18-month Calendar Jan 2026–Jun 2027
- Zionism at the Ends of the Earth by Sheree Trotter
- 3D Wooden Map of Israel Puzzle
- Israel’s Land and People in History and Prophecy by Dr Simon Smelt
- Behold He Comes by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Christians for Israel NZ Israeli & Friends Cookbook
- Two States for Two Peoples? Book (Full version)
- Two States for Two Peoples? Booklet (Condensed version)
- Why Israel? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why Jerusalem? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why End Times? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Land Without Borders by Johannes Gerloff
- Living a Life in Victory by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Until—Fourteen Prophetic Horizons by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why is it So Difficult for Jews to Believe in Jesus by Cornelis Kant
- Israel: Covenants & Kingdom by Willem JJ Glashouwer

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A Time to Watch and Stand Firm

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

Welcome to another *Israel and Christians Today*, it is our privilege to bring you news, information, and teaching, from around the world.

We are extremely grateful for the support of so many thousands of people throughout New Zealand, the South Pacific, and the 45 countries in which Christians for Israel operates. In these increasingly challenging times, it is even more essential than ever before, to stand in solidarity with Israel, but also to support each other. The Bible tells us very clearly that there will be times of great trial and difficulty—I suspect we are plunging into those times right now!

To all those who support this work, please accept our sincere thanks. We are a small, hard-working team of minimal staff and volunteers, and are constantly amazed at the support that comes in. Do bear with us if we are occasionally a little slow getting back to you, all it takes is a health issue etc and we all struggle to keep up! We will be sending out our annual letters acknowledging gifts, shortly. Thank you for your patience, but please do feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance or support.

In the book of Matthew (also Mark and Luke) we find an interesting passage, known as the 'Olivet Discourse'. In this, arguably Jesus' most prophetic sermon, He speaks about the end times. The disciples had asked three significant questions: When will the Temple be destroyed? What will be the signs of Jesus coming back? And what will be the sign of the 'end of the age'?

This is a wonderful topic with which to set theologians debating, as Jesus appears to skilfully merge warnings of things to come soon—the destruction of the Temple—with things to come at the 'end of the era'. Rather than reel out precise details, Jesus weaves together the near-term events as a kind of template or foreshadowing of the ultimate global end-of-the-world events still to come.

The particular part that has been echoing through my head latterly is 'there will be wars and rumours of wars' etc (*Matthew 24:6*). As the mainstream media flip-flops almost daily on whether there is peace or war in the Middle East, a ceasefire agreement or a refusal, or—let's be honest—what it can blame Israel for this time, it certainly appears that Jesus' words are more applicable now than ever. The world is currently experiencing its highest number of active, major armed conflicts since World War II, albeit that most of these are overlooked by news of every sneeze or cough in the Middle East. In current conflicts alone, for example the Russo-Ukrainian war, over 500,000 dead, well-publicised execution of prisoners, and blatant targeting of civilian infrastructure. The Sudanese Civil War is believed to have killed over 150,000, with 14.3 million people displaced—the largest displacement and hunger crisis on earth. The Democratic Republic of Congo has 7 million people currently displaced, with over 6 million killed since the war broke out—many tens of thousands more every year. And then just over the border from Israel, in Syria, the civil war there has claimed over 600,000 lives, and 12 million remain displaced. 375,000 killed in Yemen, and even 400,000

murders due to the Mexican Drug War. And let's definitely not forget over 1 million Uyghurs currently imprisoned in China, being subjected to forced sterilisation, forced labour, and cultural erasure. Granted, these don't get anywhere near the same exposure as anything Israel might be involved in, but they paint a very bleak picture of humanity.

Jesus' address on the Mount of Olives speaks not only of wars, but of famines, and earthquakes. The dramatic increase in both of these in recent years, should also be raising eyebrows to those reading their Bible. This could be quite depressing, but for the fact that Jesus didn't leave it there. He then issues a call to watch—we will not know the 'day nor the hour', but we are to be awake and ready. Jesus continues with three stories: first, The Ten Virgins, and The Parable of the Talents, both emphasising the importance of readiness. The third, however, is The Sheep and the Goats, where Jesus concludes with a vivid picture of the final judgement, separating the nations into two groups—the righteous sheep, who provided for the 'least of these', and the goats.

In travelling throughout the country, speaking and encouraging groups of supporters of Israel, the most common comment I hear is "we thought we were the only ones." Jesus says "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (*Matthew 24:12,13*)

Stand firm, my friends. God has already told us who wins in the end!

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Verification Failure: UN, Hamas, and Trust

■ Greg Boucher

Israel Institute of New Zealand

The issue is not only what is true—but what can be independently verified.

New Zealand funds multilateral organisations operating in complex conflict zones, including Gaza. Like many donor nations, it channels aid through international agencies responsible for implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

This arrangement is common and not inherently problematic, reflecting the role of international organisations in delivering aid under difficult conditions.

But it raises a structural question that is rarely examined directly: to what extent can those funds be independently verified as reaching their intended recipients?

MFAT disclosures suggest that while safeguards and vetting processes exist, direct oversight in complex environments is limited. This is not evidence of misuse, but of constraint.

New Zealand's funding flows through many of the same international agencies now under scrutiny elsewhere. That connection brings a distant issue into closer focus.

A 25 July 2024 advisory from USAID's Office of Inspector General highlighted oversight limits in Gaza aid programmes, noting that several UN agencies declined requests for personnel data linked to investigations into possible Hamas connections, citing legal and institutional constraints.

The issue raised by this impasse is not only whether the allegations are true. It is whether, under current conditions, they can be independently verified.

That distinction matters.

For Israel, these concerns are not abstract. The 7 October attacks intensified scrutiny of international agencies in Gaza, especially amid allegations of Hamas-linked staff within UN programmes. Verification is therefore tied not just to administration, but to security and credibility.

Concerns about militant infiltration of UN operations in Gaza, particularly within UNRWA, are longstanding. What is new is the procedural difficulty of verifying or resolving those concerns.

The USAID OIG report does not claim to have established widespread infiltration. It does, however, state that investigators identified some individuals with links to Hamas and that further referrals for suspension or debarment may follow. At the same time, it makes clear that the scale and systemic nature of any such problem cannot be determined with confidence.



| Photo: AI

Not because the question has been answered—but because the process of answering it has been limited.

Trust Is Not a Safeguard

The United Nations agencies involved have emphasised that internal vetting procedures are in place to screen staff for links to designated terrorist organisations. On its face, this is reassuring. But it does not resolve the underlying problem.

The problem lies in unequal oversight: US-funded NGOs and contractors face American vetting requirements, while UN agencies often operate under different legal frameworks with less external scrutiny.

In practice, this means that donor governments may rely on international organisations to vet their own staff—even when those staff are implementing donor-funded programmes.

This is not a minor administrative detail. It reflects a structural vulnerability.

A system that depends primarily on internal vetting, while limiting independent verification, does not eliminate concerns about infiltration. It relocates them—from the question of security to the question of trust.

Constraint or Shield?

Recognising this vulnerability does not dismiss the constraints facing international organisations. UN agencies operate under legal frameworks that can limit the sharing of sensitive personnel information, and those constraints are often binding.

But they are not necessarily absolute.

International organisations routinely share sensitive information with major donors under controlled conditions—through audit mechanisms, inspector access, and confidentiality agreements designed to protect both operational integrity and privacy. Comparable

arrangements exist in areas such as counterterrorism financing compliance, where sensitive data is shared under strict controls without public disclosure.

This raises a more precise question. If information cannot be shared in this case, why not?

If the barrier is legal, it should be specified. If it is procedural, it should be defined. If it is discretionary, it should be justified.

Institutions that invoke legal privilege to resist oversight of publicly funded programmes carry a corresponding burden of justification. That burden has not yet been clearly met.

Absent that clarity, constraints risk functioning less as safeguards than as shields—not necessarily concealing wrongdoing, but preventing the question from being tested.

Verification Requirements

Calls for 'verification' remain abstract unless operationally defined. In this context, independent verification means controlled, accountable access—not public disclosure of sensitive information.

At a minimum, three elements would be necessary:

First, restricted access to personnel data for authorised investigators, sufficient to allow cross-checking against intelligence, sanctions, or watchlist databases. This would not entail public exposure, but it would enable meaningful compliance review.

Second, reciprocal vetting standards. If NGOs and private contractors face vetting requirements for donor-funded programmes, international organisations should meet comparable standards or provide justified alternatives.

Third, defined audit pathways. Oversight mechanisms must include agreed processes through which

information can be requested, accessed, and reviewed, including timelines, scope, and conditions of confidentiality.

These mechanisms are not theoretical. Variants of them already operate in other domains of international aid and financial compliance. The question is whether they are being applied consistently—or selectively.

When Verification Fails

The implications of this gap extend beyond any single investigation. They are epistemic.

If investigators cannot access personnel data, they cannot cross-check identities. If they cannot cross-check identities, they cannot determine whether individuals flagged elsewhere are involved in funded programmes. And if that determination cannot be made, then neither exoneration nor indictment can rest on verifiable evidence.

The result is not resolution, but sustained contestation—where claims cannot be settled, only rehearsed.

This pattern is increasingly familiar in modern conflict environments, where access is constrained, institutions serve multiple roles, and verification depends on cooperation from the very bodies under scrutiny.

Conclusion

The integrity of humanitarian systems depends not only on their intentions, but on their verifiability.

The USAID OIG report does not establish systemic wrongdoing. It does not demonstrate widespread complicity. But it does establish something more foundational: that independent verification of these questions is currently limited, and that the mechanisms required to make it robust are not yet fully in place.

A refusal to enable verification does not, on its own, prove misconduct. But it does carry consequences. Where scrutiny is constrained, confidence cannot remain unaffected.

Where verification is constrained, trust becomes a substitute for evidence. And substitutes, however well-intentioned, are not durable foundations for accountability.

A system that cannot be audited cannot be fully defended—only trusted. And trust, in this context, is not a standard. It is a risk.

For donor governments, that risk carries a specific obligation: to ensure that the systems they fund are open to independent verification. Institutions that resist such scrutiny cannot expect confidence to remain unchanged.



When Antizionism Masks Antisemitism

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

The Bondi Commission matters beyond Australia because it exposes how ancient Jew-hatred now borrows the vocabulary of human rights, decolonisation, and social justice.

The Bondi Beach terror attack on Jewish people celebrating *Hanukkah* in December 2025, shocked the community in Australia, New Zealand and around the world. For New Zealand Jews, the incident felt very close to home, as strong familial connections tie the two communities together.

The Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (the Bondi Commission) is currently holding public hearings on the mass shooting which claimed fifteen innocent lives and injured more than forty others. It has been described as Australia's worst such incident since the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre and the deadliest terrorist incident in the country's history.

The Commission's interim report released at the end of April, with its fourteen recommendations, was met with the cautious approval of the Jewish Australian community. The fact that antisemitism is being treated as a national security and social cohesion issue is welcome. Jewish leaders, however, are insistent that the report must lead to lasting institutional and political change rather than simply platitudes and temporary attention.

As the scourge of antisemitism surges globally, the findings of the commission will have significance for Jewish communities everywhere. One of the issues to emerge from the hearing, is the question of when antizionism becomes antisemitism. When we have politicians and public figures donning *keffiyah* and chanting "*from the river to the sea*" and yet able to declare with a straight face "I'm not antisemitic, I am antizionist", the pertinence of this question becomes clear.

One of the testimonies at the Bondi Commission was delivered by Jewish Studies Teacher Sharonne Blum, who described the bewilderment of her students at the fact that when neo-Nazis demonstrated at the Victorian Parliament House, they faced legal consequences and the force of law, and yet when Palestinian protesters hurled hateful slurs and libels at Jews at the Sydney Opera House, they were given a free pass. This example highlights the need to understand why antisemitism is treated differently to anti-Israel animosity.

