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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

www.c4israel.org.nz | info@c4israel.org.nz



Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shaking hands with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (R) on White House lawn as US President Bill Clinton looks on. | Photo: GPO Israel

“Peace,” They Say, When There is No Peace

The Middle East is in turmoil. Iran is actively not only close to nuclear weapon capability (that it has sworn to use against Israel and the West), it is infiltrating the region with its anti-Western Islamist revolutionary ideology. Most countries in the region of the Middle East and northern Africa are in deep social, economic and governmental crisis. The US has essentially abandoned the region, opening a vacuum for anti-Western influence of Russia and China. Israel and the PLO have been unable to achieve peace. Worse, Israel is in the midst of a violent conflict with Iranian-sponsored Islamist Palestinian groups in Gaza, as well as in Judea and Samaria (the ‘West Bank’).

What will bring peace to this region?

The Jewish people started to return to the land in the mid-19th century. In 1920, the Mandate for Palestine acknowledged the Biblical and historical right of the Jewish people to ‘reconstitute their homeland’. It envisaged the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. In 1948, the State of Israel was established. The Kingdom of Jordan immediately attacked,

taking illegal possession of the Old City of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria—which it renamed ‘the West Bank’.

In 1967, the Jewish State of Israel miraculously re-conquered this territory. Israel applied Israeli sovereignty to the whole city of Jerusalem—but decided to treat the ‘West Bank’ as occupied territory.

Ever since many in Israel and around the world have assumed that the only way of achieving peace with the Palestinians and the Arab world is through partition of the land: ‘land for peace’.

That was the purpose of the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), which was formally ushered in with great fanfare on the White House lawn thirty years ago—13 September 1993.

The Oslo process was predicated on the assumption that the PLO had turned the corner and renounced the terrorism that had defined it. However, it seems that, in their desperate search for peace and their desire to please the world, Israel’s leaders allowed themselves to be deceived. Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud

Abbas never intended to achieve peace with Israel. Since 1993, the PLO has never abandoned its goal of liberating the whole of Palestine from the Zionists—“from the river to the sea”.

The fact is that the Lord is bringing His people home to the land He has given them: Jerusalem, and to the mountains of Judea and Samaria—never to be uprooted:

“They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.

They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God. (Amos 9:15).

The Bible tells us that real peace will only come to Israel, the nations and the whole creation when the Messiah comes. His kingdom will bring enormous blessings to all peoples, tribes, and nations. When Christ is reigning with His bride, in the midst of the descendants of Jacob (Luke 1:33), there will be peace on the earth, and the law of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem.

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Colophon

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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.

Editorial Team

Andrew Tucker

International Editor-in-Chief
atucker@c4israel.org

Cathy Coldicutt

Managing Editor
newspaper@c4israel.org

Marloes van Westing

International Communications Manager
international@c4israel.org

Ian Worby, Bryce Turner, Rita Quartel,
Marie-Louise Weissenböck and Marijke Terlouw

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C4I Offices

Christians for Israel International

Leon Meijer, *Chairman*
Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer, *President*
Rev Cornelis Kant, *Executive Director*
PO Box 1100 | 3860 BC Nijkerk,
The Netherlands | Tel: +31 33 422 0405
info@c4israel.org | www.c4israel.org

The English Edition of *Israel & Christians Today* is published by the following English speaking branches:

Christians for Israel - Australia

Ian Worby, *National Leader*
PO Box 1508, Springwood
Queensland, Australia 4127
Tel: +61 7 3088 6900, info@c4israel.com.au
www.c4israel.com.au

Christians for Israel - New Zealand

Bryce Turner, *National Executive Director*
PO Box 12 006, Penrose,
Auckland, New Zealand 1642
Tel: +64 9 525 7564, +64 21 127 7214
info@c4israel.org.nz
www.c4israel.org.nz

Christians for Israel - Korea

Rev Paul Wonil Jung, *Director*
Suite 3, 37 Railway Parade, Eastwood NSW,
Australia 2122
Tel: +61 410 430 677
email: c4israelkorea@gmail.com
www.c4israelkorea.org

Christians for Israel - USA

David Sudlow, *Chairman*
PO Box 400, Front Royal, VA 22630, USA
usa-info@c4israel.org
www.c4israel.us

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The Church Should Encourage Israel to Stand Strong

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

For the last 200 years, the Lord has been bringing His people home to Jerusalem and to the mountains of Judea and Samaria.

Not surprisingly, Satan has opposed this move of the Lord at every turn. Part of this opposition has been through the militant Islamist leaders in the region. It started in the 1920s, when the local Arab leader, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, incited the local population to reject the Mandate for Palestine and attack Jews. In the 1930s, he and the other Arab leaders rejected every solution proposed by the British, and in 1947 they collaborated with the wider Arab political leadership to reject the UN General Assembly's 'Partition Plan' that envisaged Arab and Jewish states living side-by-side in peace. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was created as the vehicle of the pan-Arab leadership to annihilate the Jewish state.

Israel is again under pressure to make far-reaching concessions to the PLO in order to satisfy the interests of the West and other major global actors.

Since the 1930s, the majority of Western nations in the world have also been seeking to pressure the Jewish people to accept 'land for peace'—division of the tiny country, giving the Arabs sovereignty over the spiritually and strategically significant mountains of Judea and Samaria.

Since 1948, many of Israel's leaders have also been seduced into thinking that partition is the only solution.

In 1967, the Lord gave the Jewish people control of Judea and Samaria in a miraculous victory in the Six-Day War. Giving in to international pressure, the

Israeli government decided shortly afterwards to incorporate the old city of Jerusalem into the State of Israel but to treat Judea and Samaria as 'occupied territories'. This was the beginning of the erroneous idea that these territories 'belong' to the Palestinians and that Israel has no valid claims to them.

By not integrating Judea and Samaria into Israel, the Israeli leadership placed their faith in the goodwill of other states and the hope that peace could be made via agreements. This culminated in the Oslo peace process, which was predicated on the hope the PLO had turned the corner and renounced the terrorism that had defined it.

However, it is now clear that that was never the case. Shortly after the Oslo Accords were signed, Yasser Arafat made clear that the agreements were nothing more than a 'Hudabiyah,' a temporary arrangement intended to effectuate Israel's ultimate demise. The Arabic term refers to a ten-year truce that the prophet

PLO duplicity. Rather, they insisted on covering over the PLO's repeated failure to live up to its promises.

As one commentator has expressed it: "Still today, Israel operates in a strategic environment dictated by a false peace process with the unrepentant and active terror group."

Israel is again under pressure to make far-reaching concessions to the PLO in order to satisfy the interests of the West and other major global actors. At the recent G20 conference, US President Biden announced his administration is working closely with Saudi Arabia, India and other states to achieve a regional infrastructure project that is intended to separate the oil-rich Arab countries from the Sino-Russian axis, isolate Iran, and achieve an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

As part of that project, the US is pushing for a normalisation agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, in which Israel is being asked to agree to increased funding to the Palestinian Authority, freeze settlements, and pledge not to apply sovereignty to Judea and Samaria in the future.

Of course, this flies in the face of the reality that the Palestinian leadership has no intention of living peaceably with the Jewish nation.

All of this is happening at a time when Israel is undergoing a political crisis far worse than anything in its short history.

Israel needs to learn from the mistake of Oslo.

Let us pray that Israel's leaders will stand firm on the word of God and not cave into these demands. Instead of pressuring them to make concessions, as many do, we should encourage the Jewish people to look only to the Lord – and not to the approval of the nations of the world – for their peace and security.

Prayer Points

Israel

- The prophet Isaiah says about the *Aliyah* (the return of Jews to Israel), "Your children hasten back, and those who laid you waste depart from you." (*Isaiah 49:17*) Give thanks for the return of the Jewish people to the land of the Jews! Pray that all Jews returning to Israel will soon feel at home. Pray that they will find housing and work and will soon be able to contribute to the flourishing of the country.
- There is still much unrest in Israel due to ongoing political tensions over Supreme Court reforms and large demonstrations against these reforms. Continue to pray for unity and peace among the Jewish people.
- 'For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.' *Psalms 91:11*. There is growing turmoil on the border with Lebanon. The Iran-backed Hezbollah terror force is deploying more and more rockets on the border with Israel. Give thanks that God is Israel's Keeper and pray that God's angels will surround the land to protect it from danger.

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

Israel & the Nations

- United Nations special envoy Francesca Albanese has called on the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israelis for apartheid. Albanese is known for her strong anti-Israel stance. Pray for Israel's legal protection.
- Israel's defence minister has revealed that Israel has prevented more than 50 attacks by Iran on Jews and Israelis outside Israel in recent years. Give thanks for this, and pray that Iran stops plotting attacks.
- The Lord God's relationship to His people is very clear, "...for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye." (*Zechariah 2:8*). Let us pray for a deeper understanding among the nations and in churches that even though we cannot always understand all the biblical prophecies and how current events all fit in, fighting against the Jewish people means fighting against God.

Christians for Israel

- 'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.' *Colossians 4:2*. Pray that many churches will make prayer for Israel central.

The PA and Israel Arabs

■ Dr Jacques Neriah

Since the Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993, Israeli governments have pursued a policy of containment towards the Palestinian Authority, even though the PA has blatantly violated the Accords.

That policy, which the Palestinians and Israeli Arabs see as reflecting Israeli weakness and dependence on the PA, affects the Israeli Arab sector's commitment to the narrative of the Palestinian struggle and its attitude towards law and order.

It has also helped to impair governability and ignited two waves of violence in the Israeli Arab sector, each of which was, at the time, unprecedented since Israel's establishment.

The formation of Israel's new conservative government offers a golden opportunity for a change in policy towards the PA and Hamas and their influence over the Israeli Arab street, aiming to restore governability and impose law and order.

The effects of the two fierce waves of Israeli Arab violence continue to the present. The first wave occurred in October 2000, when 13 Israeli citizens (12 Arabs and one Jew) were killed. It corresponded with the Second Intifada.

The second riots, in May 2021, accompanied the IDF's 'Operation Guardian of the Walls.' In those disturbances, 13 Israeli citizens were killed. The common denominator of these two severe outbreaks of violence is that events in eastern Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount were the detonators.

An investigation into the rioting showed that the PA and Hamas have turned the Temple Mount issue and the mendacious 'Al-Aqsa is in danger' canard into their main engines for inciting the Israeli Arabs against the state. The incitement is conducted in the Palestinian education system, mosques, official media and social media.