Blum articulated the lessons she taught her students to assist them in navigating the anti-Jewish hate they face on a daily basis. Echoing the work of a new group of



Anti-Israel protestors in Toronto in 2024. | Photo: Perry Trotter

anti-antizionist scholars and academics, Naya Lekht, Andrew Pessin, Adam Louis-Klein and Joshua Dabelstein, amongst others, she explained the "long arc of history of anti-Jewish vilification". There have been different eras of Jew hatred in which the Jew is constructed as a villain opposed to the moral currency of the age. In the era of anti-Judaism, the Jews were constructed as the villains because they opposed Christianity. In the era of antisemitism, the Jews were cast as the villains in opposition to the era's highest moral virtue: racial purity and national vitality. The Jew thus represented the antithesis of racial and national purity. She argues that we are now in the antizionism era, in which Israel and Zionism are portrayed as villains because they are said to stand in opposition to what this era elevates as its highest moral virtues: decolonisation, anti-racism, and, more broadly, human rights. In reality, none of these accusations against Jews can be upheld when scrutinised, whether under the antizionist, antisemitic or anti-Judaic regimes. They are manifestations of the Jew-hatred that Jonathan Sacks described as a mutating virus.

Sadly, New Zealand is not immune to this virus, even though positioned at the "ends of the earth". An anecdotal example is both enlightening and alarming.

A friend who teaches a Year 13 course on religion and war commented that he had taught his students about Pacifism, Just War Theory and the Crusades using the works of Augustine and Aquinas. He thought he would add some perspective by introducing an article by the Jewish philosopher and theologian Rabbi Moses Maimon, known as Rambam or Maimonides, 1138–1204 CE. The teacher remarked, 'About three minutes in, the students began laughing and taking photos of the article. When I asked why

they were doing this, the response I got was "We are reading Zionist propaganda in class".

That these students would label the work of a 12th century Jewish philosopher as Zionist propaganda, when political Zionism is a product of the late nineteenth century, is truly astounding. They had not merely confused a medieval Jewish source with modern Zionism. They had absorbed a more corrosive assumption: that Jewish thought itself is politically suspect, and that 'Zionist' is a label sufficient to discredit it. It is not surprising that young people have absorbed these assumptions given the sustained portrayal of Zionism in activist, academic, and online discourse as uniquely illegitimate and morally toxic.

Antizionism is not about criticism of Israel, its leaders or its policies, all of which can be entirely legitimate and in which Israelis themselves vigorously engage. Antizionism is an ideology that rejects the legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty altogether and assigns collective blame to Jews in relation to the existence of a Jewish state.

In practice, antizionism frequently functions not merely as opposition to Israeli policy, but as a moral framework through which hostility toward Jewish collective identity is expressed and legitimised. These ideas did not arise spontaneously on social media after 7 October. Modern antizionism has an intellectual and political genealogy stretching back decades, shaped by Soviet propaganda allied with Arab and non-aligned groupings and UN institutional campaigns. In addition, elements of post-colonial frameworks in academia migrated into activist networks and popular discourse.

Some strands of Indigenous and

anticolonial activism absorbed the antizionist narrative. When Māori politician Willie Jackson declared in New Zealand's parliament in December 2023, that Māori were pro-Palestinian and their heroes were Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro and Yassir Arafat, he was referencing an activist heritage, which connected to the 'Red-Green' alliance of radical Leftist and political Islamists.

Furthermore, within academia, post-colonial theories such as settler colonialism have propagated the view that Jews are foreign colonisers of their ancient homeland, a claim that sits uneasily alongside the archeological, historical, literary, and genetic evidence of continuous Jewish connection and presence in the land.

Israel fails to meet the settler colonial model. There is no metropole seeking economic extraction or imperial expansion. The expulsion of Jews from Middle Eastern and North African communities complicates the binary of 'European settler' versus 'native.' Zionism is better understood not as a settler-colonial project, but as the national revival of a dispersed Indigenous people returning to its homeland after centuries of foreign rule. Whatever criticisms may be made of Israeli governments or politicians, the historical experience of Jewish return does not fit neatly into the classical settler-colonial model of a foreign metropole implanting a population for imperial extraction.

New Zealand cannot afford to be complacent in dealing with Jew-hatred, whether antisemitic or antizionist. The government recently approved a motion without notice presented by the ACT Party, stating: "That this House condemn all incidents of antisemitism in New Zealand, and affirm that antisemitism has no place here."

However, when Act Party Member of Parliament, Simon Court posted this news on social media, he was inundated with hateful comments including accusations of Jewish control, being paid off and Holocaust denial. Among the comments: "It's not antisemitism—just criticism of genocide, war crimes and colonialism", "Has Bibi's office infiltrated our shores much?", "If you want to know who controls you, look to who you aren't allowed to criticise".

This may be dismissed as the unfortunate down-side of social media ignorance. However, official data indicates that we have an antisemitism problem in this country, in line with other Western nations.

The New Zealand Jewish Council recently released its Annual Report on Antisemitism in New Zealand.

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Undermining Jewish Presence in the Land

■ **Dr Michael G Wechsler**
Linguist & Biblical Scholar

The most prevalent of the anti-Jewish falsehoods that I will here address—and the one most repeated by the anti-Zionist mobs in the city squares and university quads—is that the Jews in Israel are a colonial entity with no indigenous ties to the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) or the Land of Israel into which they have intruded.

Of course, the presence of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel long predates that of any other existing ethnic group, including Arabs—the significant presence of whom in Israel only began with the Muslim conquest and colonisation of the land in the 7th century CE. By any reasonable measure of indigeneity this confirms the Jews as the preeminent indigenous people of the Land—certainly so according to the collectively agreed-upon qualifications of indigeneity adopted by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, according to which one of the defining characteristics of indigeneity is “historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.” Whether or not one requires such “historical continuity” to include residence in the land of claimed indigeneity—which requirement is highly debatable—makes no difference, since the Jewish people have maintained an unbroken presence in the Land of Israel from antiquity. And according to the same UN Forum another characteristic of indigeneity is “self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.” Hence, any individual born outside of Israel who self-identifies as a Jew and is accepted as such by the community of Jews which has maintained an unbroken presence in the land is part of the same indigenous group.

As to the presence of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel in antiquity, this is as much of a historical truism as anything can be, confirmed by more historical evidence than can be found



Dr Michael G Wechsler. | Photo: Perry Trotter

for most other claims of similar antiquity.

Suffice it to say, for our present purposes, that the presence of the Jews in the land long before the military conquest and colonisation of the land by Muslim Arabs is broadly recognised in classical Muslim historiographical tradition. Information about the Jews, or *Banū Isrāʾīl* (“Children of Israel”), in the Land of Israel during the period covered by the Hebrew Bible and New Testament is found in the works of almost every major classical Arab historian (al-Ṭabarī, al-Masʿūdī, Ibn Khaldūn, etc.). Reference to Jews in the Land during this general period is also attested in the loose collection of narratives known as *Isrāʾīliyyāt* found in Muslim folktales, *ḥadīth* collections, and classical commentaries on the Qurʾān. In the Qurʾān itself, moreover, the view is even attested that God foreordained, or destined (*kataba*), the Land of Israel for the Jews: “O people, enter the Holy Land that Allāh has foreordained for you” (*sūrat al-Māʾida* [5], v. 21). Throughout these sources the Land of Israel is typically designated by the terms *al-ard al-muqaddasa*, *balad bayt al-maqdis*, or simply *bayt al-maqdis*, all of which are calques of Hebrew designations (see the

discussion in sec. III below), as well as the Arabic term *al-Shām*, which also includes modern Lebanon, Syria, and western Jordan. Far less common during this period is the term *Filasṭīn*, or more precisely *jund Filasṭīn*, which comprised the southern military-administrative district (*jund*) of al-Shām, encompassing Judea and most of Samaria (i.e., the *Palaestina Prima* of the early Byzantine period).

As to the continuing, unbroken presence of Jews in the land throughout the medieval period of Islamic and sporadic Crusader rule, as well as the subsequent period of Ottoman rule, this is all richly documented in the carefully-researched studies of scholars such as Moshe Gil, Jacob Mann, Eliyahu Ashtor, and Yitshaq Ben-Zvi, among many others, drawing from an abundance of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources in various languages. Indeed, even in the *Second Encyclopaedia of Islam* (vol. 2, published in 1965) the admission is made that “Palestine had some Jewish inhabitants throughout the period of Islamic rule.” Notwithstanding the notion of hundreds, perhaps, to which the term “some” might give rise, the Jewish population of the Land of Israel during this period, while waxing and waning

according to the ill or good will of the Muslim or Christian ruling class, was in fact quite significant. Although precise population numbers are generally difficult to come by, it can be conservatively estimated that the Jewish population of the land throughout this period numbered in the tens of thousands, and in some places the Jewish population even outnumbered that of Muslims. Thus, at the end of the tenth century, the Muslim geographer Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī, a resident of Jerusalem, wrote in his famous *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* that the majority of the city’s inhabitants were Christians and Jews, whereas “the mosque is devoid of congregations (*jamaʿāt*) and learned assemblies (*majālis*).” On *Purim* of 1039 in Ramla, as described in a Judeo-Arabic letter written in that year by the Jewish communal leader Nathan B Abraham, 400 Jewish men gathered in the main hall of one of the city’s synagogues to engage in a collective reading of the scroll of Esther. From this, as reasonably observed by Moshe Gil, we can infer “that there were approximately a thousand Jewish families residing in the city, which is about 5000 souls.” Geniza documents reveal that, in the early 9th century, Gaza had an important Jewish community, including, apparently, a center of study (cf. the reference to the Masorete “Moses the Gazan” ca. 800!). For its part, Tiberias in Galilee was one of the centres of worldwide Jewish scholarship, being the city to which the Sanhedrin had relocated after the Bar Kokhba rebellion as well as the subsequent location of Yeshivat Geʾon Yaʿaqov—a direct outgrowth of the Sanhedrin and one of the three main Yeshivot at that time (the other two being in Iraq: Sūra and Pumbeditha)—until its relocation to Jerusalem towards the middle of the tenth century. It was also one of the main centers for the Masoretes, Jewish scholars who crystallised the reading and transmission of the Hebrew Bible.

View Michael’s address, shot in Jerusalem in November 2025, here:
<https://www.indigenousembassy.org/articles/the-fabrication-of-a-history>

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According to NZ Police, New Zealand Jews are disproportionately targeted relative to other ethnic and religious groups. The number and severity of reported antisemitic incidents in New Zealand reached unprecedented levels following the 7 October 2023 terror attacks in Israel. There were a total of 143 antisemitic incidents in 2025, the highest number ever recorded in a single

year in New Zealand. Incidents were more severe and included five assaults (the most assaults in any year). One disturbing example was an assault on a kindergarten child by a teacher. There has also been a large number of individual Jewish New Zealanders targeted with antisemitic hate mail sent to private homes. Prominent non-Jewish Israel supporters have also been targeted.

As a nation we need to take stock and watch carefully what is unfolding over the ditch. The Jewish teacher, Sharonne Blum concluded her testimony at the Bondi commission hearing by expressing how heartbroken she was for her students, that they are made to feel excluded and dehumanised as fifteen year olds in the diaspora. She had also made a promise to herself that she would not finish her speech without mentioning

that six months earlier she had buried her husband and sprinkled the soil of Israel in his grave. This act exemplifies the depth of feeling many Jewish people have for Israel. Israel is in their hearts and is core to their identity. These were her final tear-filled words: “That is Zionism.”

New Zealand Jewish Council, *Annual Report on Antisemitism in New Zealand in 2025*, 16 April 2026.

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Beware the False Narrative

Nick Dalgety

Director | Provenance 101

“As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:9

Context Setter

Nelson has been a hotbed in New Zealand for anti-Israel marches since the depraved islamo-nazi Hamas attack on innocent Israeli villages bordering Gaza, on 7 October 2023.

A majority of Palestinians in Gaza and Judea-Samaria (West Bank), supported that attack.

I attended a speaking engagement at the All Saints Anglican Church in Nelson on 9 March 2026. The event flier¹ noted that the speaker Cole Martin, an Anglican Church activist, had spent some time recently in Judea-Samaria.

He claimed that Israel (rather than Islamic *Jihadist* groups) was the oppressor and that churches around the world have fueled the violence in Palestine for decades. Apparently that was achieved through misguided narratives, poor readings of scripture and political ideologies, directly contributing to the assault, imprisonment, persecution and erasure of Christian communities in The Holy Land.

My Response

The speaker described Israel as genocidal, an occupier and operating as an apartheid state towards the Palestinians.

I expressed serious disagreement with his narrative. Here are some suggested actions that we as Christians can take to counter defamatory slurs on the nation of Israel. We need to be like the Berean; compare what is said with The Word to see if there is any truth in what is being claimed.

1. Seek Honest Biblical Discourse in Our Churches on the Relationship Between Israel and the Church, Especially as Our Messiah's Return Approaches.

If we teach from the Bible and apply sound biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, we can come to a very biblical conclusion about Israel. God has a restorative plan for Israel based on Old Testament prophecy and the Apostle Paul's writings in the book of Romans.

2. What is a Palestinian Christian?

The Palestinian Christian is sold to us as the perennial victim. Let's break this down. By common worldly definition, this title refers to Arabs identifying as Palestinian and Christian in Gaza and the so-called West Bank.

A Christian for me is a repentant sinner, who has heard and believed in the Gospel (read *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*), carries his cross daily and follows *Yeshua* (Jesus) as his *Messiah* and Lord.

Palestinians as a people are a propaganda invention! In the 1960's the Soviet KGB with an Arab confederacy, invented this People to transform a population into a weapon to demonise the nascent state of Israel, giving totalitarianism and antisemitism renewed means of action. These are the views of Robert Spencer, the director of *Jihad Watch*.² However, the name is now generally applied to the Arabs and other ethnic groups living in the Palestinian territories.

It is very difficult to confirm the number of Christians in Gaza. Two local Messianic pastors, whom I spoke to soon after the speaking event, believe the number is



| Photo: Shutterstock

small and those believers are under tremendous persecution by local Islamist groups. The murder of a Gazan Christian bookstore owner in 2007 highlights this persecution reality.

Arab Christians in Judea-Samaria (the West Bank), are also seriously persecuted.

Bethlehem is a prime example where, at one time, Christians flourished, yet their population has plummeted once jurisdiction was handed over from Israel to the Palestinian Authority. Pressure includes demands not to preach the gospel and threats to family members.

A real fear of an Arab born-again Christian father is that his daughter will marry a Muslim who pretends to come to Jesus, and then takes her back to Islam.

Remember that Arab Christians think tribally, so they need other Christians in their tribe to protect them against the dominant Muslim tribe.

In Bethlehem, they have significant land ownership and control over the woodwork industry which helps to sustain them. Interestingly, Jewish people also have a strong tribal Jewish identity, helping to explain why they were such a thorn in the flesh to the Roman oppressor.

A Messianic pastor I talked with says that many Arab Christians hold to a form of double replacement theology. First, they wipe out every identity connector set out in scripture and the land to the Jewish people. Then they force every Israel scripture to become allegorical to the Church! Therefore, in Bethlehem, they have connected to their broader tribal group, the Arab nations, and gone against Israel, the latter-day Roman oppressor, by default.

Another Messianic pastor spoke of a growing trend for Bedouin women to wear black garments from head to toe, resulting from an increase in radical Islamic teaching.

3. An Israeli Genocide Is a Blood Libel

Looking at the graph (opposite), how can there be a genocide of Palestinians when their population has grown from 1.55 million in 1982 to 5.56 million today?

John Spencer, an urban warfare expert, shared his views on this issue in mid-2025.³ He said that what is happening in Gaza is tragic yet it is neither genocide nor illegal. Genocide requires clear, provable intent to

destroy a people through sustained, deliberate actions. That burden of proof has not been met.

He goes on to say that the laws of war do not prohibit war itself. They require that military operations distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, that force be proportional to the objective, and that commanders take all feasible precautions to protect civilian life.

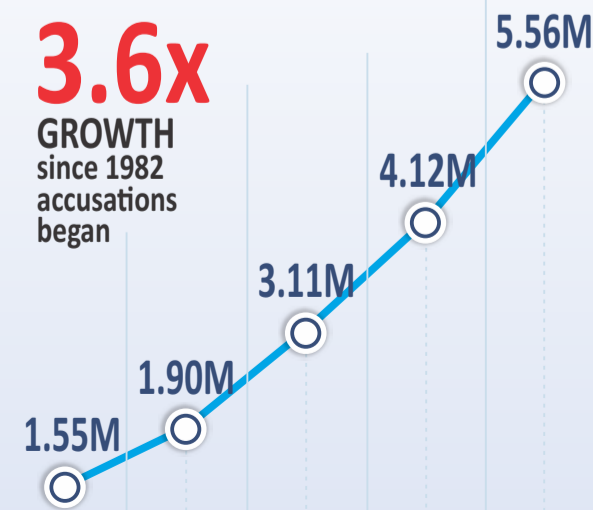
He has watched the IDF do exactly that. He has seen restraint, humanitarian aid, and deliberate compliance with legal standards, often at tactical cost. He goes on to say that this is not a campaign of extermination. Rather it is a war against Hamas, a terrorist army embedded in civilian areas by design.

Palestinian Christian numbers are very hard to confirm. Their numbers have dwindled in locations such as Gaza and Bethlehem because of oppression not by Israel but by their own leadership including Palestinian Authority (Fatah), Hamas and Islamic *Jihad*.

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Palestinian Population in West Bank & Gaza: 1982-2025

Despite decades of conflict and repeated genocide accusations, the Palestinian population has more than tripled.



| Photo: Amir Tsarfati, Behold Israel, 15 April 2026



US—Israel Partnership

The US-Israel partnership is a relationship between a major power and a small, but powerful, regional power. The size difference matters. Size brings economy of scale in production, wider range and big budgets, but also bureaucracy. Importantly, each party brings something that the other party lacks and significantly, the cost of providing what the other party brings is HUGE. As a result, BOTH are stronger. The latest war in Iran has demonstrated the unique capabilities. Additionally, they also share intelligence.

Ideology and culture also matter as they drive compatibility. Both have educated workforces and a culture of excellence combined with a problem-solving and innovative mindset. What Israel provides, that the US doesn't, is ongoing combat experience, the continuous threat of war driving innovation and local knowledge. Israel can draw on an immigrant population with centuries of experience in multiples languages and cultures from a diverse diaspora that spans all continents.

US Military aid to Israel is, in reality, a subsidy to US military contractors with HUGE benefits to the US in the form of fresh eyes, battle testing and ongoing improvements. The Israel link enhances

the prestige, credibility and efficacy of Americans military products and services leading to greater sales and

more confidence in Pentagon procurement. All accomplished without US boots on the ground. The USA is the

largest supplier country of Israel defense products and services with American aid only 15-20 percent of the total.

USA 345 MILLION		SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP	ISRAEL 10 MILLION	
345 Million	→	POPULATION	←	10 Million
Large military USDF	→	MILITARY PROFILE	←	High percentage in IDF
Giant military companies E.g. Lockheed Martin RTX (Palantier), Northrop Grumman, Boeing, General Dynamics	→	DEFENCE INDUSTRY	←	Niche military companies E.g. Elbit, IAI, Rafael ADS, Start-ups like Xtend.me, Robotcan, Kela
Large scale manufacturing	→	MANUFACTURING APPROACH	←	Small scale manufacturing
High cost per unit	→	ECONOMIC FOCUS	←	High value per unit
Tanks, planes, ships, missiles	→	CORE CAPABILITIES	←	Electronics, UAV's, Air Defence Systems
US-based product development	→	R&D MODEL	←	US subsidiary lab development/refinement
In-house testing E.g. F35 aircraft upgrades	→	TESTING & FEEDBACK LOOP	←	Real-world testing Continuous data flow
CIA intelligence	→	INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP	←	Mossad, Shin Bet
US SCALE & INNOVATION Advanced research, design, and mass production		ISRAELI REAL-WORLD EDGE Real-world operational testing, rapid iteration, battlefield-proven solutions		CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT Battlefield data and insights flow back to US systems for upgrades and next-gen development

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Beware the False Narrative

4. Occupying Palestinian Land Is a Myth

Israel is not occupying Palestinian land. There has never been a Palestinian state at any point in history. There was a region known as Palestine from 134 AD when the Romans applied that name, but it was never a people or a nation.

Christians are called to uphold the truth of scripture. One truth set in stone is that God gave the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not to Ismael and Esau who received significant other land through God's bounty. The Jewish people miraculously returned to their Land a second time in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. They can not occupy what is their God-given inheritance.

5. Israeli Apartheid Defies the Facts

Once again Robert Spencer destroys this myth regarding Israel. The term 'apartheid' comes from South Africa, where it referred to a system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination that was in place from 1948 to 1991. The word itself means 'separateness,' and South Africa instituted numerous laws to keep the races apart in schools, workplaces, and areas where the public gathered, such as beaches.

There is absolutely nothing like this in Israel. In Israel, Arabs sit on the Supreme Court, serve in the Knesset and go abroad as ambassadors. The chairman of Israel's largest bank, Bank Leumi, is an Arab. Jews and Arabs work in the same factories and offices.

The only difference in their treatment is that Jews must, while Arabs may serve in the military. The apartheid smear is used by anti-Israeli campaigners because it is a way to demonise the Jewish state without having to bother with actual evidence.

A Hateful Israeli Narrative in Nelson Has Real Consequences

Back to Nelson New Zealand. On Thursday 16 April, I heard that a hateful piece of graffiti had appeared on a Nelson city footbridge. See the photo opposite that I took the morning after, before it was conveniently painted over.

The seeds for this graffiti relate in large part to an appeasing Council and local community who have allowed this hateful antisemitic rhetoric by Palestinian propaganda marchers on our Nelson streets for well over two years. I view the actions of the local Anglican church in a similar light. They have chosen to provide a platform for those seeking Israel's demise through deceptive means. God will not be mocked—this hateful narrative is another gospel (the good news). *Yeshua* is the bearer of good news. Israel is still God's Chosen People for God's gifts and his call with Israel are irrevocable. *Romans 11:29*



Nelson, NZ. 17 April 2026. | Photo: Nick Dalgety

¹ These sources were noted on the event flier. <https://www.pna.nz/> and <https://www.facebook.com/TeTIPalestine/>
² The FIVE MYTHS About Israel Perpetrated by the Pro-Hamas Left By Robert Spencer. <https://yaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/IsraeliPalestinian-Pamphlet-single-pages-1.pdf>
³ I'm a War Scholar. There is No Genocide In Gaza. John Spencer Jul 24 2025. <https://spencerguard.substack.com/p/im-a-war-scholar-there-is-no-genocide-and-israel-is-not-committing-genocide> and, Israel is Not Committing Genocide. Exposing The Distortion of Law and Truth. John Spencer and Arsen Ostrovsky Sep 05 2025. <https://spencerguard.substack.com/p/israel-is-not-committing-genocide#:~:text=Israel%20is%20Not,AND%20ARSEN%20OSTROVSKY>

Western and Islamic Lawfare Against Israel

■ Andrew Tucker

Director General | The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) | www.thinc.info

In contemporary conflicts, states routinely use legal fora to frame the adversary's conduct in legally charged terms—thus shaping global perceptions of legitimacy; influencing political decision making among allies and partners; imposing reputational and diplomatic costs; and creating a narrative 'anchor' that media and NGOs will repeat.