On the eve of Ramadan 2023, there was growing concern that the PA and Hamas would again use the Temple Mount issue to incite the Israeli Arabs. Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir announced the possibility of a 'Guardian of the Walls II' outbreak in the Arab sector and the mixed Muslim-Jewish Israeli cities. He stated that the police were preparing accordingly. Eventually, despite growing tension and incitement and some escalation, there was no major outbreak of violence.

As the Israeli Arabs see it, what happened in May 2021 was a spontaneous eruption aimed less at protesting against injustice and inequality in Israeli society and more at emphasising that their national identity is Palestinian rather than Israeli, despite the Israelisation phenomenon in Israeli Arab society.

As a direct result of the violent events of May 2021, Israel is now establishing a national guard to help restore governability in the Arab sector and deal with widespread disturbances, including in the mixed Jewish-Muslim cities.



A demonstration by Bedouin and Israeli Arabs to mark Land Day on 26 March 2022. | Photo: Flash90

Some members of the Israeli Arab leadership have helped encourage the violence through rabble-rousing statements in the media. Parliamentary whip and Knesset member Ofir Katz is now promoting a bill to disqualify Arab MKs who support terror. Statements favouring terror or individual terrorists would constitute sufficient cause to bar candidates from running for the Knesset under the proposed legislation.

Meanwhile, the Bedouin residents of the Negev are marking a year since the 'Negev uprising' (habat al-nakab in Arabic) against a tree-planting ceremony by the Jewish National Fund, and some are preparing for a further confrontation in light of the new government's aim of imposing law and order.

Many members of the younger Israeli Arab generation continue to voice complaints over what they perceive as racism towards the Arab sector and the meagre budgets devoted to tackling its crime and social problems. There is still intense anger over the Israeli establishment's intention to fight illegal Arab-sector construction while neglecting the issues of violence, crime and illegal weapons.

The exclusion of the Arab Ra'am Party from the current coalition has exacerbated the fear that instead of addressing the fundamental problems of the Israeli Arab sector—a process that Ra'am spearheaded as a coalition member of the Bennett-Lapid government—the new government will neglect the issue, despite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's promises.

The current government aims to funnel a sum of 30 billion shekels (\$7.8 billion) to the Arab sector—compared to the 53 billion shekels (\$13.8 billion) allocated by the previous government.

Although quiet has prevailed in the Arab sector since the May 2021 events, it is an illusory quiet. Under the surface, resentments simmer and threaten to erupt anew, especially in cities where the friction between Jews and Arabs is considerable.

There is great apprehension in the Israeli Arab sector regarding Ben-Gvir's appointment to the post of national

security minister in light of his election campaign declarations to restore governability to the Negev and fight crime in the Arab sector. Those fears intensified with Ben-Gvir's visit to the Temple Mount on 3 January and statements about changing the status quo on the Mount. There is concern that his policy will ignite a new spate of disturbances in the Arab sector.

On 9 January, the National Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities stated in a letter to Netanyahu: "It is hard for us to see how we can work effectively with the new national security minister, given his racist positions towards the Arab sector and the total and deep mistrust between the Arab sector and the minister and his office."

The local authority heads warned that Ben-Gvir had been granted policy prerogatives and powers with great potential to harm the Arab sector. For example, the transferring of the Israel Lands Authority to his purview, the authority to possibly change IDF engagement orders, and allowing the Israel Security Agency to operate in Arab communities. Such powers could help the minister to implement his hardline agenda towards Israeli Arab society, they warned. The local authority heads clarified that "these measures could certainly lead to events involving loss of control in the Arab communities."

Ben-Gvir, on the other hand, repeatedly states his commitment to fighting crime in Israeli Arab society—so far to no avail, as the number of murders among Israeli Arabs keeps rising.

As the new Israeli government took shape, PA leader Mahmoud Abbas formulated a new 'roadmap' for the struggle against it. His plan calls for 'popular resistance' and international diplomatic and media activity against Israel. Central to the plan is the diplomatic and media efforts against the Netanyahu government, which is portrayed as a racist entity that pursues a policy of apartheid. The project was presented to the 10th conference of the Fatah Central Committee at the start of December 2022.

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Short News

Dogs as Reading Aids



Learning to read is sometimes quite a challenge for children. But how about reading aloud to a four-legged friend? Suddenly it turns out to be a lot more fun and effective, more effective even than reading aloud to one's classmates. This is the outcome of an Israeli study on how to motivate children to read. Shirley Har-Zvi, who was involved in the study, said, "Research shows that being able to read fluently is essential for a child's learning process; it helps them integrate into society." | Photo: Flash90

First Hydrogen Refilling Station

Near Haifa, Israel's first hydrogen refilling station was recently opened. So Israel is now in the ranks of leading countries in the world that want to replace the use of fossil fuels with hydrogen, among other things. The aim is to open more hydrogen refilling stations in the future. Pilot projects are also being conducted to see if hydrogen can also be used in the industrial sector.

Millions for Arab Israelis

The previous Israeli Cabinet had already initiated investments for the Arab population in Israel. The current Cabinet will continue those investments. In mid-August, it agreed to invest 780 million euros for the benefit of inhabitants of East Jerusalem for the next five years. The investment aims to reduce economic and social inequality. "It will provide massive development of the infrastructure, health care, well-being, personal safety, employment and education", PM Netanyahu announced when the program was presented.

Israel National Trail Extended



The Israel National Trail is known to—and loved by—many a hiker. The trail is now even longer than it was before. You can now start—or end—on Mount Hermon, the northernmost part of Israel. To walk the Israel Trail, you will need some time; the trail is over one thousand kilometres long. But you will see all the beauty Israel has to offer. | Photo: Flash90

Delegitimising Israel's Government Only Helps Foes of the Jewish State

(19 September 2023). Israel is still in a political crisis. The government is sticking to its plans (announced earlier this year) to introduce legislation limiting the powers of the Supreme Court. Massive demonstrations against these reforms continue across the country. When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to the USA to meet with Elon Musk in California, to meet other heads of state and to attend the UN General Assembly opening session in New York in mid-September, he was met by groups of Israeli/Jewish protesters. Their protests, which focused on attacking Netanyahu personally, included screening an image of Netanyahu in an orange prison uniform with the words Welcome to Alcatraz, Bibi, on the walls of the infamous San Francisco jail. Giant protest slogans displayed on the UN headquarters read, Don't Believe Crime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and an image of Netanyahu with a growing Pinocchio-style nose, with a similar message in Times Square.

Jonathan Tobin

Prior to his departure for New York, Netanyahu took a shot at the protesters, giving full vent to his resentment at their activities. He described the demonstrators as "joining forces with the PLO and Iran."

He shouldn't have said that—or at least not in that way. But those blasting him for it are ignoring the implications of their own actions, which, like it or not, are providing ammunition to those who don't want merely to delegitimise Israel's government but destroy the Jewish state.

Netanyahu's statement was denounced by his political opponents at home as well as by the Israeli press as an outrageous slander. They spoke of the demonstrators as 'patriots' who deserved respect, not comparisons to those forces wanting an end to Israel.



Anti-overhaul activists protest against the judicial overhaul and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit in Manhattan, New York City, 19 September 2023. | Photo: Flash90

just about the dismay that the losers of the election conducted in November 2022 felt about the end of the three-year-long stalemate that ended with the Likud Party and its religious allies gaining a clear majority in the Knesset. More than that, it is a culture war in which the country's Ashkenazi secular liberal elites feel power is slipping from their grasp. That's why they want not so much to preserve the Israeli Supreme Court but to allow it to rule unchallenged and unelected as the last bastion of the old left's once-complete dominance of every government institution. And it's why the demonstrators have engaged in the most vicious slurs against the largely Mizrahi, religious and nationalist voters who helped elect Netanyahu.

It's all well and good to say that Netanyahu should be more polite when talking about his critics. But those who are treating Bibi as if he were the moral equivalent of an Iranian or Palestinian terrorist who threatens Israel are in no position to complain about civility or hurt feelings. Moreover, the resistance's efforts to foment mutiny in the Israel Defense Forces and to persuade investors to remove capital from the country are not behaving in a manner that is patriotic or in line with the aims of any real democratic movement.

Netanyahu's opponents are entitled to say what they like as well as to demonstrate. It should be noted, however, that their tactics of blocking highways and paralysing the

It's all well and good to say that Netanyahu should be more polite when talking about his critics. But those who are treating Bibi as if he were the moral equivalent of an Iranian or Palestinian terrorist who threatens Israel are in no position to complain about civility or hurt feelings.

And to some extent, the criticisms were justified. Those Israelis who hate him and who have done all in their power to try to topple his government since it took office at the end of December are not the same thing as terrorist murderers or Islamist theocrats bent on the annihilation of the Jewish state. At best, Netanyahu's comments were intemperate partisan hyperbole. At worst, they were an example of how the battle over judicial reform and the composition of the current government has crossed over into the sort of culture war that threatens the social fabric of the nation.

But the idea that it is Netanyahu who crossed the 'red lines' that should exist in a democracy to ensure political debate remains at least somewhat civil, is absurd. Even if it would have been more statesmanlike for Netanyahu to try to rise above the fray, the protests being conducted during his visit to the United States are far worse than anything he said. Indeed, the entire tenor of the anti-Netanyahu demonstrations, and the efforts by his opponents to sabotage the economy and national security in order to get their way, are not the actions of a loyal, let alone civil, opposition.

By falsely branding the prime minister as authoritarian and the efforts by the coalition to enact a program of reform of Israel's out-of-control and power-mad judiciary as a 'coup', the protesters have crossed over from political debate to a campaign of delegitimation that is incompatible with a functioning democracy.

Even worse, it soon became apparent that this struggle was not really so much about judicial reform. Nor was it

All that is bad enough. But what the anti-Bibi resistance ignores is the way their campaign is regarded by those who have very different goals from others who just want a return to the good old days when the Israeli left ran the Jewish state—and, I might add, did so without a Supreme Court having a fraction of the power it claims to possess today.

The protesters claim that the government—that won a democratic election—is authoritarian and is seeking to end democracy. That claim isn't just wrong, it's gaslighting. The government's only goal is to give the Knesset and the executive back some of the power that the courts had seized—seized without reference to any law or constitution other than their own self-manufactured whims.

It's not just that it is unseemly for groups of Israeli immigrants to the United States and other leftist allies to hound the democratically elected leader of their former country as he carries out his routine task of trying to build support for the Jewish state, especially at the United Nations. The claim that Netanyahu is a 'criminal' because of bogus corruption charges that don't stand up to scrutiny, and which even the judges in the case that is dragging on for years have already said has no chance of ending in a conviction, is also cheap partisan rhetoric.