There is nothing wrong with this. But where the highest court in the world—the ICJ—is deliberately weaponised to attack the sovereignty of other states, a red line is crossed.

For the last five years, there has been a strange alliance between Islamist states (which have an anti-Western agenda) together with progressive lawyers in Western states like Denmark and Netherlands. They have been acting in concert to engage in litigation under the 1948 Genocide Convention in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to undermine Western-oriented states, especially the State of Israel.

So how does it work? The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) comprises 57 states, most of them having an Islamic majority. The OIC has been instrumental in bringing two cases under the Genocide Convention to the ICJ: *The Gambia vs Myanmar*, and *South Africa vs Israel*. The revolutionary regime in Iran also played a key role in these cases.

Once these cases were launched, progressive legal advisers in key Western countries like UK, Germany, Denmark, France, Netherlands and Canada convinced their governments to 'intervene' in these cases, pushing for an expansive approach to the concept of 'genocide'. The end goal of both the Islamist states and progressive lawyers: to have Israel convicted of genocide.

The timeline: in 2019, the OIC enabled the small African country The Gambia to bring genocide proceedings against Myanmar before the ICJ over atrocities committed against the Muslim Rohingya population. The OIC formally encouraged and authorised legal action through resolutions adopted by its member states, and OIC summits and ministerial meetings endorsed the strategy of pursuing proceedings before the ICJ. Since only states can bring contentious cases before the ICJ, the OIC could not sue Myanmar itself, so it designated The Gambia—an OIC member state and party to the Genocide Convention—to institute proceedings. As



| Photo: AI

The battle over Israel is no longer confined to the battlefield—it is now being fought internationally.

the litigation was expensive, the OIC helped finance it through a special fund supported by member-state contributions and the Islamic Solidarity Fund. The OIC also coordinated diplomatic support among its 57 member states, publicly backed the proceedings, promoted accountability efforts internationally, and supported engagement with international lawyers and advocacy groups involved in the case. After the ICJ ordered provisional measures in January 2020 requiring Myanmar to prevent genocidal acts and preserve evidence, the OIC continued publicly urging compliance and rallying international support for the Rohingya cause.

The Myanmar case shows how a small state with no direct territorial connection to the atrocities could invoke obligations owed to all parties under the Genocide Convention, with strong backing from a multilateral organisation like the OIC.

After six years, the Myanmar proceedings is now drawing to a close. All arguments and evidence have been presented, the Court is now writing its judgment.

In the meantime, in late 2023, South Africa brought a case under the Genocide Convention against Israel claiming that Israel is committing genocide of the Palestinian people. Like The Gambia, South Africa had neither the finances nor the expertise to mount such a case; it was likely funded by Iran, with support of Qatar and other Islamist states.

For the last two years, the Myanmar case has been used by the Islamist states to lay a legal foundation for South Africa to

succeed in its claim that Israel has committed genocide. Strikingly, the legal teams on both cases are almost identical; comprising highly-paid progressive international lawyers with strong anti-Israel sentiments like Professor Philippe Sands.

Even more striking is the role of six Western states in these proceedings. Central to the definition of genocide in the Genocide Convention is the requirement of 'specific intent'. In its jurisprudence to date, the ICJ has insisted that genocide exists only if the intention to destroy a people is the only possible inference that can be drawn from the factual circumstances. The ICJ has held that "claims against a State involving charges of exceptional gravity must be proved by evidence that is fully conclusive," and the Court must be "fully convinced" that allegations of the crime of genocide have been committed. France, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Canada and Denmark are now urging the court to lower the evidentiary threshold, arguing that the construction of the Convention in relation to the requirement of specific intent requires what they call a "comprehensive and holistic" approach to the available evidence. They also urge the Court to rely 100% on UN reports, many of which have an anti-Western bias—such as reports by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese.

For example, these states are trying to convince the ICJ that because the finding of genocide includes the intent to destroy "at least a substantial part of the particular group", and children form

a substantial part of the groups protected by the Genocide Convention, therefore high mortality rates among children provides an indication of the intention to destroy a group as such, at least in part. Given the significance of children to the survival of all groups, evidence of harm to children may contribute to an inference that the perpetrators intended to destroy a substantial part of the protected group.

Another argument they raise is that forced displacement may also constitute evidence of specific intent to commit genocide. This may be so even in cases where affected members of the group are not transferred to a place where they are subjected to conditions leading to their death or destruction. Acts of 'ethnic cleansing' may occur in parallel to acts prohibited by Article II of the Genocide Convention and may be significant as indicative of the presence of a specific intent (*dolus speciosus*) inspiring those acts. Furthermore, "the violent military operation triggering the forced displacement of members of a targeted group may similarly contribute to evidence of a specific intent to destroy the protected group, regardless of whether the acts triggering the forced displacement fall within one of the five categories of underlying acts of genocide."

All of this totally ignores the fact that regimes like Hamas deliberately conduct asymmetric warfare—strategies of using human shields to ensure the maximum mortality rate of their own children. The arguments of Netherlands etc not only will make it easier for progressive ICJ judges to convict Israel of genocide; it actually raises risks for all Western countries engaged in terrorism.

The risk is that the applicable standard no longer demands that the perpetrator acted with genocidal intent. The armed forces of Western states engaged in defensive operations against terror regimes or in other counter-terrorism activities will be exposed to the risk of allegations they are committing genocide. As countries like the USA, Paraguay and Fiji have argued, the scope of the crime of genocide must be approached with special restraint. Attempts to broaden the definition of genocide risk diluting the specific normative function of the Convention, blurring its boundaries with other international obligations, and eventually undermining the treaty framework.

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thinc. exists to strengthen the integrity of international law, counter legal narrative inflation, and promote responsible, evidence based discourse in conflicts where international law is being instrumentalised.



Embassy Jubilee History 2009-2017

During the period when the Embassy was closed, diplomatic relations reverted to Canberra. So the Israeli Embassy in Canberra took over relations with the NZ government in addition to their other roles. This meant that all government-to-government dialogue was far more difficult as the honorary consul had limited powers and no power to act in political matters. Canberra is up to three flights away from Wellington. It showed the value of having an embassy in New Zealand. When issues arose, as they inevitably will, it was far more difficult for Israel's case to be heard in New Zealand. Over the closed period there were a series of Israeli Australian ambassadors cross-credited to New Zealand, but few became well-known in New Zealand, except perhaps, the last one. The last cross-credited Israeli Australian Ambassador Yuval Rotem (2007-2013) would come to play a much larger role later on in his career, drawing on his New Zealand experience. On our side, the NZ Government recognised the need for a diplomatic presence in Israel in addition to the Ankara regional base, and in 1998 appointed an Israeli with links to New Zealand business, Mr Gad Propper as Honorary Consul, a position he held until early 2022.

The move to re-open the Wellington Embassy was part of a concerted effort by the Netanyahu government to forge diplomatic and trade relations across the globe; particularly in the Asian region, and helped along by New Zealand's gateway status to the all-important South Pacific nations coupled with the prospect of a change in New Zealand government. It was also a period in which the number of Israelis visiting and living in New Zealand was climbing steadily. The role of Israeli Ambassador to New Zealand and four South Pacific nations became the premise of diplomats on their final postings. For many, it was a small, less busy role with the bonus of living amongst genial people in a safe, beautiful country, even if the New Zealand government was less friendly.

Pacific representation was divided between the Australian and New Zealand embassies in a roughly North and South Pacific fashion based on ethnic groups and historic ties. Canberra had responsibility for Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Nauru. Wellington had the Cook Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Niue. The rest were looked after by non-resident diplomatic staff. But in recent times Israel sought diplomatic relations with twelve small island Pacific nations and the structure of accreditation will change accordingly once the new embassy is opened in Fiji.



The Beehive: Symbol of NZ Government and why Embassies reside in Wellington. | Photo: Shutterstock

Diplomatic setbacks, cultural connections, and determined ambassadors all played a role in shaping Israel's modern relationship with New Zealand and the South Pacific.

The acceptance and progress an embassy makes generally depends upon four factors: the state of affairs and attitudes of host and home governments, global developments, host and media understanding of the home nation, and incidents or positive developments in the host country. In Israel's case, wars will always place an enormous burden on the staff and diplomatic relations curtailing many activities. It means that diplomatic staff are on call 24/7 in addition to the regular demands to be available during Jerusalem working hours with a seven-hour time difference to boot, meaning most nights! But so too, does a change of government in the host country and other matters. Every diplomatic tenure has to be viewed in the context of what was happening in the background, both positive and negative. Remembering also that New Zealand is an isolated, tiny player in world affairs.

Early Reopening

The man tasked with the Wellington reopening role was experienced diplomat Shemi Tzur ably assisted by two key local people—David Zwartz and Gael Keren. It was like starting from scratch and Shemi Tzur threw himself into the role, became highly respected and known as a 'man of action'. He was joined by Teddy Poplinger as Deputy. All helped by strong, local support and a new National-led government; that was initially very favourable towards Israel.

For six months the start-up laboured on the Terrace in Wellington in temporary

premises awaiting accreditation, finally opening on 15 April 2010. The Embassy then moved into their purpose-built current premises with a sizeable staff for a small nation. Christian Israel supporters were delighted. Prayers had been answered. The Working Holiday Visa scheme, extremely popular amongst Israelis, was finalised at this time. Seminars for Maori business and clean technologies were also held.

Following Ambassador Tzur was Yosef Livne, a man who had spent time in South America and had school-age children linking him with the local community. His presence was a bonus for the Spanish-speaking staff the Embassy had inherited from the closure of the Peruvian Embassy and with Spanish-speaking diplomats. Ambassador Yossi Livne was a people-person maintaining links with contacts from all his postings. He clearly loved New Zealand and quickly became a favourite with Christians across the country. But it was during his era when relations with the NZ government soured over Israel's policies.

Cultural activities were established right from the start of the modern era organised by a very enthusiastic public relations professional. The Embassy sponsored acts in the International Festival of the Arts like the prestigious Batsheva Dance company, brought Israeli films to international film festivals and hosted outdoor events like Independence Day (*Yom Ha'Atzama'ut*)

and *Hannukah* in the Park, bringing together the three communities—Israeli, Jewish and Christian. These events formed a key part of Israeli and Jewish calendar events in addition to Holocaust remembrance. Maori connections were always an important part of the Embassy's activities.

Res 2334

Dr Itzak Gerberg was next to follow. He came from being Ambassador to Georgia and had links with South Africa and an impressive collection of colourful, silk ties and pocket kerchiefs from his Silk Road connections. He was just getting settled in and on holiday when New Zealand dropped the bombshell in the final hours of their tenure on the UN Security Council (UNSC) with Resolution 2334 on 23 December 2016. The response from Jerusalem was almost immediate. Ambassador Gerberg was given a few hours to leave the country as the Ambassador was withdrawn. Israel blocked New Zealand's Ambassador to Israel in a reciprocal move. This left newly-minted Deputy Avital Mimran-Rosenberg, the child of New York Jews who made *Aliyah* as idealistic young adults, in charge, and was the making of her career. She left shortly after the matter was resolved. The rupture was a low point that dragged on for about six months. In the intervening years, former Israeli Australian Ambassador, Yuval Rotem, had risen in the ranks to become the head of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was his background in Australia and knowledge of the New Zealand scene that led to the direct top-level negotiations with the National Government under Bill English. Diplomatic relations were restored in Mid-2017.

Ambassador Gerberg returned a changed man, enthusiastic to rebuild relations. He was joined by Kasa Bainesay-Harbor, a personable Ethiopian Jew who had left Ethiopia as a child on the Great Trek to freedom. Her story enthralled Kiwis. She broke the popular perception that Israelis are white and from Europe shown for example, by hosting the first-ever observance in New Zealand of the Ethiopian Jewish *Sigd* festival. It was an enlightened choice and she was a passionate Zionist. Sadly, the enormous demands of the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) trifold role, meant that she wasn't able to fulfill her diplomatic potential. Kasa left the post early, but not before recording a powerful clip with The Israel Institute of NZ over her Zionist commitments as a diplomatic advocacy tool and as a fitting farewell to New Zealand.



Jewish Life—Britain

■ Joanna Moss

When Britain celebrated 350 years of British Jewry in 2006 with a display in Trafalgar Square, it was the celebration of the life and history of the longest standing minority community in the land. Jews were to be found in almost every area of society and were both respected and integrated into British, primarily English life. Chief Rabbi Baron Jonathan Sacks was a household name. Robert, Lord Winston was fascinating audiences with medicine and science. Simon Schama taught history in the university and across television screens. Such was public acceptance and respect for Jews. How things have changed. Sadly, Anglo Jewry is diminishing in significance and facing an uncertain future as their place in British society has been questioned by more recent militant arrivals. Britain has the fourth highest Jewish population in the world, but it remains a tiny proportion of the UK population (0.4%).

Overview

As in France, Jews have lived in Britain since early times. In the 11th century William the Conqueror invited Jewish merchants and financiers into Britain. But this changed when they were expelled in 1290. Oliver Cromwell invited them back in 1650's. The exact history is not settled. But *Sephardic* Jews were the ones who came back first.

France was the first country to emancipate Jews (late 18th century), whereas in Britain it was a more gradual process throughout the 19th century because of the central role of the Church of England in insisting upon Christian oaths. Antisemitism has plagued British Jewry throughout its history, but it has been undercover for much of the post-war period following public acknowledgement of Holocaust horrors and a commitment to equal rights for minorities. As Britain became more secular, few cared about Jewish identity in multicultural Britain. That was until 7 October 2023.

The 2021 census registered 278,000 (core) population with an estimated 370,000 (expanded community) depending upon definition (religion versus ethnicity), providing a solid core to Jewish life centred on London with a smaller community in Manchester. Few Jews live in Scotland (6,000), much fewer in Wales and Northern Ireland. But it's well below the heyday of 450,000 Jews in 1945. British Jews tend to be educated, own their own homes and are relatively wealthy. Many are self-employed. British Jewry has had a strong attachment to Israel borne out by the number and strength of Israel-related groups such as Conservative Friends of Israel.



Orthodox Jews demonstrate in Parliament Square, Westminster, UK, 2024. | Photo: Livvy 2020, Shutterstock

Waves

Historically, it was a small community with only 35,000 in 1860, but rising to 60,000 by 1880. These Jews were predominantly middle class. As the big wave of poor Jews fleeing Russian Empire pogroms began, the community ballooned to 250,000 by 1914. However, 1905 immigration restrictions stopped the flow. These newcomers were radically different from the established community. They settled in the East End of London, Leeds and Manchester. Britain became a haven for Jews fleeing Nazism with 70,000 arriving pre WW2 and 80,000 during the war. More recently Jews arrived from Europe, the Middle East after 1947 vote, and of course, from the British Commonwealth.

Ethos

Jews have lived in Britain witnessing the rise and fall of the British Empire. As a financial centre, Jews have been integral to the City of London. They have a decidedly British culture taking on British values and mores becoming integrated into society whilst retaining their Jewish culture as a minority. Britain has been good to the Jews and, in return, they stress their loyalty to the nation. In every community building the monarch's photograph is displayed prominently and prayers for the Royal family and government are an integral part of worship services.

For 100 years Anglo-Christians fervently worshipped, prayed and fasted for the re-emergence of Israel and the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland primarily in 19th century on the back of the Reformation, Puritanism and Philosemitism. This laid the foundation for support for Israel and the Mandate.

Make-up Today

British Jewry is ostensibly two communities—the *Haredim* (25%) and the rest. The latter is very mainstream, religiously and politically diverse, and

contracting. Religiously, it is predominantly *Ashkenazi*, dominated by Orthodox and Reform adherents, with smaller numbers following Liberal, *Masorti* and *Sephardic* traditions.

London increasingly became the home of British Jewry with religious Jews tending to live in Jewish areas such as North London, but not exclusively. Jewish residents have recently moved into such areas as Bristol, Oxford and Cambridge. *Non-Haredim* Jews have been marrying out in the past few decades, but not on the scale of American Jewry. Community and identity remain important. More than 50% of Jews have a synagogue affiliation which acts as the central focus of Jewish life in much of the community.

Governing Bodies

The British Board of Deputies, established in 1760, is the official body of British Jewry liaising with media and government. Religiously, there are separate bodies based on the type of religious practice. The Chief Rabbi acts as community spokesman, but only represents some strands.

The Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) covers major charities, synagogues and community organisations with a planning focus and the Community Security Trust (CST) is focused on security and antisemitism. Interestingly, The Institute for Jewish Policy Research collects data and produces research. Each religious tradition has their own movements governing religious education and representation.

Key Personalities

British Jews have distinguished themselves in many fields including academia, the law/judiciary, medicine, state and military. David Salomons became Lord Mayor of London in 1855, Lionel de Rothschild became an MP in 1858 and George Jessel Solicitor General in 1871. Then PM Benjamin Disraeli and Herbert Samuels (Israel Mandate High

Commissioner). Prominent politicians include Nigel Lawson and Ed and David Milliband.

Culturally; there are writers such as Harold Pinter, Howard Jacobsen and Simon Sebag Montefiore. Beatles manager Brian Epstein, singer Amy Winehouse and many actors e.g. Peter Sellers, Helena Bonham Carter, Stephen Fry, Miriam Margolyes and Daniel Radcliffe and comedian David Baddiel.

In industry, the founders of Marks and Spencer, Debenhams, Tesco, ICI and Saatchi and Saatchi were Jews. Journalists Melanie Philips and Jonathan Sacerdoti. Chefs Ottolenghi and Nigella Lawson and David Deutsch in quantum computing.

Education

Education remains a top priority for many Jewish families. Historically, Jews attended state schools and Hebrew schools for religious instruction. Now 60% attend Jewish schools. There are 45 general Jewish schools and 91 *Haredi* ones. Jewish high schools are some of the top schools in the UK. As in Israel, there is concern over the content of *Haredi* curricula including basic education.

Oxford, University College London, University of Warwick and SOAS offer Jewish studies programmes. Jewish students are finding it increasingly hostile on university campuses and this may drive young people to seek alternatives offshore.

Culture

Limmud is the main annual Jewish cultural festival combining lectures on a wide array of topics. There's also the Jewish film festival, Jewish Book week and Jewish Music week.

The *Jewish Chronicle* began publication in 1841. Thereafter, the *Jewish News* and *Jewish Telegraph* appeared. Opened in 2013, JW3 is a community arts, educational and cultural centre in the heart of Jewish London.

Antisemitism & Aliyah

Jews have been accepted and respected in society. But things changed in 2010's. Increasingly, many British Jews don't see a future for their children or their community. The government seems unwilling to address the problem, yet pays for security. Jewish institutions are heavily fortified. Yet sadly, attacks have been frequent, brutal and fatal.

Like French Jews, British Jews are now being squeezed and harassed. Since 7 October, a record 50% British Jews are considering leaving. That's staggering. British real estate purchases in Israel will be a major indicator of a forthcoming exodus. Some will go to America. Historically more Jews arrived from Israel than left in a 3:2 ratio. But this is about to change.



Through Joy and Tears

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President | CFOIC
Heartland

Three days before Memorial Day and Israel Independence Day, the US announced a cease-fire with Iran. The missiles that had been raining down upon Israel since the first of March, stopped suddenly and we breathed a collective sigh of relief. Unfortunately, the Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon had no interest in laying down their weapons and their attacks against northern Israel continue. But for most of the country, the Memorial Day ceremonies and Independence Day celebrations that had been put on hold, were suddenly back on schedule. Communities, towns and cities scrambled to rehearse, set up stages, sound systems and carnival rides. And somehow, it all came together.

No one believed the cease-fire would last long, especially since Iran seemed committed, as always, to the destruction of Israel and to the continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile systems. But we were relieved by the break. We rejoiced in being able to sleep through the night and slowly began to gain confidence that life could resume normalcy, at least for a while.

Israel is an enigma, to people around the world, but no less to ourselves. Our young men are still serving hundreds of days each year in the reserves, fighting the worst terrorists on multiple fronts. Hundreds of homes were destroyed during the recent Iranian missile attacks, with people seeking refuge with families and in hotels. Most of the north is still living under irregular missile barrages with many still not willing to return to their homes in the northern-most communities. And yet, we rejoiced on Israel Independence Day. The children love to walk around with spray foam, spraying everyone in sight. My husband barely dodged an attack! There was music and dancing, falafel and chips. We barbecued both on Tuesday evening and on Wednesday afternoon—enjoying meat and salads and all kinds of trimmings with friends and family. Walking around the festivities, you would be hard-pressed to identify the fear and uncertainty that was so prevalent just days earlier. How can this be? How can we face an existential threat one day and laugh and celebrate the next?

Since the early days of the State, our leadership decided to place Memorial Day for our Fallen Soldiers on the day before Independence Day. There have always been those who question the proximity of such diametrically opposed days—a day of profound mourning just before a day of equally profound



The people of Shaked in northern Samaria celebrate Israel's Independence Day in a display of flags and joy. | Photo: Sondra Oster Baras

From mourning our fallen soldiers to celebrating independence, Israelis continue to hold joy in one hand while wiping tears away with the other.

celebration. But that is really what Israel is about.

Israel is a miracle. After nearly 2000 years of exile, discrimination and near destruction, we returned to our ancient Homeland and restored our nation as a political entity, a nation among nations. No longer hounded as a minority group dispersed all over the world, we were free to determine our own future, even as we drew upon our rich and shared past. But winning our independence and sustaining it has never been easy. Ever since the earliest years of modern Zionism, our Arab enemies tried to murder us, expel us and prevent us from reaching our national and religious aspirations. We had no choice but to fight to secure our freedom and very existence.

The IDF started with nothing—a few second-hand sten guns left over from World War II, four airplanes that had to be held together in the most primitive ways. The US and most of Europe declared an arms boycott against Israel, even as they anticipated the destruction of the fledgling Israel. But we defied all expectations. We drove our enemies out of most of Israel and we built a state. We built a powerful military, including the best air force and the best intelligence services in the world today. We worked hard, but none of this would have been possible without God's help. And it also would not have been possible without the ongoing sacrifice of so many of our young men and women who fought bravely and fell in battle.

We have no right to celebrate Israel's

Independence without first remembering and mourning those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could celebrate.

Today, that dual experience hits home like never before. We were able to celebrate Israel's Independence Day this year because we knew how hard our soldiers and fighter pilots worked to bring us to the cease-fire. And people paid a price—soldiers and civilians lost their lives, their homes and their security. But when we celebrate, we acknowledge that the price had value, it had enormous meaning.

The emotional switch that we all make each year between Memorial Day and Independence Day, was also good training for the roller-coaster we have been experiencing for the past two and a half years. From the depths of the horrific massacre of 7 October, 2023, from the mourning for our fallen soldiers—during the first year of the war, nearly every day we mourned another fallen soldier—we were able to identify moments of hope. We recognized the miracle when Iranian missiles first attacked Israel and the Iron Dome downed every one that was aimed at inhabited areas. We heard stories from our soldier sons, sons-in-law, husbands and relatives about near misses. We celebrated like never before when our hostages came home. Through all of this and from the very beginning of our restoration in our precious land, we have found ways to hold joy in one hand, while wiping the tears from our eyes

with the other. I can't explain how we do it, but I can assure you we do. It is just how we are. And Israel continues to rank amongst the happiest nations on the planet. Explain that one!