But in a non-Israeli context, all this also has the effect of undermining Israel's stance as the only true democracy in the Middle East. Those who make this argument are assisting Israel's foes, whether that is their intent or not. They are demonising the country's leader and his supporters.

country wouldn't be tolerated and, in fact, would be labelled as thuggish and anti-democratic if it were the political right that was behaving in that fashion. Just look back to the protests against the Oslo Accords in the 1990s and the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Still, they have no right to cry foul when it is pointed out that their efforts to delegitimise an Israeli government not just at home but abroad go far beyond anything ever done by their opponents.

Some who are protesting are upset about any connection being made between their hatred for Netanyahu and support for a juristocracy with the efforts to falsely smear Israel as an 'apartheid state'. But the links are there. And it will be no coincidence that while they are trashing the only man who is standing up against the lies of the Palestinians and the nuclear threat from Iran on the podium of the United Nations, there will be other demonstrators there supporting Israel's destruction. A more responsible opposition would have chosen to say that politics end 'at the water's edge', as Michigan Republican Sen Arthur Vandenberg famously said of debates among Americans in the 1940s. Instead, they have chosen to recognise no limits to their campaign to slander Netanyahu and his voters.

While the prime minister should be more careful when expressing his frustration about his political foes, those who are lying about him and his voters are the ones who should be ashamed of themselves.

Jonathan S. Tobin is editor-in-chief of JNS (Jewish News Syndicate). Follow him on Twitter at @jonathans_tobin.

Oslo and the Victims of Peace

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

30 years ago, on Wednesday, 13 September, the first Oslo Accord was signed. That agreement did not bring peace, but from the moment it became clear that an agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had been reached, terror attacks against Israelis increased.

Classified Decree

To commemorate the Accord, a classified document was partially released for publication in Israel early September.

That document contains the minutes of a cabinet meeting held on 30 August 1993, dealing with the proposed Oslo Accord that was, in fact, a declaration of principles that should have been followed by a final peace agreement.

As it turned out, some participants in that cabinet meeting were utterly ignorant of the existence of negotiations with the PLO and were astonished that an agreement had been reached.

Among them was the then chief of staff of the Israeli Army (IDF), Ehud Barak.

Barak received the draft document containing the text of the Oslo Accord just hours before the meeting with the Israeli government.

That government was led by the later assassinated Prime Minister, Yitzchak Rabin, and included the ultra-left Meretz party, which won a record twelve seats in the 1991 elections.

Meretz's Deputy Foreign Minister, Yossi Beilin, was the one who started negotiations with Arafat's PLO behind Rabin's back and entirely against the then-existing legislation.

Shimon Peres, who was then foreign minister, knew about the negotiations that were held first in London and later in Oslo, Norway.

When Peres later informed Rabin about the talks with the PLO, the prime minister ordered them to stop immediately. For some reason, however, Rabin changed his mind and ultimately approved the Oslo Accord.

The now-released minutes of one of the most crucial cabinet meetings in the history of the State of Israel show that there were strong reservations from the start about an agreement with Israel's arch-enemies in the PLO.

Some of these reflections had even prophetic value, as it turned out.

Take, for example, what Shimon Peres, who was a real dovish peace supporter, said during the meeting.

Peres warned that it was not clear to what extent the PLO would renounce terrorism and said it was also not clear what would happen if the Palestinian leadership collapsed and was replaced by more extreme elements.

"I must say that there is a possibility that the PLO will disintegrate and that some kind of Hamas-like Iran will emerge here," the minister said, adding that Israel had to be careful because there was no certainty that they (PLO) would remain in power.

Well, that is exactly the scenario which unfolded in Gaza after the departure of the Israeli army in the summer of 2005 and the first preparations for war with Israel began.

In 2007, Hamas staged a bloody coup d'état, and Gaza was turned into 'Hamastan', as some called the entity in the south of call Israel. Rabin used less precise language, calling the agreement with the PLO 'a difficult deal.'

Most of Rabin's comments will remain classified for another sixty years, and this could be an indication that the prime minister was far more critical than Peres.

After Rabin's assassination, for example, one of his closest advisers said that the Prime Minister had, prior to his death, concluded that his reservations about the Oslo Accord had been justified.

During the meeting on 30 August 1993 Rabin also said that Israel would give the PLO too much in return for very few commitments, a reference to the lack of guarantees that the Palestinian Arabs would indeed renounce terrorism.

Later, on 10 September, during a sober meeting in his office in Jerusalem, Rabin seemed visibly unhappy and used a simple Pilot pen to sign the accord with the PLO while his new 'partner' Arafat was absent. Rabin's body language during the official ceremony three days later at the White House showed the same reluctance and uneasiness while the Norwegian diplomats who were involved in the Oslo negotiations were in a state of euphoria.

Barak's Criticism

Ehud Barak, in his capacity as army chief of staff, severely criticised the Oslo Accord. Barak said that Palestinian PLO police officers, who were trained by the Americans in Jordan and received their weapons from Israel, could join Palestinian paramilitary organisations. In other words, they could work with terrorist organisations.

Barak also said the agreement would tie the army's hands behind its back in the fight against terror.

"If we have information about an impending terrorist attack from a refugee camp, we will not be able to act effectively," Barak said about the end of IDF raids in cities, villages, and refugee camps under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

These predictions have also come true. Officers from Arafat's police force, and later that of current PA leader Mahmoud Abbas, took part in terrorist attacks and battles against the IDF.

Also, in the early years of the Oslo process, the Israeli army could not enter refugee camps or Palestinian cities.

"I remind you that there are extreme elements in Palestinian society who have an interest in sabotaging this agreement," Barak said, in a warning that also had a prophetic quality.

Rabin rebuked Barak, however, and said that there were also extremist elements in Israeli society who would be bent on sabotaging the agreement with the PLO. The prime minister was later proven right when the Jew Yigal Amir killed him at a peace rally in Tel Aviv.

The Oslo War and the 'Victims of Peace'

Ironically, it was Ehud Barak who later, as Prime Minister of Israel, led the country into what is referred to in Israel as the Oslo War (Second Intifada). That war was finally planned by Arafat after the failed talks on a final peace agreement at Camp David in the summer of 2000. Barak then went against the advice of many and offered Arafat a near-complete IDF withdrawal to the indefensible 1948 Armistice lines.

However, Arafat refused Barak's unprecedented offer because he had been preparing for war with Israel for years and had built up an army of 60,000 armed 'policemen' while under the Oslo Accord, a limit of 8,000 officers was agreed.

After signing the Oslo I Agreement, Peres called the many deaths and injuries caused by the terrorist attacks aimed at stopping the peace process 'the victims of peace'. The list of 'victims of peace' is long, numbering in the thousands and still growing.

Series of New Attacks

After three fatalities from two shooting attacks in mid-August 2023, there was another death on the last day of August.

Near the city of Modi'in, a Palestinian truck driver drove his truck into a group of IDF soldiers, killing one of them while others sustained moderate to serious injuries. That attack followed three more within 24 hours. First, another car-ramping attack was reported near Hebron. IDF soldiers shot the driver of the car before he could ram his vehicle into a group of soldiers.

Then on Wednesday evening 30 August, two buses of the Egged company were pelted with boulders, injuring the two drivers who were taken to hospital.

Later, a stabbing attack took place in the Old City of Jerusalem in which an Israeli was wounded in the back. On Thursday 31 August, a terrorist was shot dead near the Palestinian city of Nablus, apparently on his way to the next shooting attack. IDF soldiers later detonated a large roadside bomb that they suspected was smuggled into Israel from Syria or Lebanon.

Daily attempts to murder Israelis continued into the first week of September and led to a general warning by Israel's security forces that with the high holidays approaching, terrorist activity would increase even further.

All these terrorist attacks usually do not make it into the foreign media, but they show that the Oslo peace process was doomed to become an abysmal failure from the start.

The excuse for the terror is usually the so-called 'Israeli occupation' of Judea and Samaria. However, this is not a valid argument because Palestinian terror against Israel did not begin in 1967 when Israel conquered these areas during the Six Day War.

In fact, the Palestinian Arab terror began long before the establishment of the State of Israel and targeted the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

Short News

Yad Vashem Uses AI



Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Centre Yad Vashem will employ artificial intelligence (AI) in order to make the best possible use to archive all the documents it holds. Yad Vashem holds millions of pages of documents, over half a million photographs, tens of thousands of videos, audio recordings and written testimonies about the Holocaust. With artificial intelligence, Yad Vashem hopes to link the right names to photographs, e.g. the testimonies that mention names, dates and places. | Photo: Flash90

Cooperation Strengthened

The Philippines have strengthened ties with Israel in the field of agriculture. The closer cooperation will mainly take place in the field of exchange; think of training and internships. The Philippines also hopes to focus on developing large dairy farms with the aid of Israeli technology. Israel invited the country to participate in Agritech 2023, a large agricultural technological fair in Israel in October.

UN Censors History

On the UN's website is a timeline called The Issue of Palestine. The unsuspecting reader sees a timeline with factual historical events and thinks factual, so objective. But anyone who knows more about the history of the area sees what is not mentioned. It is as if Israel started various wars, without any reason, as if there were no Palestinian suicide attacks that caused Israel to react. The timeline can be found through: www.un.org/unispal/historical-timeline

Higher Buildings Eilat



Eilat's coast relies on a lot of tourists. There is currently a maximum height for building hotels, so that hotels usually have no more than eight storeys. That is about to change. Israel's National Council for Planning and Building has agreed to raise the maximum to sixty metres, or twenty storeys. There are also plans for a high-speed train connecting Kiryat Shmona to Eilat. Both plans are good news for the development of Eilat. | Photo: Flash90



Israel Timeline 1948-1993



1948

On 14 May 1948, Israel declares independence, re-establishing the Jewish state after 1,900 years. Armies of five neighbouring countries immediately invade in an effort to annihilate the newly born state. The Israeli Defence Forces are established.

1948-1951

The Jewish population doubles, as over 800,000 Jewish refugees flee racism and violence across Europe and the Middle East and return to Israel.

1949

The United Nations votes Israel in as its 59th member. The first Knesset (Israeli Parliament) is elected, including three Israeli Arabs. Jerusalem is divided under Israeli and Jordanian rule.

1950

The Knesset enacts the Law of Return, fulfilling Israel's mission to 'ingather the exiles' and to serve as a safe haven for all Jews.

1962

Adolf Eichmann is tried and executed in Israel after having been found guilty by an Israeli court of crimes against humanity.

1952-1964

About 240,000 Jewish refugees from Arab states are forced to leave and go to their ancestral homeland in Israel. By the 1970s a total of over 850,000 Jews have fled Arab states.

1956

The Sinai Campaign (also known as *Operation Kadesh*), fought to put an end to the terrorist incursions into Israel and to remove the Egyptian blockade of Eilat.