Independence Day in Israel is not only a wonderful national celebration. It is a spiritual one. Just as we stop to remember our fallen soldiers and the sacrifice they made before we can celebrate, we also remember God's mercies before we start picnicking. In synagogues and public areas all over the land, Independence Day celebrations begin with a prayer service. It is a service of rejoicing—we sing *Psalm 126* to the tune of *Hatikvah*. Like our ancient forebears, when we returned to Israel it was a dream come true—a dream so beautifully articulated by Naftali Herz Imber, the Jewish poet who wrote *Hatikvah* in 1877.

As I write this, we are waiting anxiously to learn if the US and Iran will reach an agreement. And there is great consensus in Israel that an agreement could be a very bad thing. If we were dealing with a normal country with a normal government that takes the interests of its people into account, Iran would certainly understand that nothing good can come from continued bombardment from the US and Israel. They would give up their nuclear programme, their ballistic missiles programme and invest in their people. But that is not Iran. So long as Iran is an Islamist Republic with a national suicidal/*jihadist* mentality, it will continue to come after Israel. It will lie, cheat and steal and then find a way to continue developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. If the sanctions are lifted and billions of dollars flow into Iran, they will use that money to rearm, both themselves and their proxies— Hamas and Hezbollah. Nothing good can come out of an agreement with Iran. They must be defeated. Totally. There is no other option.

So for now, we do anticipate a return to hostilities, to additional missile attacks with its fear, sleepless nights and ongoing damage. But it will be worth it if we can finally defeat Iran and pave the way for a new Iran. If we stop too soon, Iran will be like a wounded lion—angry and powerful enough to do real damage.

But regardless of what happens, we will continue to hold joy in one hand, even as we dig in, fight on, and wipe our tears with the other. Because we will never lose hope and faith in the God of Israel that there will be a better time.

Sondra Oster Baras is the Founder and International President of CFOIC Heartland, representing the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria to Christians all over the world. To support the urgent needs of the people of Judea and Samaria, during this terrible war, please use the coupon on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).



The Afterlife According to Scripture—Part 3

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Director | Beth Melekh International

Notwithstanding certain texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the collected books of the New Testament were written at least 30 years prior to the earliest codified extra-Biblical post temple Rabbinical Jewish writings, with the possible exception of the Mishnah.

Therefore, the texts of the New Testament stand as an illuminating view into the theological thinking and practices of first century Biblical Judaism in the land of Israel, which at that time was under Roman occupation and named Judea.

Numerous New Testament Scriptures address the subject of the afterlife and make clear distinctions between the various elements associated with the human transition from life to death, and then, after the Judgement, to everlasting life or everlasting death/torment, in respect of the deceased's position in relationship to God.

Many of these Scriptures are misrepresented by modern scholars who seem to be jumping through hoops to try and prove that the ancient Biblical text actually says something entirely opposite to what the plain meaning suggests.

What Does the New Testament Actually Say About the Afterlife?

The Greek *Hades*, equivalent to the Hebrew *Sheol*, occurs ten times in the New Testament and reflects the *TaNakh* use of *Sheol* as the holding place for the departed.

The noun *Gehenna/Gehinnom*, is used twelve times in the New Testament, and on each occasion is clearly describing a specific part of *Sheol* where the departed wicked dwell in perpetual torment awaiting the Judgement and a continuation of their torment in the Lake of Fire. (*Matthew 5:22, 29-30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; James 3:5-6*).

Some foolishly claim that *Gehenna/Gehinnom* simply relates to the continual burning of refuse in the valley of Hinnom and not to the afterlife. *Yeshua* refutes this outright:

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (Matthew 10:28)

Note that *Yeshua's* hearers are admonished not to fear those who kill the physical body in this life but instead to fear God, who, is ultimately in control of the death of the human body, and post death, is able to destroy both the body and the soul/spirit in a continual burning (*Gehenna/Gehinnom*).

There is no question that this verse



Panoramic view of Jerusalem's Old City overlooking the Hinnom Valley and Sultan's Pool, from Yemin Moshe to Mount Zion. | Photo: Shutterstock

Sheol contains two distinct places, the Bosom of Abraham (Paradise) and a place of tormenting fire.

describes *Gehenna/Gehinnom* as a place that exists spiritually beyond physical death and is therefore described using the valley of Hinnom as a metaphor only because the reality is something terrifyingly inexplicable. Something which is beyond physical death.

Yeshua quotes the prophet *Isaiah (66:24)* repeatedly in describing the perpetual nature of the torment in *Gehenna/Gehinnom* which awaits the wilfully unrepentant wicked following physical death (*Mark 9:42-48*).

Paradise, *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden) and the Bosom of Abraham are synonyms.

The Greek Paradise is used three times in the New Testament, and in every instance refers to the distinct place within *Sheol/Hades* where the righteous await the Judgement and eternal life.

To the thief on the cross alongside *Yeshua*, who in humble repentance honoured *Yeshua* acknowledging Him as the promised Messianic King, *Yeshua* said: *“Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise!” (Luke 23:43)*

We know that *Yeshua* died that day and descended into *Sheol*, into Paradise. He did not go to the Father in the heavens until after His resurrection. This is consistent with the ancient and first century Jewish understanding of *Sheol/Hades* and its two distinct parts divided by an uncrossable chasm (*Luke 16:19-31*).

In *2 Corinthians 12:2-4* Paul the Apostle describes himself in a vision, as being ‘taken away’ on two separate occasions, once to the third heaven and once to

Paradise. Paul, a first century Jew, chooses his words carefully to ensure that two different locations are understood by his readers. This is also why he repeats the phrase *“I knew a man... whether in the body or out of the body I can't see, God knows,”* prior to describing each instance.

We know Paul is describing a vision and not a journey in the body (meaning not physically travelling) because Scripture states plainly that *“it's appointed to a human being to die once (a final time in the case of the temporarily resurrected) and then the Judgement!” (Hebrews 9:27)*.

We note that there is no room in Scripture for a human being to traverse worlds or enter the heavens/heaven prior to the Judgement. *Yeshua* says, *“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13)*.

Although this is said prior to His resurrection, we know based on the words of the writer of the book of Hebrews (according to the Holy Spirit), which were written following *Yeshua's* resurrection, that, *“it's appointed to a human being to die once (a final time in the case of the temporarily resurrected) and then the Judgement!” (Hebrews 9:27)*.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the believing communities. To the person who overcomes, I will give the right to eat of the Eiytz Chayim (tree of life) which is in Gan-Eyden (Paradise) of God.” (Revelations 2:7)

Eiytz Chayim (Tree of life) is a powerful Hebrew symbol that connects the

creation and the Garden of Eden (*Genesis 2:9; 3:22, 24*) to the present *Gan-Eyden* (Paradise: the distinct part of *Sheol* set apart for the righteous, also known as the Bosom of Abraham. [*Luke 16:19-31; Luke 23:43*]). It also connects the believer to the future unifying of *Gan-Eyden* (Paradise) and the *Olam Haba* (World to come), in that the *Eiytz Chayim* (Tree of life) seems to act as a conduit between the temporal Paradise *Gan-Eyden* of *Sheol* and the eternal city which is outside of the universe in the third heaven awaiting the time of the end when eternity will consume the sin affected creation and the New Jerusalem will come down to converge with the present city and engulf the righteous in the manifest presence of God.

In the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (*Luke 16:19-31*) *Yeshua* describes *Sheol* as it was understood by His hearers in the first century CE, and more importantly based on His personal knowledge of it.

It's important to note that this parable is the only parable *Yeshua* shares where He uses a proper noun ‘Lazarus’, a specific individual. The parables of the rabbis and those of *Yeshua* were most often teaching stories that used general nouns and morals to expound on a spiritual idea. They were not considered to reflect an actual set of events but were simply used as teaching tools. However, on certain occasions actual events were described using the names of specific individuals. These accounts/parables were then employed to teach a lesson but were also understood to be factual accounts. This is how we know that *Yeshua's* parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man is describing *Sheol* as it actually exists and not simply as a figurative location.

The account of Lazarus and the Rich Man teaches us a number of things about the afterlife and in particular about the nature of *Sheol/Hades*:

- *Sheol/Hades* is the holding place of the departed, both righteous and wicked alike.
- *Sheol* contains two distinct places, the Bosom of Abraham (Paradise) and a place of tormenting fire (*Gehenna/Gehinnom*) which are divided by an uncrossable chasm.
- Both the righteous and the wicked are conscious in *Sheol*. The seat of Biblical Hebrew consciousness is not the brain/intellect but the centre of being the *neshamah* (a direct convergence of God's breath (*ruach*: spirit) and created matter. Therefore, a human being's consciousness continues after death. According to the Biblical Hebrew worldview intellect and consciousness are not the same thing. The brain dies but the consciousness is transcendent.



Israel and the Brain Virus

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

“Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come.” Isaiah 41:22

A popular trope among those who oppose Israel is to deny that any Christians before Nelson Darby in the 19th century saw a prophetic future for the Jews. Dr Taylor Marshall—a popular blogger—calls those arguing for such a future ‘infantile’; Tucker Carlson calls Christian Zionism ‘heresy’ and a ‘brain virus’. These critics position themselves as guardians of mainstream Christians and commonsense.

In my book, *Israel’s Land and People in History & Prophecy*, I debunk the narrative and attacks on Zionism as settler-colonialism etc., favoured by such sources. But what of the Bible?

Set aside debates about the detail and sequence of end-time events and we arrive at two basic propositions on Bible prophecies over Israel:

- A. That the Lord promises the renewal of ethnic Israel to Himself, and this promise is active and trustworthy;
- B. That the Lord promises the restoration of the Holy Land to ethnic Israel, and this promise is active and trustworthy.

Of course, there is a wide variety of views about Israel’s prophetic future. We can trace the roots of both those that promote such a future and those that deny it back to the early church. Both have developed over time, so that their current positions can both be described as ‘recent’.

Here is a list of some pre-19th century notable people and writings who support one or both of A and B above:

- Origen (c185-253) early theologian: A
- John Chrysostom (c347-407)



Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was an English Particular Baptist preacher. | Photo: Al

archbishop of Constantinople, strongly against Jews and Judaism: A

- Augustine of Hippo (354-430) founding father of theology, who spiritualised much prophecy, but not Israel’s spiritual restoration: A
- Joachim of Fiore (c1135-1202) visionary monk, spoke to King Richard I en route to second Crusade: A
- Albertus Magus (c. 1200-1280) influential philosopher: A
- Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) the rock of Catholic theology: A
- John Calvin (1509-1564) leader of the Reform movement: A
- 1560 edition Geneva Bible: A, arguably B
- Thomas Draxe (?-1618) English classicist, published about Jews’ return 1609: A, B
- Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) influential work on Jews’ return to the Holy Land published 1615: A, B
- Following Brightman in 17th century England: Henry Finch, Joseph Mede,

William Bridge, Giles Fletcher, John Owen, Henry Oldenburg: A, B

- 1619 Canons of Dordt: Preamble: A, B
- John Dury (1596-1680) Scottish Calvinist: A, B
- Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) his 1649 sermon to Parliament officially printed: A, B
- Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) Dutch theology professor, notably close to dispensationalism: A, B
- John Milton (1608-1674) eminent poet: A, B
- 1645 Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God: Public Prayer before Sermon: A*
- 1648 Westminster Larger Catechism (191): A*
- 1658 Savoy Declaration (26.5): A*
- Increase Mather (1639-1723) New England preacher: A, B
- Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) eminent scientist: A, B
- Nicolaus Zinzendorf (1700-1760) leader of the Moravians: A, B
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) American revivalist: A, B
- John Wesley (1703-1791) evangelist: A, B
- Charles Wesley (1707-1788) hymn writer: A, B

“Of All The Ancient Race

Not One Be Left Behind,

But Each, Impelled By Secret Grace,

His Way To Canaan Find.

We Know It Must Be Done,

For God Hath Spoke The Word:

All Israel Shall The Saviour Own,

To Their First State Restored”

Charles Wesley, *Almighty God Of Love*

All those listed above understood the Bible as pointing to a future fulfilment of prophesy for Israel. Indeed, the great 19th century Baptist preacher Charles

Spurgeon said that to deny such a future was ‘treason to God’s word’. (Spurgeon, incidentally, was a fierce critic of Nelson Darby.)

To declare this future as a recent ‘heresy’ is false. The frequency of such charges shows both the power of social media and the desperation of those who preach against Biblical prophecy as it is fulfilled before our eyes.

The early gentile church largely put aside the Old Testament other than as a precursor to the New. The spiritual restoration of the Jews survived this treatment because Paul restates it in *Romans 11*. But its basis in the Old Testament was mostly ignored.

Until the 16th century, illiteracy and the vast cost and rarity of the huge, hand-written Bibles (mostly chained to church pulpits), plus the grip of the Catholic Church, choked peoples’ ability to study Scripture. The Protestant reformation and the Gutenberg revolution of printing opened wide the Bible. Its prophecies were rediscovered.

Replacement theology—the view that church replaces Israel—was revitalised in the late 19th and early 20th century by German liberal scholars such as Ferdinand Baur, Julius Wellhausen and Adolf von Harnack. They dismissed the Old Testament, saw the Jews as a negative force, and emphasised instead the church’s march forward. This fed into Nazism. When Hitler spoke of Christ’s “tremendous struggle for this world against the Jewish poison,” he was reflecting the words of Baur. We should not be surprised by the strong, antisemitic bent now emerging in some churches.

Today we hear about ‘fulfilment theology’. Here, the emphasis is less on the church replacing Israel than on the church fulfilling prophecy. If anything, this is worse. For example, the popular ‘seven mountains mandate’ takes the prophecy of *Isaiah 2:2*—about the mountain of the house of the Lord becoming the chief of the mountains—and applies it to the church seizing control of the commanding heights of society. If the church by its own works fulfils end times promises, Jesus is out of a job. No need for His return—the church does it all. Nor can the ‘apostles’ of this movement bear any distinct moment or role for Israel. Back instead to a materialistic and nationalistic church.

Such theologies are insidious for they degrade God’s word, acclaim the church, and crush our future hope in a fallen world (*John 14:1-3*).

*Signatories to these statements mostly or all believed B also, but chose not to constrain others.

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Yom Ha'atzmaout *Israeli Independence Day 21-22 April*

■ Heather Moore

“Forgive my people. Forgive us, for some of our people have been very dishonourable,” community advocate Regina Moses recently asked members of the Jewish community in Wellington. “Find it in your heart to hear the words from a *Maori* woman; forgive us for the way we have dishonoured and treated you.”

Ms Moses was one of the speakers at the *Yom Ha'atzmaout* celebration in Wellington on Thursday 23 April, along with Israeli ambassador Alon Roth-Snir and Israel advocate Yifat Goddard.

Ms Moses, a team leader at Wellington's Downtown Community Ministry, was part of a 20-strong delegation of *Maori* people who visited Israel last year, and she shared some of her experiences to the gathering of about 60-members of the Jewish community, visiting Israelis and Christian supporters of Israel and the Jewish people.

“You are not alone,” she said. “Look for the ones who will always have your back”. She said *Maori* and Jewish people shared strong links of land, family and community, and the delegation saw



Israel's 78th Independence Day, 22 April 2026. | Photo: Flash90

consistently in Israel the same principles of *manaakitanga* (hospitality and care) that *Maori* people valued.

She said the visit had allowed the delegates to have a stronger voice in their spheres of influence about the reality of what is happening in Israel.

Yifat Goddard, an Israeli who moved to

New Zealand about 20 years ago and has subsequently become a New Zealand citizen, instigated the visit. She said there were many strong opinions within the group, many that had been shaped by the media, and the visit opened a door to the truth. And she said something powerful happened as the

visit progressed.

“Israel spoke for itself,” she said, and perspectives shifted.

“The evening's host, Brian Johns, began with the slightly tongue-in-cheek quote: “Jews have two memorial days—*Yom Hazikaron* (Day of Remembrance for fallen soldiers and victims of acts of terrorism 20-21 April) to remind us the cost of having Israel, and *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day 13-14 April) to remind us the cost of not”.

Yom Ha'atzmaout (Israeli Independence Day 21-22 April) falls the day after *Yom Hazikaron*.

Ambassador Roth-Snir said these were not merely dates in the calendar but moments to remember this was a price Israel was still paying on a daily basis. He spoke of his own sons having spent hundreds of days in the reserves. But he said Jewish people chose life and hope and continued to be a powerhouse of innovation in medical and agricultural fields.

He said the Anzac commemorations were a reminder of the bond shared with New Zealand. “We hope it will continue in the future.”

Welcome to *Nerissa's Place*

■ Jane Smelt

Toby Curwin is the lady behind *Nerissa's Place*. Originally from Chicago, she made *Aliyah* with her husband (who she met in Israel) in 1996. When she decided to open a second hand store with her friends to serve their home town of Efrat, she named it *Nerissa's Place* to honour a much loved aunt. Initially Toby rented a room in a private flat, but the endeavour has steadily grown with demand for bigger and better locations. It is now located in the neighbourhood community centre, alongside energetic youth at their after-school activities. She founded the shop whilst working full time as a designer of aircraft cockpits! Miraculously the shop was born around a job and family.

It is much more than ‘just’ a second hand shop. It meets the community needs of a large area of Gush Etzion, customers coming from far and wide to buy children's clothes, holiday clothes, school and household items. Efrat itself has almost 14,000 souls from a variety of

religious observances and nationalities and sits around 9kms from Bethlehem. It is surrounded by villages and towns, all within reach of this wonderful shop. When a large influx of refugees from the Ukraine arrived in Israel in 2020, *Nerissa's Place* was quick to donate items for families who arrived with little more than the clothes on their back. They are also mindful of families who have suffered terror attacks or are displaced due to war. They have been ready to give practical support at short notice and in a variety of contexts, throughout the years.

Nerissa's Place is a friendly meeting point. Toby brings tea on cold days and many a creative conversation takes place about upcycling/repurposing items that have been donated. All are in excellent condition to be re-homed, often mended or laundered by volunteers to ensure the highest quality! They also donate to a local community blanket bank ‘*gemach*’ which assists those in need of emergency bedding, and *Nerissa's Place* keeps the local one

regularly supplied. Medical equipment and used glasses are passed on to appropriate local organisations who ensure they find the right homes. Unusable linens are donated to pet shelters as bedding, and specific requests for fabric or other materials are saved for local artists and students. The shop also donates funds to other worthy charities in Israel.

The fun atmosphere of the shop attracts all, as does ecologically responsible shopping. ‘Financially needy’ folks shop alongside the less needy, shopping with dignity. People make friends, help each other with fashion advice, parenting support, and just enjoy themselves, while keeping the environment a bit cleaner!

As Kiwis, we love a good ‘op shop’. My visit to *Nerissa's Place* was very touching; it modelled a generosity of spirit that springs from the Jewish calling to be a light in the world. The next time you locate a bargain at your local ‘op shop’, do please say a prayer for Toby and her team in the biblical heartland.





The Resurrection of Israel—Part 3

The Bones of Regathering—Aliyah

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up |
New Zealand

“So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.” Ezekiel’s interpretation follows in verses 11 and 12: “Then he said to me: ‘Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel... This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.’” Ezekiel 37:7

The term used for the modern migration of Jews returning from the Diaspora to the Promised Land is *Aliyah*. This word means to ascend or go up, particularly relating to the natural ascent up the Judean mountain range toward Jerusalem which is nestled on the ridge. The first phase in the restoration of the Jewish national home was going to start with *Aliyah*. Before anything could be built up or restored the rightful occupants had to be back home to do it. The disciples had said to Jesus immediately prior to His ascension in Acts 1:6, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus’ answer was a bit vague, but history has answered their question. They were not going to witness the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, but we, two thousand years later are witnessing the restoration of Israel, and it started with *Aliyah*.

Aliyah began taking place in the early 1880s. Jews fleeing from persecution in Czarist Russia and Romania spontaneously began heading home. This was the beginning of the modern Zionist era. Israel’s history books record five major waves of *Aliyah* bringing some 435,000 Jews home prior to the Second World War.

Only a trickle of Jewish outcasts from Europe managed to reach the safety of the shores of *Eretz Israel* during the War. After the Liberation of Europe by May 1945 there were desperate attempts by the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust to reach the shores of ‘Palestine’. Boatloads made their way to what many of them perceived as their only remaining hope. They had lost almost everything, but they still had a Land. British blockades preventing their entry into the Promised Land could not stop them from coming. Thousands were clandestinely beached onto coastal areas between 1945 and 1948, while many others were detained by the British and placed into detention camps. They would not return to *Eretz Israel* until independence.



1222 passengers were flown out of Addis Abeba to Israel in a Boeing 747 Cargo aircraft of El Al as part of Operation Solomon. | Photo: Michael Zarfati, IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons

With independence on 14 May 1948, the trickle of immigrants turned into a flood. The Jewish people once again governed their own land—“no longer will foreigners enslave them” the prophet predicted in *Jeremiah 30:8*. No more British blockades nor restrictions. Imbedded in their Declaration of Independence was the commitment of the State of Israel: “THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles”. The Holocaust survivors were the first to come. By the end of 1948 some Jewish displaced persons camps in Europe could be closed because their inmates had gone home. Israel’s independence, with her flag flying high among the nations, was not welcomed by Arab nations of the Middle East or North Africa. They did not want a Jewish state in the neighbourhood. The day after independence was proclaimed by David Ben Gurion the Arab nations of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq sent their regular armies to attack the new infant state.

The resistance of the Arab nations to Israel manifested not just in open warfare at Israel’s borders, but also in hostile policies towards Jews living in those Arab nations. Egypt, Iraq, and Syria imposed heavy restrictions on their Jewish subjects. Confiscation of property, revoking of citizenship, riots and unprovoked attacks against the Jews became commonplace. Persecution arose throughout the region. Many Jewish lives were lost, properties destroyed, assets confiscated, and citizenships revoked by these governments. These were the ‘Lands of Stress’ for the Jewish people. One

solution for those living in those hostile countries was *Aliyah*. Jews who had lived in these lands throughout the Middle East for thousands of years decided it was time to return to the Covenant Land.

For the three and a half years following Independence up until the end of 1951 the Jewish population of Israel doubled from approximately 650,000 to 1.4 million. This was ‘the mass immigration period’ when Holocaust survivors and hundreds of thousands of ‘outcasts’ from the Arab nations returned home. Initially the Jewish survivors from Europe were coming home by the shipload—“*And the ships of Tarshish will come first, To bring your sons from afar*” (*Isaiah 60:9*). Then something unprecedented in the history of Israel would begin to take place—the Jewish people began taking flight literally—“*Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? ...to bring thy sons from far*” (*Isaiah 60:8-9*). History records the answer. Those flying home were:

Operation Magic Carpet

380 flights manned by British and American pilots brought the Jews of Yemen (ancient Sheba) home. During 1949 and 1950, 47,000 Jews were brought into Israel on what had originally been called ‘Operation Messiah is Coming’—“*All they from Sheba shall come*” *Isaiah* prophesied chapter 60:6.

Operation Ezra & Nehemiah

About 120,000 Jews were airlifted out of Iraq in 1950-1951. Politics meant the Iraqi government would not agree to them being allowed to fly directly to Israel; they had to be flown first to Cyprus and from there they were

transported to Israel. They came from the east, but they entered Israel from the west—“*His sons shall come trembling from the west; They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, Like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,*” says the Lord. (*Hosea 11:10-11*)

Operation Moses

In 1984 politics again dictated that the Ethiopian Jews were flown to ports in Europe first, and then to Israel aboard Trans European Airways (TEA). They flew up the Red Sea ‘as a bird out of Egypt’, but they too came into their promised land from ‘the west’. A total of 35 flights over one and a half months brought 7,800 Jews home.