1951

Operations Ezra and Nehemiah: Israel rescues 121,000 persecuted Jews from Iraq.

1978-1979



1967

Six-Day War. Israel regains control of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (also referred to as the 'West Bank'), Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza. Construction begins in Kfar Etzion, an Israeli community in Samaria, destroyed in the 1948 war and re-established following the Six-Day War.

1969

Golda Meir becomes Prime Minister of Israel, the third woman in the world to lead a country.

1972

During the Summer Olympics in Munich, Palestinian gunmen take 11 members of the Israeli team hostage and murder them.

1973

Yom Kippur War, launched by Egypt and Syria.

1982



1950



1984-1985

Operation Moses. Israel rescues 8,000 Ethiopian Jews from oppression and brings them home to Israel.

1982

First Lebanon War.

1978-1979

Camp David Accords, agreements between Israel and Egypt, signed on 17 September 1978, that led to a peace treaty between the two countries in 1979. Israel returns the Sinai Peninsula as part of this peace treaty.

1976

Operation Entebbe. Israeli commandos mount a successful rescue operation at Entebbe Airport in Uganda, freeing over 100 hostages taken after the hijacking of an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris.

1989



1951



1987

First Intifada. Israelis are attacked with stones, firebombs, guns, and other weapons.

1989

Start of mass immigration of Jews from the Former Soviet Union.

1991

Israel launches *Operation Solomon* to transport over 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel over the course of just 36 hours. Israel attacked by Iraqi Scud missiles during the Gulf War. The Soviet Union is dissolved, resulting in a massive wave of Jewish immigration to Israel.

1993

Oslo Accords, marking the start of a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. While at first seen as a step toward a peaceful two-state solution, it is followed by terrorism against Israeli civilians and rejections by Palestinian leaders of numerous Israeli peace offers.

1969



Ben Gurion (left) signing the Declaration of Independence. | Photo: GPO Israel



New Ethiopian immigrants on an Air Force Boeing jet en route from Addis Ababa to Israel during *Operation Solomon*. | Photo: GPO Israel

Israel Timeline 1994-2023

1994

Israel signs a peace treaty with Jordan. The treaty clarified the borders of the two countries and their water rights. Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1995

Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated in Tel Aviv at a peace rally.

2000

Second Intifada. PLO leader Arafat rejects a proposal for peace with Israel.

2005

Israeli disengagement from Gaza. Israel evacuates all Jews (about 8,500) living in Gaza.

2017



2010

Mount Carmel Forest Fire. A forest fire began on Mount Carmel which would kill forty and burn nearly twenty square miles over the next three days.

2009

The city of Tel Aviv celebrates its 100th anniversary.

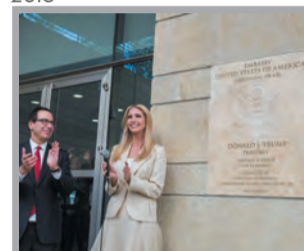
2008

Israel launches Operation Cast Lead in response to the barrage of over 10,000 rockets and mortars fired from the Gaza Strip.

2006

Hamas, a terrorist organisation wins the Palestinian elections and intensifies rocket fire against Israeli civilians. Hezbollah launches rocket attacks on Israeli cities from Lebanon and kidnaps Israeli soldiers, giving rise to the Second Lebanon War.

2018



2012

Operation Pillar of Cloud (Pillar of Defence). Israel wants to halt rocket attacks, originating from the Gaza Strip, against Israeli civilians. It's the 'debut' of Iron Dome, the Israeli defence system that stops rockets mid-flight.

2014

Operation Protective Edge, a military campaign aimed at destroying Palestinian tunnels used to smuggle weapons into the coastal enclave and launch attacks against Israel.

2015

Israel is hit with a wave of stabbing, shooting, and car-rammings attacks against civilians in the streets.

2017

Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, celebrates its 50th anniversary of reunification. United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel: In December 2017 US President Donald Trump formally announces the United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

2018



2021

Operation Guardian of the Walls (Gaza) UN Human Rights Council establishes "an ongoing, independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of international human rights law leading up and since 13 April 2021".

2020

'Abraham Accords' brokered by USA and signed with United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.

2018

The State of Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary.

2022

Operation Breaking Dawn
Thirty-seventh government of Israel formed on 29 December 2022, consisting of six parties and led by Benjamin Netanyahu who took office as the Prime Minister for the sixth time.

2023

Israel-Lebanon maritime border agreement. Political crisis in Israel as government seeks to implement judicial reforms.

Small photos on pages 6-7:
Shutterstock, GPO,
Flash90 and C4I

1994



2005



2012



Abraham Accords Signing Ceremony at the White House in Washington, USA, 15 September 2020. | Photo: GPO



People watch the military air show in Jerusalem as part of Israel's 75th Independence Day. | Photo: Flash90

ISRAEL
75 Years
Anniversary

Thailand Welcomes Message of Hope

■ Christians for Israel International

In August, Christians for Israel's President Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer travelled to Thailand to speak at nine different venues. Over the last ten years, multiple speaking tours have been organised in various parts of Thailand for his Biblical teaching and Christians for Israel's study books. These books include the trilogy *Why Israel?*, *Why Jerusalem?* and *Why End Times?* which have been translated into the Thai language.

With *God is not finished with Israel!* as the main theme, Rev Glashouwer was invited to speak at different churches in and around Bangkok. Although the topic may sound a bit dramatic, it really isn't. Israel retains significant meaning in our time, although many Christian Churches traditionally think otherwise. The prophetic return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is creating a new reality. As Rev Glashouwer explained, "The Church in general assumed that God had finished with Israel. The Church became the new chosen people of God. In general, the belief in many churches and in theology was that the Christian Church was the new Israel. However, nothing could be further from the truth. We all see the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel; God is preparing planet Earth for His future. One day, the Word will go out from Jerusalem. Jesus will return to Jerusalem. Then peace and righteousness will



Rev Willem Glashouwer at Wattana Presbyterian Church in Bangkok.

cover the earth, and the nations shall not train for war anymore. The promises and covenants that God made with Israel are everlasting and irrevocable. God will fulfil all His promises for Israel."

Many Christians in Thailand heard this message of hope for Israel and for the world for the first time and gladly welcomed it. Our coordinators in Thailand managed to

get the Thai translation of *Signs of the Times* printed and launched during this trip. A new working committee constituted of Thai Christians from various backgrounds was established to further develop Christians for Israel Thailand. May the Lord open the hearts of people in Thailand to the Biblical message about the Jewish people and Israel.

New Zealand Welcomes Rami Sherman

■ Bryce Turner

Christians for Israel New Zealand

After having plans derailed by the Covid pandemic several times, Christians for Israel New Zealand were finally able to host Major (ret) Rami Sherman for a speaking tour. Arriving in New Zealand in August, having already completed a very busy speaking schedule in Australia, Rami's visit to New Zealand was focussed on small groups and meetings. Beginning in the south of Auckland at Pukekohe, Rami shared some of the significant events in his life—most notably his involvement in *Operation Thunderbolt*, the famous Entebbe hostage rescue. Although only in New Zealand for a short stay, Rami was kept busy visiting many groups, bringing a unique perspective. As a Jewish Israeli, 'born and bred' on a Kibbutz and having lived through—even served in—some of the most significant armed conflicts in the modern State of Israel, Rami has developed some profound observations. In his personable and unassuming style, Rami openly shares, not only the lessons learned and wisdom gained, but also the journey he is still on as a Jewish man in an increasingly anti-Jewish world.

As a Jewish Israeli, 'born and bred' on a Kibbutz... Rami has developed some profound observations.

In collaboration with our friends from ICEJ, Rami spoke in Mt Eden and then travelled to Whangarei. Meetings in Hamilton and Matamata were followed by Flaxmere, Hastings, and then a week in Wellington, including a meeting hosted by members of the Wellington Jewish Community. Rami was able to present at meetings held in churches, hotels, halls, and in homes. Returning to Auckland, final meetings were held in Hamilton and



Christians for Israel New Zealand with Rami Sherman in downtown Auckland, New Zealand. Left to right: Cathy Eksteen, Bryce Turner, Rami Sherman and Graham Simpson. | Photo: Christians for Israel NZ

Waihi. Rami was farewelled by members of the Christians for Israel New Zealand team with a dinner on Auckland's waterfront before he flew to Fiji to join the Christians for Israel Fiji team for a series of meetings there.

In a nation so geographically removed from military conflict, audience members were fascinated to hear various parts of the build-up to *Operation Thunderbolt*. An incredible mission developed in an impossibly short amount of time; the odds of success were not high at all. As Rami shared various parts of the operation itself, including a deep respect for those soldiers wounded in the operation and, of course, reflection on the death of commanding officer Jonathan Netanyahu, any remote ideas of war being anything but a tragedy, quickly disappear. As Rami shared the experience of being prepared to risk one's life in order to save others—in this

case, the Jewish hostages of the hijacked Air France flight especially—it brought a deeper understanding of the perils of being Jewish, and therefore being the target of such hatred. The terrorists who hijacked that Air France passenger jet were members of the popular front for the liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an organisation that has active members and supporters in New Zealand today. To a New Zealand audience, being aware of increasing support for the terrorist regimes and moves to align with the Palestinian cause—in spite of its stated desire to see the destruction of Israel—the story of Rami's journey is sobering and an important call to advocate for truth. The staggering odds Israel has faced and continues to face, serves as a bold reminder of who is actually in control of the ultimate outcome in the Middle East.



The Illusion of Peace?

■ Bryce Turner

New Zealand Executive Director | Christians for Israel NZ

Welcome to *Israel and Christians Today*, thank you so much for joining us.

The last few months have been a very interesting period, not just in New Zealand and Israel but around the world. As New Zealand heads towards a general election, our news media, television, radio, internet and even the side of the road at every intersection have been invaded by party political statements and slogans, along with the usual air-brushed photos of candidates and party leaders. Along with the usual brutal slurs and childish bickering, it has been interesting to see what has emerged as the 'key issues'—and just as interesting to see what has been somewhat sidelined and pushed to the back. Faced with escalating costs of living and business uncertainty, New Zealanders appear to be ready to vote based more on their bank balances than their values, perhaps.

Over August/September, many New Zealand groups—and our brothers and sisters in Fiji—were able to spend some time listening to Rami Sherman. Travelling throughout the North Island (we did try to organise South Island engagements; we'll try again next time!) Rami was warmly welcomed, visiting churches, home groups, halls and other locations with a busy speaking schedule. Having come from a speaking tour in Australia and with a fast-paced itinerary in New Zealand, the final leg of his tour was in Fiji with the C4I Fiji team. Rami then returned to Israel delighted with the support of countless friendly New Zealanders and Fijians. More on his trip inside our NZ insert.

As New Zealand looks towards the general elections, it is somewhat amusing to see the response with various groups protesting, marching on parliament, and expressing their opinion in a country where democracy is held as the ideal system of governance. And yet, when Israelis are out protesting—in the only true democracy in the Middle East—there is condemnation and predictions of chaos and doom. Whilst it is true that some Jewish individuals have made headlines around the world with protests, comments



Rami Sherman speaking in Hamilton. | Photo: Jan Kaluza

and conduct that are, well, less than helpful to the nation of Israel as a whole, Israel continues to function and hold its place in the world. Whilst we celebrate with Fiji, where the first ever Fijian Airways charter flight to Israel has just taken place, closer to home in New Zealand, there are some worrying comments being thrown about by political candidates. Of particular concern are those of one party, from which one candidate in particular has clearly stated their desire to immediately recognise a Palestinian State and welcome an ambassador. Andrew Tucker (*thinc*) brings us a political commentary on the negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Israel and shares why the idea of a fully-fledged Palestinian state living in peace side-by-side with Israel is an illusion.

In this edition, we continue to bring you articles of news and views from around the world, and especially from closer to home. Dr Sheree Trotter, just back from a course on Critical Contemporary Antisemitism at Oxford, brings a fascinating perspective on Zionism as a

model for indigenous people. We have an article from Sondra Oster Baras from the Bet Hagai youth village in Judaea and Samaria, and we continue with our Centenary of the Mandate for Palestine series from Hugh Kitson. Raphael Jordan (Christians for Israel Fiji) brings a very encouraging update from the Fiji Islands, and Enoch Lavender looks at the Jubilee and Jesus' return. Keith Buxton (ex-Bridges for Peace Australia) continues with pastoral insights from a *Torah* portion, Rev Cheryl Hauer (Bridges for Peace International) shares an observation from the olive tree, and Dr Simon Smelt shares his thoughts on the 144,000 Jews and the End Time revival.

As this edition arrives in your letterbox, we will be in the final stages of preparation for our Israel Study Tour 2023, departing NZ on 5 November. We count it a great privilege to take another group of New Zealanders to visit Israel, to set foot in the Holy Land and see it for themselves. Thank you for joining us in support of Israel. Be blessed as you bless the Promised Land.

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The East Coast and Israel

Joanna Moss

Remote Tairāwhiti has been linked with Israel and the Jews since the early part of the twentieth century when farm boys were recruited into the NZ Mounted Rifles in WWI. They were part of the 9th East Coast Squadron of the Wellington Mounted Rifles and served in Gallipoli, Egypt, Sinai and Palestine. Many more served in other WWI units. Today, the ANZAC monument proudly stands on the banks of the Turanganui River, close to Gisborne's town centre (pictured below).

Famed St Mary's Anglican Church at Tikitiki has a beautiful war memorial to those Māori who served in WWI with a Jerusalem connection. Māori had a natural affinity with the story of the Israelites, their tribes, *whakapapa* and land connection. The church was built in

the 1920s under the direction of Sir Apirana Ngata for *Ngati Porou*. A stained-glass window depicts two local casualties kneeling at the foot of the cross, linking the war with the Bible. A lone soldier statue sits atop the hill standing guard reminding Māori of their heritage.

But perhaps it is the 28th Māori Battalion in WWII that many associate with Tairāwhiti with its Gisborne Headquarters. C company was recruited from East Coast Māori. The battalion distinguished itself as fierce fighters and brave warriors coping with harsh conditions in the deserts of North Africa, such as at El Alamein. Such was their fame it came to the attention of the Allied command and even the Third Reich leaders! They remain the most decorated NZ battalion. Here were Māori fighting for the Jewish communities of North Africa and Europe and protecting the Holy Land from invasion.

Such was the support for Israel; NZ Friends of Israel had a Gisborne branch, and other Israel groups were active in the region. Today, Prayer for Israel remains ably led locally by Pastors Jennifer and Guthrie Boyd (pictured right). But perhaps the saddest aspect is that many *Ngati Porou* have embraced the false Palestinian narrative as akin to their own, forgetting the biblical narrative and the sacrifice of their forebears. Please pray for them.

Guthrie and Jennifer Boyd

Guthrie and Jennifer Boyd from Assemblies of God (AOG) Gisborne are particularly well-known for their pastor trips. After pastoring in the Bay of Islands for ten years the Boyds responded to God's call in 1997 to go to Phoenix, Arizona. In the year 2000 they went on a pastors' familiarisation tour to Israel, and it was then that the



revelation of Israel unfolded more clearly. The following year they took a group of people from their church in Phoenix to Israel and also around the 'Seven Churches of Revelation', which today are located in Turkey.

After returning to New Zealand in 2010 the call to Israel remained strong and they continued to take small groups to both Israel and Turkey. In 2018 they took 48 AOG pastors and leaders to Israel. The following year they led another group of 46 people, including many pastors, from other several different churches around Israel. Pastors often have limited time and money, so they stick to 12 days touring in Israel with flights on top of that, often with a monthly payment plan to make it doable.

God has laid a new plan on their hearts and they have booked two back-to-back tours to Israel in May 2024, one of which will be focused for young leaders. So now they are looking for people to pray and encourage pastors to go and to identify key young leaders, some of whom will likely need some help with funding. If you would like to support this, please contact Guthrie for more information.



Life-Saving Surgery in Israel

Shevet Achim Volunteer

A long-neglected little Muslim boy named Yaman, the son of a Kurdish shepherd in the mountains on the Iraq-Iran border, flew into Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv on 31 August to have heart surgery in Israel.

His lips and face were blue from his heart defects, and his fingernails were dark and clubbed. Even though his oxygen saturations were reading only 50-60% of normal, Yaman's cardiologist in Iraq gave him a pre-flight infusion and felt he could safely travel without a medical escort.

Since Yaman's mother had never travelled internationally and spoke no Arabic or English, the sponsoring charity 'Shevet Achim' paired her with another Arabic-speaking mother and her child to assist her in transit. All made it safely to Israel and through passport control.

But then the other mother, in her excitement, rushed out of the baggage claim area, leaving behind not only Yaman and his mother but also her passport and her own baby! Of course, once she was outside, she was not allowed to return. Yaman's mother, now with two babies in her arms, was left alone, lost and helpless inside the airport.

Shevet Achim volunteer Jonathan Miles was waiting outside: "After nearly an hour had passed with no sign of her, I approached the security guards and told them a child whose life was at risk was lost inside. When they told me to leave the area and go look for a phone number to call, I interpreted this as indifference and started shouting at them angrily. But once I humbled and quieted myself, it turned out this was indeed the only way for me to get inside. When I called, the Israeli on the other end of the phone was concerned and came at once to help me enter the baggage area. After 15 minutes of searching through the crowds, thank God I found the mother and two missing babies."



Yaman following surgery in Israel. | Photo: Shevet Achim

Volunteers rushed Yaman up to the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, where cardiologist Julius Golender was waiting. Once he got a look at Yaman's heart, he told the mother that her child needed to go straight into the operating room.

Miles adds: "This is something I love about the way our partner doctors in Israel value life. It was now Thursday afternoon, and everyone had already gone for the weekend. The poor child had been ignored by everyone for two years. But no one gave a second thought about calling everybody in to take him to surgery that very evening."

Shevet Achim volunteer Berith Lindberg stayed with the exhausted mother as she waited outside the operating room. When the surgeon, Prof Alain Serraf, emerged three hours later, he simply said, "Before he was blue, now he is pink."

Lindberg said, "I had the feeling that they came here to Israel at just the right time to save his life."

Shevet Achim was registered as a charity in Israel in 1994 to give non-Jewish children access to advanced medical centres in Israel. Their name comes from Psalm 133: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity."

Baddiel Charms Auckland



Journalist, Juliet Moses with David Baddiel.

David Baddiel is a British Jew famous for his television work and as a comedian including screen writer and TV presenter as well as being an author. Baddiel was in Auckland recently to speak at Limmud, the Jewish educational festival. Notably, he is the author of the recent controversial book, *Jews Don't Count* in which he opines that so many people today ignore antisemitism.



Thank you to those of you who sent through your updated information for our database. As promised, the three lucky winners are:

- *Behold He Comes* book: I & J Barnes - Rakaia
- *Why Israel Trilogy*: J Cowey - Christchurch
- *Friends of Israel Cookbook*: L Buckley - Auckland



Israeli-Saudi Normalisation Shouldn't be Made Conditional

■ Andrew Tucker

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

As part of the realignment of its global position, the United States is negotiating with Saudi Arabia in the hope of achieving an 'Abraham Accord' between the Saudi monarchy and Israel. Israel is being pressured to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state as a condition for 'normalisation' of relations with the Saudis. However, the idea of a fully-fledged Palestinian state living in peace side-by-side with Israel is an illusion. Ever since the 1970s, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) has received billions of dollars in foreign aid to establish an independent, viable and peaceful Palestinian state and has failed to do so. To this day, the PLO continues to refuse to recognise Israel as a legitimate state and to engage in normal diplomatic cooperation with it. This attitude of rejection was the main reason that the various attempts to negotiate a final status agreement since the Oslo Accords (2000/2001, 2008 and 2014) failed. The PLO and PA participate actively with UN member states in initiatives through United Nations institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council, to delegitimise the Jewish State of Israel to condemn Israel as guilty of human rights violations and war crimes and as being racist and apartheid in essence. All Palestinian organisations (including the PLO) claim that the Jewish State of Israel is illegitimate, that Palestine (including Israeli land west of the Green Line to the Mediterranean coast) must be 'liberated', and that they are legally entitled to use force to achieve these claims. Palestinian society is based on strong families and clans, mostly bound to a traditional religious Islamic and Arabic culture of honour on local and regional levels, which generate patronage as a general model of authority. Leadership is constructed from the top down without republican or democratic elements through politically centralised organisations. The Palestinian way of life in the West Bank never included state-building in the sense of a state along Western lines based on freedom and the rule of law. The reality is that the heartbeat of Palestinian politics throbs with the wish