Operation Solomon

In May 1991 over a 36-hour period, 14,325 more Ethiopian Jews were airlifted directly to Israel on a total of 34 flights. The El Al aircraft—C130 Hercules and Boeing 747s, had their seats removed to maximize the carriage of human freight. A world record was reached when on one Boeing 1,122 Jews were transported to Israel. Five babies were born during the flight—“*Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labour; a great throng will return.*” (*Jeremiah 31:8*)

From the Land of the North and all the Countries:

Throughout the 1990s, over a million Jews left the former Soviet Union in unprecedented numbers and headed for their homeland. Many have also come from nations not mentioned here and many more still await the ‘push’ from among the nations to return to the safety of *Eretz Israel*. Since the Zionist era began over 3.5 million Jews have made *Aliyah* and returned to their ancient land. This figure alone means that more Israelites have returned in this modern exodus than the number agreed upon by most Bible scholars who came out of Egypt in their first great exodus. Of course, the prophet predicted this too: “*So then, the days are coming,*” declares the Lord, “*when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.*” (*Jeremiah 23:7-8*)

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Holocaust Education Is Everywhere So Why Isn't It Working?

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel

The Ministry of Education has released its draft Social Sciences curriculum for Year 10. On the face of it, the Holocaust content looks solid: Nazi antisemitism, *Kristallnacht*, ghettos, mass shootings, extermination camps, resistance, liberation—the usual landmarks.

And yet, something isn't adding up. Around the world, Holocaust education has expanded dramatically over the past two decades, but antisemitism hasn't gone away. In many places, it's getting worse. That's not just an overseas problem. Jewish New Zealanders are being shouted at, pushed around, and occasionally assaulted simply for being Jewish. You don't need a PhD in history to see that something isn't working.

So what's going on? And what might we need to think about here in Aotearoa?

What the Experts Keep Saying

If you look at the work of people who've spent their lives studying this—Yehuda Bauer, Deborah Lipstadt, Matti Friedman, the teams at UNESCO, IHRA, Yad Vashem—a pattern emerges.

They're not arguing over details. Their concern is that we teach the history, but we don't teach students how to recognise the same patterns when they appear today.

Students often get the events, but not the underlying logic. They learn the horror, but not the warning. They learn what happened, but not how to recognise the same currents when they appear in their own world—in jokes, in slogans, in conspiracy theories, in the way people talk about 'them'. Students learn Jewish death, not Jewish life. Jews are often presented as victims, not as a living people with culture, agency, and continuity.

These gaps matter.



| Photo: AI

The Holocaust was Meant to Destroy the Jews

One point the experts are almost unanimous on: the Holocaust needs to be taught with clarity. It was the Nazi project to annihilate the Jewish people. That's the core of it.

Other groups suffered terribly under Nazism—Roma, disabled people, political dissidents, LGBTQ+ people, and others—and their stories deserve to be taught properly, in their own right. But when everything gets folded into one big, blurred narrative, students lose the ability to understand why Jews were targeted then, and why antisemitism still has such a long half-life now.

Clarity isn't exclusion. It's accuracy. And accuracy is what lets students make sense of the present.

The Missing Skill: What to Do When You See Antisemitism

One thing that rarely appears in any curriculum—here or overseas—is the practical side. Students need to know what to do when they encounter antisemitism.

Not confrontation. Not speeches. Just the basics:

- spotting harmful stereotypes
- understanding why they're dangerous
- knowing how to challenge misinformation
- knowing when to get help
- knowing how to support someone who's being targeted.

This isn't a political agenda. It's the same logic behind anti-bullying programmes and digital citizenship. If we want young people to recognise injustice, they need tools, not just stories.

A Thought for New Zealand: What About Senior Civics?

The Ministry's draft curriculum stops at Year 10, but it also says Year 10 Social Sciences prepares students for senior subjects. That opens a door.

By Years 11–13, students are ready for the deeper questions:

- how democracies fail
- how propaganda works
- how prejudice becomes policy
- how extremism spreads

- how human rights frameworks were built
- how to participate meaningfully in civic life.

This is where Holocaust education becomes more than history. It becomes civic literacy—the kind that helps young adults understand the world they're about to vote in, work in, and live in.

Young people want meaning. They have a thirst for justice. A senior Civics course isn't a radical idea. It's a practical one.

Some Ideas That Might Be Worth Considering

After looking at the international research, the Ministry's draft, and the reality facing Jewish New Zealanders today, a few ideas seem worth putting on the table:

- Strengthen the Holocaust content already in Year 10 by making the purpose clearer, not just the events.
 - Teach the persecution of other groups distinctly, so their experiences aren't lost in generalisation.
 - Make the link between historical antisemitism and contemporary antisemitism explicit.
 - Connect students to living Jewish communities.
 - Give students practical tools for responding safely when they encounter prejudice.
 - Explore a senior Civics course where these themes can be taught with the depth and maturity they require.

None of this requires tearing up the curriculum. It's about sharpening the focus so the history does what it's meant to do: help young people understand the world they're stepping into—and their responsibility to stand up for justice and ensure that no community is left to face intimidation, harassment, or violence because of antisemitism.

The Reality Behind the Headlines

■ Yosef Livne

Former Israeli Ambassador to New Zealand

The announcement of a ceasefire by President Trump coincided with the celebration of the 7th day of *Passover*. After a sleepless night punctured by several sirens, the new day is characterised by calm. Although it is only natural to try and weigh the results of the war, in my view it is far too early, and we shall all have to wait and see.

For the past six weeks we have lived under the constant threat of missile attacks across our country and yet the Israeli nation has displayed courage and resilience in

face of the attacks. Closer to home, one dawn, while sitting in our safe room we heard a very loud noise as a missile head fell onto the road barely 150 metres away. Luckily there were no casualties. Nevertheless, no one can overlook the civilian casualties around the country, nor can we ignore the situation along the Northern border of Israel where our population has lived under constant barrage by Hezbollah.

Now, as the ceasefire grows there will no doubt be a surge of commentaries concerning the war and more than a few will try to blame Israel for instigating the hostilities. I, as an Israeli, wish to put things in the right context. The Iranian regime is not an innocent

victim of aggression. Since its very early days, Iran has made no secret of its goal to destroy Israel. Over the years, it instigated repetitive terrorist attacks against Israel as well as Jewish targets overseas. The explosions of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the Jewish community centre in the same city are among the cruelest reminders of the hostile character of the Iranian regime. It has also strived to acquire nuclear capabilities enough for a nuclear weapon. Closer to home, Iran has sustained Hezbollah in Lebanon and aided Hamas in Gaza, all in the name of its declared goal of destroying the State of Israel. We shall never let it happen.



Three Small Miracles for Adina

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

Some of the most precious encounters happen spontaneously—encounters with survivors whom we would never meet at an event due to their age. Many of our project partners are descendants of Holocaust survivors, including Yonatan, who told me about his 100-year-old grandmother in Netanya during a visit to the Jaffa Institute.

The so-called expressway to the north, which is lined with construction sites slowing down traffic even on weekends, leads through Netanya. I want to try to find a parking space, a flower shop, and Adina, Yonatan's grandmother, in the congested city center. Three small miracles for a precious and healing moment.

Adina is resting on her daybed as she is feeling weak. She is being cared for by a young woman from India who has learned Hebrew for her. Still a beautiful woman, this lady with such a special charisma has lived through a whole century of human history!



Anemone Rüger (C41) with Adina, who turned 101 in November. Raised in the Carpathian Mountains, Adina rebuilt her life in the US after the Shoah before immigrating to Israel at the age of 81. | Photos: C41

**Then she whispers with all her strength:
"You can't imagine how happy I am that you visited me!"**

"That's my dad in the photo, and my brother is to his left. And in the other photo, that's me with my mother," Adina explains. The nurse has hung the photos opposite Adina's bed so that she can always see them.

I tell Adina about my family, about the many Christians in Germany who love the Jewish people, about my work. "That's very nice," Adina says repeatedly in a soft voice; every sentence obviously takes a lot of effort. The bright flowers make her face light up.

When I read her the card with the verse from *Isaiah 62*, she quietly repeats each word: "You will be a beautiful crown in the hand of the Lord..."

Then she whispers with all her strength: "You can't imagine how happy I am that you visited me!"

Only afterwards do I learn her whole story from her grandson Yonatan.

From the Carpathians to Auschwitz

"My grandmother was born in 1924 in a small village called Svaliava near Mukachevo in the Carpathian Mountains; at that time it was Czechia, today it is Ukraine," Yonatan tells me. "She was the middle child of three. Her older brother, Hersz, is with her in the photo with their mother. Her younger brother, Shmil (Schmuel), can be seen in the photo with his father. They were wealthy and had a large house. Their father, Yitzchak, was often away on business in America, and Malka, their mother, stayed with the children."



Adina's father with her younger brother, Shmil. Both were murdered in the Holocaust.



Childhood photo of Adina with her mother and her older brother, Hersz.

When the war broke out, Yitzchak returned to be with his family. He was immediately deported to a labour camp, where he perished. Adina's older brother also disappeared in a labour camp.

"My grandmother was already 18 when the Germans invaded the area," Yonatan continues. "She was deported to Auschwitz with her mother and younger brother. She remembers that they had to line up in front of a certain Mengele. Then Shmil, her younger brother, was pulled out. He was maybe eight or nine. Malka started crying and ran after her son. So they both went together into the line for the gas chamber.

"My grandmother didn't understand what was happening. She was desperate to avoid being separated from her family. 'Do you see the smoke over there? That's where they're being taken,' one of the prisoners said to her. She had to work in the crematorium until liberation. Her job was to examine the bodies after they had been gassed to see if they were wearing any gold."

I can hardly breathe listening to Yonatan telling me this unbelievably tragic story so matter-of-factly on the phone. I would love to drive back to Netanya right now.

"My grandmother never talked about it. But my mother grew up with her mother screaming in her sleep every night from nightmares and crying for her family. She always needed strong sleeping pills to be able to fall asleep."

A New Start in America

After the war, Adina was taken to

Hungary with other survivors; a year later, she boarded a ship to the United States. By then, she was 22 years old and alone in the world. A Jewish couple from Minnesota adopted her, gave her a new home, and helped her train as a kindergarten teacher—a profession she pursued with great passion throughout her life. She eventually moved to New York, where a large community of Holocaust survivors had formed. She was still haunted by the question of what had become of her older brother.

"One day, she was standing in line at the checkout in a store," Yonatan recounts. "Someone tapped her on the shoulder. It was Hersz, her brother, two years her senior. He had been searching for her for a long time. He then took care of her for the rest of his life. He already owned several bars in New York and had achieved a certain level of prosperity. He visited her every *Shabbat*. And every few years, he bought her a car, even though she already had a family and was well provided for. He supported her as a big brother until the end of his life 17 years ago."

Aliyah at 81

After 30 years, Adina moved with her family to Florida, where she stayed for another 20 years. When she was already well into retirement, she decided—at the age of 81—to make *Aliyah* with her 90-year-old husband and follow their two daughters to Israel. She had already learned Hebrew in her hometown in the Carpathians.

"Grandma Adina always had guests for *Shabbat*," Yonatan recalls. "When we used to visit her in the US, she often had 10 or 15 guests at the table who had no one else."

When Yonatan receives the photos of the flowers from the nurse a few minutes after my visit, he thanks me warmly. "What you did for my Grandma is incredible!" Really? I am humbled by his words. In relation to Adina's story, what I did seems to be less than nothing. Now that he has told me the whole story, I just want to cry. And go back there again. But at the same time, I know that God takes the little we have and turns it into something divine.