to destroy Israel. This is stimulated by the UNRWA system's promise of a 'right of return' and the ongoing insistence of international anti-Zionist actors that Israel is illegitimate. The common core element of the various groups constituting the PLO (Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and others), Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and similar groups is their declared political program to annihilate the State of Israel. This is evidenced by their political charters, deliberately ambiguous and conflicting territorial claims, education of children, TV programmes, newspapers, military organisations, and political declarations in Arabic language. Hamas, governing the Gaza Strip since 2006, attacked Israel in 2008/2009, in 2012, in 2014, in 2021 and in 2022. The Palestine National Charter (as amended in 1968) denies the existence of the State of Israel and calls on 'armed Palestinian revolution' to liberate the whole of Palestine. For more than 30 years, polls have shown that Palestinian majorities believe the destruction of Israel will be achieved in the future and even within a matter of years. A common thread runs through the anti-Jewish massacres one hundred years ago, the antisemitic actions of the Mufti of Jerusalem cooperating closely with German National Socialism, the 1948/9, 1967 and 1973 wars against Israel, and thousands of terrorist attacks against Israel since the 1950s, to the present-day attacks on Israeli citizens by young radicalised Palestinian terrorists. Palestinian political culture is driven by a heroic ideal of fighting against real or imagined humiliation. It is rooted in the accusation of injustice and dispossession and holds close to extremist religious traditions. The political aims of the Palestinian majority have been documented in numerous polls since around 1990. In every poll, those wishing to destroy the state of Israel gain a strong majority; more than 60% of the Palestinians in the West Bank say that the destruction of Israel is their preferred political outcome. Those preferring peace and acceptance of Israel gain percentages between 6% and 35%. In general, Palestinians reject the right of Jews to live in the West Bank and in a Palestinian state. Jews shall have no place, just as there

are none today in the Gaza Strip. All of this means that as long as the political basis of Palestinian society remains the destruction of Israel, there will never be a peaceful Palestinian state in the West Bank alongside the Jewish State of Israel. Under these circumstances, Israel cannot be expected to tolerate the coming into existence of a Palestinian state overlooking its longest border and main population centres, poised to destroy the Jewish population. Instead of insisting that Israel accept Palestinian statehood as the price for Saudi normalisation of relations with Israel, Western nations like the US, the EU, Australia and New Zealand should insist that the Saudis first require the Palestinians to cultivate a legal and social culture-based on personal liberty and equality and normalisation of relations with Israel.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) promotes the rule of law to advance security and cooperation in the Middle East. For further information, and to make a donation directly to thinc. www.thinc-israel.org

Philanthropists in Israel

In this new series, we bring you philanthropists who seek to promote the welfare of Israelites in Israel.

Robert M Beren



Robert Beren, a prolific philanthropist, oil magnate and Republican donor who funded Jewish schools, yeshivas, agencies and synagogues in the United States and Israel, died on 8 August 2023. He was 97. Beren's grandson Jonah Platt reflected on his grandfather's 'tremendous' impact, "He instilled in all of us such a sense of responsibility to the Jewish community, to give back always and to always put an emphasis on philanthropy and education and Jewish values." "Family," Platt said, was central to Beren's values. "He set the tone, the way he revered his family and those who came before him. So we try with everything we do to honour him and his legacy." Born to Adolph and Ethel Beren in 1925, he grew up in Ohio. During Beren's first year as a freshman at Harvard University, he enlisted to fight in WWII. After the war, he returned to complete his undergraduate and master's degree in business. His uncle, Israel Henry Beren, helped found the Okmar Oil Company in the early 20th century and led it through the Great Depression. Continuing the family's ties to the oil industry, Beren founded the oil and gas firm Berexco in the 1960s. His son, Adam, serves as chairman and president of Berexco today. Among the numerous beneficiaries of Beren's charitable giving are the following: the Robert M. Beren Academy, a Modern Orthodox Jewish school in Houston; Yeshiva University; the Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore, named after the Beren family; the Beth Medrash Govoha in New Jersey, named after Beren's parents and a study hall named for his uncle; and the Ohr Torah Stone network in Israel, including its Robert M. Beren Machanaim Yeshiva in the West Bank settlement of Migdal Oz. Rabbi Kenneth Brander, president of the Ohr Torah Stone network of institutions said, "The worldwide Jewish community mourns the loss of a true champion, a man of unwavering principles, of a dedication to the Jewish people, and of extraordinary generosity. His commitment to excellence and education had a profound impact. Mr Beren was more than just a philanthropic donor—he was an involved partner whose strategic insights guided our growth." Beren is survived by daughters Nancy Beren, an active member of Jewish organisations in Houston; Julie Platt, chair of Jewish Federations of North America; Amy Bressman; former president of UJA-Federation New York; and son Adam Beren, a former president of the Mid-Kansas Jewish Federation, member of the US Holocaust Memorial Council and founder of the Combat Antisemitism Movement.

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Zionism is a Model for Indigenous People

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

This unsolicited morsel of advice left me taken aback. I had just spent two weeks at Oxford attending a course on Critical Contemporary Antisemitism by the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy. Such a rebuke gave me cause for reflection. Why should an indigenous person from distant New Zealand care about what happens to Jews in the Middle East and elsewhere?

Oft-cited is the phrase “Jews are the canary in the coalmine”. In other words, rising antisemitism is an unmistakable sign that society is in deep trouble.

Antisemitism globally is displaying an alarming upward trend, a trend that is coincidental with, and likely lubricated and accelerated by, increasing polarisation within Western-style democracies. As is painfully obvious, the latter is a phenomenon from which Israel is not exempt.

Antisemitic incidents in the US reached their highest level last year since the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) began such records in 1979.

A 2021 survey on antisemitism in my own nation found that 63% of New Zealanders held at least one antisemitic view, and some 6% held nine or more antisemitic views (based on 18 questions posed to expose antisemitic ideas.)

Further, antisemitism emerges from a bewildering range of divergent worldviews. If this means society is indeed desperately ill, perhaps we should all care about the Jews?

Another reason for my concern over Jewish issues is that there are many ‘in my backyard’ who seem to think it’s noble to attack and demonise Israel. As a Christian, I cannot ignore nearly 2,000 years of persecution of Jews perpetrated in the name of Christ. While I can’t be held responsible for such attitudes and actions, it naturally and properly creates for me a deeply rooted connection to the issue.

Many New Zealanders view Israel through the lens of our own settler colonialist history: the Jews, like the British, are seen as white European colonisers; the Palestinians, as akin to my own people, the indigenous Māori.

Such is the narrative. But like so many narratives, it lacks even a passing resemblance to the facts of history.

The British were complete strangers to the land of Aotearoa, New Zealand. In contrast, for the Jewish people, Israel is the ancestral homeland. It was here that a distinctive indigenous Jewish culture, language and religion began to develop more than 3,000 years ago. And despite multiple dispersions, there has always been a residual Jewish presence in the land, and for those in the diaspora, an inextinguishable longing for the land. Thus, as an indigenous person, it’s most natural for me to recognise in the Jewish experience and history the markers of indigeneity.

Of course, Arabs are indigenous too—to Arabia. They came to Palestine (so named by the Romans as an act of cultural erasure) many centuries later.

One of the presenters at Oxford remarked that Zionism is



Sheree Trotter participating in the ISGAP scholars-in-residence programme at Pembroke College, Oxford. | Photo: Perry Trotter Photography

about reclaiming the land. “We walk the land. We know every stone—we know the land”. (Yossi Shain, ISGAP 2023) This is very much an indigenous trait. The recovery of the Hebrew language is also an inspiration to other indigenous peoples seeking to revive their language.

Moreover, while many critical race theorists insist on defining Jews as white, with all the attendant oppressor class guilt associated with whiteness, Jews generally do not identify themselves as such. Indeed, only two generations ago, Jews were hunted down and murdered by the millions, in large measure, because they were not white.

One of those in my own backyard recently took it upon herself to opine on Israel’s evils in a prominent New Zealand newspaper. She spoke of her trip to ‘Palestine’, undertaken as part of a quest to work out her conflicted sense of identity as a person with a Christian mother and Jewish father. Her article was predictable in many ways. After describing what she saw as the suffering of the Palestinians and the culpability of Israel (with no mention of terror and rocket attacks and the need for security restrictions), the writer concluded:

“I don’t know how the story ends, but one thing is clear: if the question remains as to whether the Jewish people deserve a place to call home, we are still asking the wrong question. The answer to that will always be unequivocally yes. The question we should all be asking is whether the autonomy of Jews matters more than the human dignity and lives of Palestinians. My Jewish values of social justice and the sanctity of life guide me to believe that the State of Israel, as it exists today, isn’t worth the cost.”

And there we have it. The questioning of Israel’s right to exist. The author falsely posits a zero-sum game, a false dichotomy between Jewish self-determination and Palestinian dignity. Both matter and need not be pitted one against the other. The writer failed to address the elephant

in the room; the Palestinian leadership bears much of the responsibility for the plight of the Palestinians by refusing to make peace with a Jewish state in any part of the land and by their endemic corruption and failure to provide for their own people or establish a free democratic society.

Perhaps this young woman is unaware that without a state, Jews would be left in a deeply precarious situation. This is proven by two thousand years of homelessness, incessant persecution, the Holocaust and the reluctance of the world to receive Jewish refugees before, during and after the Holocaust. One painful lesson of the Holocaust was that the Jewish people should never entrust their existential security to the international community.

Opposition to Zionism (belief in the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancestral homeland) is one of the most pernicious forms of contemporary antisemitism. Whereas in the past, Jews were persecuted for their religion or their race, now they are persecuted for their peoplehood. They are denied the right to a national existence. As Professor David Patterson put it, anti-Zionism “is the quintessential form of antisemitism” in that it involves “the elimination of a place to go for the Jewish people... It undergirds the homelessness of the Jews, where the wandering Jew is forbidden to become the dwelling Jew”. (ISGAP 2023)

The denial of peoplehood, history, heritage, and connection to one’s land, in concert with the usual demonisation and double standards in regard to security, would be deeply dehumanising for any people group. But for Israel, the Jew among the nations, it is now the norm. The canary is long dead.

No. I won’t be forgetting the Jews anytime soon. Indeed, it seems obvious to me that all those who care about history, justice and decency should be resolutely unwilling to ‘forget the Jews’.

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Batsheva and the Story of Bet Hagai

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President of CFOIC Heartland

On 20 August 2023, Batsheva Nigri left her home in Bet Hagai, together with her 12-year-old daughter, to run some errands in Efrat and Jerusalem. She never made it. Just a few hundred metres from the entrance to her community, she was murdered by an Arab terrorist who opened fire on the car. Miraculously, her daughter was not hurt.

Batsheva was not the first person from Bet Hagai to be murdered by terrorists. In fact, there is a memorial plaque in the centre of the community with the names of seven residents of Bet Hagai who were murdered by terrorists over the years. Batsheva's name will now be added to the list.

The story of Bet Hagai actually begins with a horrible terrorist attack. May 1980, Hebron. At the time, Jews were not permitted to live in Biblical Hebron but only in neighbouring Kiryat Arba. But a number of very brave women entered an old Jewish building in Hebron, Bet Hadassah, in the middle of the night in April 1979 and established a permanent Jewish presence in the city. For the first time since 1929, when Jews were massacred by Arabs and the survivors were driven from the city by the British, Jews returned to live in Hebron.

The Israeli Government at the time was not happy with their presence. The leadership of Israel was not willing to stand before the Arabs in Hebron and declare our Jewish claim to the city. And they were not willing to stand before the world and declare our right to Judea and Samaria. But the Israeli Government also could not bring themselves to forcibly evict women and children who had taken up residence in a building that belonged to Jews, where Jews had lived and worked for years before 1929. But in the hope that they would voluntarily leave the city on their own, the government did not allow the husbands to join their families in Hebron, leaving the women and children alone in the dilapidated building.

Jews were able to visit Hebron freely, however, and every Friday night, Jews would gather at the Tomb of the Patriarchs and welcome the *Sabbath* with prayers and songs. Before walking up the hill to Kiryat Arba, they would stop in front of Bet Hadassah and sing *Sabbath* songs to the women and children inside. On one such Friday night in May 1980, Arab terrorists ambushed the group and opened fire on the men as they were singing and dancing in honour of the holy *Sabbath*. Six men were murdered.

Three years later, students of the Kiryat Arba *yeshiva* decided to start a new community in Judea, just south of Hebron, in memory of their three friends, fellow students at the *yeshiva*, who were murdered in Hebron on that tragic night. Using the initials of their first names, Hanan, Gershon and Yaakov, which spells the word Hagai in Hebrew, they named their community Bet Hagai.

From the beginning, the people of Bet

Hagai were committed to settling the Land of Israel as the fulfilment of God's will. They understood that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was the first step in the ultimate redemption and Messianic age that the Prophets of Israel spoke of thousands of years ago. And then, when Israel returned to the Biblical Heartland in 1967, they saw an opportunity to play a critical role in the fulfilment of prophecy, as spoken by *Ezekiel*: "But you, O Mountains of Israel, shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people of Israel for they will soon be coming... And I will multiply people upon you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt" (*Ezekiel 36:8, 10*). Israel had returned to the Mountains of Israel, Judea and Samaria, and it was time to inhabit the cities and rebuild the ruins.

It was a difficult beginning, but the early pioneers persevered. But almost from the start, they did not just want to settle the land. They wanted to give back to Israeli society as a whole, to embrace a project that would serve people from all over Israel. They opened the Bet Hagai Youth Village in 1989, initially in mobile homes. Theirs was a unique concept. The Youth Village would not just be a place for troubled boys living in dormitories. Their village would mirror a real family. Young families would live with the boys in a group home, and the boys would not only receive therapies and specialised education. They would also receive the love and sense of belonging in a family that they so desperately needed.

Batsheva and her husband, Eliyahu, moved to Bet Hagai several years ago, and Eliyahu became part of the staff of the youth village. Batsheva and Eliyahu were quiet people but full of kindness and love. They had difficulty conceiving a baby, and it was years before they were able to have their only child, today a lovely 12-year-old girl. But they have fostered children for years in their Bet Hagai home. The Nigri family, like the entire community of Bet Hagai, is all about love, about children and about reaching out to those most in need, without fanfare, without fuss. Just being there for the people who need them most.

Christians for Israel, together with supporters of CFOIC Heartland from all over the world, have been helping the people of Judea and Samaria, and particularly the people of Bet Hagai, for decades. Thanks to your support, there are security cameras to protect the children and staff of the Youth Village from terrorist infiltration. Christians for Israel has provided assistance for the construction of some of the family homes, for the art centre, the music centre and ongoing needs for the boys. Bet Hagai has stood firm in its dedication to settling the land and has spread love and comfort to those who need it most. Thank you for partnering with them.

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 people of Bet Hagai and the work of CFOIC Heartland, please use the form on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).



Troubled teenagers from all over Israel find a home with a family at the Bet Hagai Youth Village. | Photos: CFOIC Heartland



Bet Hagai staff shower their teen charges with love, love and more love.



Christians for Israel representative Johan VD Ham joins the Bet Hagai teens for lunch and a chat during his visit in February.



The community of Bet Hagai mourns the loss of Batsheva Nigri. Local teens create a Star of David out of memorial candles to symbolise their determination to hold on to the land regardless of the danger.

Film Review: NZIFF

An Insight into Space Travel

An insight into NASA's space programme is hardly what you'd expect from an Israeli contribution to the International Film Festival. Yet *Space: the Longest Goodbye* is a documentary produced by US-based Ido Mizrahi with his close friend Nir Sa'ar, proving you don't have to live in the country and make locally-themed documentaries to qualify.

It began with the premise—what does it take psychologically to be an astronaut, and will that change when the parameters adjust to a three-year round trip Mars mission? This film had local interest as it paralleled the work done by the late Wellington Emeritus Psychology Professor Tony Taylor, who applied his knowledge of men in isolation from *Operation Deep Freeze* staff in Antarctica to 1970's Space Shuttle planning teams.

Given Ido Mizrahi's credibility as a documentary maker, his team was given unprecedented access to NASA facilities and staff. The documentary centres on Chief Mars Mission Psychologist Dr Al Holland. He talks the audience through the recruitment process, showing psychological testing currently being performed on astronauts before tackling the demands of Mars. Mizrahi interweaves the case study method with Holland's dialogue. Whilst technical competence is the base entry requirement, being a team player and needing limited personal space are critical requirements in a capsule. Then medical concerns arise—how do astronauts' bodies and minds cope with extended periods of zero gravity and artificial light when tested in a pod? Next comes the monitoring and interview process. You wonder how truthful are the answers given with such a lot at stake.

We saw a mother engage in parenting from the space station and learnt later how the family felt about her work and absence. No guarantees they will come home. Then, a career-driven 30-year-old wife, facing the dilemma of future motherhood, was featured. What kind of person can survive lengthy, limited contact with family and friends? In 2023, how do you have a relationship where any communication will be delayed at best? Strange methods to alleviate isolation were explored, including hibernation for journeys and using AI to mimic a spouse as real-time communication won't be possible on Mars, methods not appealing to the NZ audience at all.

As NASA contemplates Mars travel, the psychological demands become more paramount. Initial mission preparation included placing a team who met the initial testing criteria in a sealed simulated capsule in the desert. The experiment failed when one would-be astronaut suffered toothache and had to be relieved. Dentistry was not part of the training, apparently! Clearly, sickness and death would be major mission concerns. Given the psychological problems of the Mars mission, let alone the physical, technical and financial problems, the audience did not think that a Mars mission was tenable.

What happens to children who move countries and cultures knowing their primary culture yet being forced to adapt and live in another country? These are people known as *Generation 1.5* since they often belong to neither culture and, thus, are caught between the two cultures. Sadly, this problem is not easily resolved.

This 1.5 expression has a deeper meaning in Israel because the expression was applied to the children of the Russian/FSU *Aliyah* of the early 1990s, and their numbers are large and growing with successive generations moving to Israel. Interestingly, time has not eroded their distinction and dislocation. Today, they make up a significant cohort of about one million (11%) of the population and now want to be taken seriously. After all, they are no longer children, nor silent, nor ignorant of how Israeli society works.

What made the Russian or Former Soviet Union (FSU) *Aliyah* unique was that many of the 'Russians' were well educated and left behind a rich, developed culture, good jobs, and an established position in society with an affinity to the land e.g. *Mother Russia*. When they arrived, their parents often couldn't get work in their chosen fields and were forced to work in more menial roles, causing bitterness and resentment that the children had to wear. Many chose to hold on to their mother tongues and culture rather than embracing the new Israeli language and culture. Clearly, they were not *Aliyah* ideologues but rather Jews fleeing a closed society with the potential threat of death or banishment, looking for opportunities. Hardly surprising, many moved on to the United States and elsewhere. Israel was just too hot, too hard and too small. Imagine the shock of leaving Moscow or St Petersburg for tiny Arad in the Negev. If that wasn't enough, there was identity dysphoria because although they were

Generation 1.5



Stacked Jewish Matryoshka highlight Jews steeped in Russian culture. | Photo: Shutterstock

considered Jewish in their home countries, and some even had a J stamp on their passports, Israel did not consider them Jewish. They qualified for entry under the Law of Return, but that's all. Worse still, they were regarded with deep suspicion by the Israeli public as well as the governing authorities. Even to enter Israel, they faced huge obstacles, not least the difficulty of proving they were Jewish when Judaism was outlawed for decades back home. When all else fails, they resort to DNA. Russian Jews got the message—they were not really wanted. Yet the opposite was the case as they kick-started the high-tech sector and improved the work culture markedly, plus provided much-needed engineers and doctors to a burgeoning society. It begs the question, where would Israel be today without them?

A recent development has further aggravated the problem. Recent immigrants are in a worse position than those who

came in the 1990s. Israel has closed the fast-track immigration process for citizens of Russia and Belarus. Immigrants from these countries now enter under temporary arrangements akin to a visitor's visa. They are unable to work, study, join an *Ulpan* to learn Hebrew or access health care. This status lasts for six months. How many people could sustain that level of expenditure in expensive Israel when few from these countries have many resources in the first place? Alternatively, staying in Russia could mean being drafted into the war or becoming locked in. Israel is forcing them to look elsewhere.

Alex Rif, CEO of the One Million Lobby, is trying to be the voice of *Generation 1.5*. Her organisation attempts to help new immigrants ease into Israeli society. Her political position is that one million is not a small number, and they must have a voice. But given the political turmoil, her timing is not great.

Tikvah Conference on American Crisis

The Tikvah Fund is a major, prestigious Jewish American philanthropic organisation that invests in aspiring Jewish leaders and in the development of Jewish ideas and excellence. It also engages with media and think tanks and is seeking to present the conservative viewpoint on college campuses in the face of rising liberalism. Based in New York City and Jerusalem, this conservative organisation focuses on Israel, Judaism and Jewish culture, as well as on economic, political, religious and cultural matters relating to them.

In October, the Tikvah fund will host a major conference in New York City entitled *The Rising Generation: will our children defend America, Israel and Jewish Civilization?* What makes this conference significant is the backdrop. People are openly talking about whether the American Jewish community has any

future. Ido Netanyahu, brother of the Israeli PM and an American resident, describes the community as being in free fall, and he expects it to be gone in a few decades. This is hard to believe as America contains the second largest Jewish community in the world, one that's highly visible and has been a prominent voice globally. That is about to change. The younger generation (under 45) is different. In contrast with the Orthodox, they are staying single, having few children, increasingly marrying out i.e. to non-Jews (up to 85%), and not engaging with the Jewish community. American Jewish institutions are crumbling, especially the Reform and Conservative synagogues and community centres and with it their voice.

Interestingly, this younger generation is the least religiously literate of any Jewish generation. Many have only loose cultural

Jewish connections, such as eating latkes and bagels, and don't value their Jewishness. Being Jewish on campus and in the community is becoming increasingly problematic, providing more reason to drop it.

Many question the tenuous link this younger generation has with Israel and whether they will support Israel in future. Despite the Birthright programme et al., many Jews remain ideologically opposed to Israel. Birthright brings young diaspora Jews to Israel on a 10-day familiarisation tour with an option to extend to work as volunteers. It's specifically designed to connect Jews with their Jewishness and the land. These young Jews are hostile to traditional American values, too. Will they recognise Jewish responsibility to uphold biblical values and principals in society at large or renege on it and be like the gentiles?

Centenary of the Mandate for Palestine *The Spiritual & Prophetic Significance—Part 6*

■ Hugh Kitson

Writer, Director and Producer of the *Whose Land?* documentary

This series has previously mentioned that the San Remo Resolution, which resulted in the Mandate for Palestine that was ratified in July 1922, enshrined into international law the title deed that Almighty God had given to the Hebrew Patriarchs as an everlasting possession. Perhaps this was not obvious at the time, but I believe this was what God was doing behind the scenes 100 years ago.

At that time Great Britain, along with the empire that was attached to it, was the ‘world superpower’ of the day, although in decline by then. In the decades that followed, the United States of America would accede to that position.

Nevertheless, Great Britain and its empire was responsible for the Balfour Declaration, the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire, which had inflicted a genocide on ethnic minorities within its empire, and the implementation of the Mandate for Palestine.

The Decree of Cyrus

This wasn’t the first time in recorded history that the ‘world superpower’ of the day would be responsible for facilitating the restoration of the nation of Israel. The Bible records that the head of the Persian Empire, King Cyrus, was given a similar role during the Babylonian exile in the 6th Century BC.

What happened is recorded in a number of books in the Hebrew Scriptures, notably *2nd Chronicles* (chapter 36), as well as the *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. The Hebrew Bible, which has a different configuration to the Christian Old Testament, actually concludes with the second *Book of Chronicles*, which itself closes with the decree of Cyrus:

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: “All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all of His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!”

(*2 Chronicles* 36:23)

One could say that this decree from the Persian king was ‘the international law’ of its time. Not only do we find it in the Bible, but it is also inscribed on the ‘Cyrus Cylinder’, which comes from the ancient Persian Empire and dates back to 538 BC. Today this ancient historic artefact resides in the British Museum! For those who believe in neither the authority nor the accuracy of the Bible, God provides extra-biblical evidence of something that so many today seek to deny: the Jewish historic connection to Jerusalem!

Restoration and the Coming of Messiah

So why was the return of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple so crucial back then? There could be many answers to that question, but I would like to offer just one: to prepare the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people for the First Coming of Messiah—the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world (*John* 1:29).

More than 2,000 years after the Cyrus decree, the Lord raised up another great empire—the British Empire—the most extensive empire the world had hitherto seen. Apart from taking the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, the British Empire would assume its ‘Cyrus’ role to facilitate the restoration of Israel to its ancient homeland once again.

Sadly, many British people today hold the former British Empire in contempt, in the same way that they hold the gospel and the rebirth of the Jewish state in contempt. While there were atrocities committed in the name of the empire—after all we are a fallen humanity—nevertheless, the Lord had his purposes for the rise of the British Empire, just as with the Persian Empire in the days of Cyrus.

Some years ago, I produced and directed a documentary film, which was largely the vision my Australian historian friend Kelvin Crombie, who presented it. It was entitled



Cyrus Cylinder in the British Museum.

‘*The Destiny of Britain*’ and you can view a trailer (7 min) through the link given at the end of this article. It examines how Britain’s Christian heritage was instrumental in leading to the Balfour Declaration.

San Remo and the Mandate for Palestine: The Modern-Day Cyrus Decree

The San Remo Resolution, and the Mandate that followed it, which raised the Balfour Declaration to the status of an international treaty, could be likened to the ‘Cyrus Decree’ for the modern era.

As was pointed out in the earlier article looking at the San Remo Conference in some detail, the territorial extent of the Jewish national home was discussed, and while the actual boundaries were not finalised then, the intention was expressed that it should incorporate the area of Israel’s domicile during the reigns of King David and King Solomon. Included within that is the biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria, and particularly Israel’s historic capital, Jerusalem.

So, why is this latter-day ‘Cyrus Decree’ so crucial in the purposes of God? I would suggest that it is to prepare the Jewish people, who have been largely scattered across the face of the earth for two millennia, the Land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem for the Second Coming of Messiah. His mission this time? To rule and reign over the whole earth from the throne of David—His throne—in Jerusalem.

The City of the Great King—not ‘Al Quds’

The Lord Jesus once referred to Jerusalem as “the city of the great King” (*Matthew* 5:35)—in reference to Himself. Through the Prophet Zechariah, he declared: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain” (*Zechariah* 8:3). Clearly, the Lord Jesus is not going to return to ‘Al Quds’ (the Arabic name for Jerusalem) as the capital city of an Islamic Palestinian state. And therein lies the heart of the Middle East conflict as we see it today—the onslaught of the demonic spiritual powers of darkness against the declared purposes of God. Most nations of the world, particularly the European Union and the United Nations, are hell-bent on disinherit Israel of her historic capital city and her Biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria. Certainly, in a spiritual sense, we are seeing the fulfilment of *Zechariah* 12: 2-3: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will be cut in pieces ...” I believe we are seeing the spiritual fulfilment of this prophecy in the BDS movement of today.

Britain’s betrayal of the Mandate for Palestine in the 1930s and 40s laid the groundwork for this to happen.

San Remo 90

As mentioned in a previous article, it was the San Remo Conference of 1920 that paved the way for all of the Mandates awarded to Britain and France in the former Ottoman Empire. Britain has sought to cover up its comprehensive violation of the Mandate for Palestine resulting in the records of the San Remo Conference being buried for several decades. In 2010 the European Coalition for Israel organised a commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the San Remo Resolution on 24th and 25th April at the Villa Devachan in San Remo. Villa Devachan is where the original conference took place just over a century ago. The gathering included some international lawyers and around 30 intercessors from different nations, including the UK. At the conference there was repentance for the nations—particularly Britain—for ‘breaking the covenant’ made there, and a new declaration was signed affirming the original San Remo Resolution.

The official report from the gathering records:

We felt that Sunday (25th April) would be a day which we would dedicate to the Lord and His purposes for Israel. We read out His promises from the Word of God as we lifted up His name in worship.

The guest of honour to witness all of this was the then Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Danny Danon. He later served as Israel’s Ambassador at the United Nations (2015 to 2020).

The Time for Repentance

Real repentance is not just a question of apologising to Israel for Britain’s betrayal of the Mandate, but re-aligning its foreign policy with the spirit and the letter of the treaty that was entered into 100 years ago. At the time the international community unanimously endorsed this treaty. Without this repentance the United Kingdom remains on a collision course with the God of Israel.

The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Joel, gave us a dire warning: “For behold, in those days, and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have also divided up My Land.” (*Joel* 3:1-2)

Isaiah chapter 60 is a passage of Scripture that relates to Israel in the latter days in which we are now living, and beyond. We see in this passage something of the dark days in which we are now living, but we also see the glory of the Lord arising upon Israel at such a time. We also see something of the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and the wealth of the Gentiles being gathered to Israel.

Continued on page 10

Blessings from Fiji

■ Raphael Jordan

Christians for Israel Fiji

Greetings from the Fiji Islands.

There is currently a buzz of excitement in Fiji as a group of pilgrims prepares to take a charter flight to Israel to attend the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), 2023 in the Holy Land. Fiji's National Carrier, Fiji Airways, is scheduled to depart Nadi for Israel on Thursday 28 September 2023.

Fiji's Prime Minister, Sitiveni Laigamamada Rabuka, who is currently attending the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York and confirmed Fiji's intention to establish its first Embassy in Israel, a proposal that has received the endorsement of Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen.

PM Rabuka said that it underscores Fiji's dedication to deepening bilateral relations with Israel and the Holy Land.

Fiji's presence in the Middle East began in 1978 by contributing to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL Peacekeeping Operations). Ever since, Fiji has been part of Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

On 8th August, 2023, the Jewish State, Israel, held its 75th Anniversary at the Grand Pacific Hotel (GPH) in Fiji's Capital, Suva.

Israel's Ambassador to Fiji, HE Roi Rosenblit, hosted this historic event on behalf of the State of Israel.

Those attending included HE The President of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, Prime Minister, Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, the three Deputy PM's, Viliame Gavoka, Biman Prasad, Manoa Kamikamica, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Supporters/Friends of Israel. Around 200 attended. Music was provided by the Fiji Police Band, who, sang and played the *Hatikva* (the Hope) on the night with distinction, having been given the music two days earlier.

At the event the appointment of Israel's Honorary Consul in Fiji, namely, Rokoseru Nabalarua, was announced, a position that had been vacant for more than two decades.

We praise God for all that is happening in Fiji. C4I Fiji wants the world to know that our National Rugby Team, playing in the World Cup, is sponsored by *Fiji Water* (a brand company owned by Jews living in the USA). Being an Israeli Sponsorship means a lot to Christians and friends of Israel in Fiji and Fijians residing all over the world. This is truly God in action, one of the many things that connects us—Jew and non-Jew/FIJI ISRAEL (*Romans 15:27*).

Stay Blessed.



Historical Fiji Airways arrive in Tel Aviv, Israel. | Photo: Pacific Voyager



(Left to right): President of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere cutting the Israel 75th Anniversary Cake, Israel Ambassador to Fiji, HE Roi Rosenblit, and Fiji PM, Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka.

The Jubilee and Jesus' Return

■ Pastor Enoch Lavender

Olive Tree Ministries | Lavendar

"When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." *Luke 21:28*

I once watched a really frightening movie about the End Times. The 90-minute feature film focused its attention almost exclusively on a truly evil person coming to power and dominating the world, viciously persecuting anyone who stood in his way. A mere three minutes at the end of the movie brought some hope as Jesus appeared in blinding light.

Considering this dark portrayal of the End Times, is it any wonder that many Christians and churches today shy away from the topic of Bible Prophecy? The only comfort offered by this view is that we believers will one day 'be out of here' and that this dark world is not 'really our home' anyway.

While there will certainly be trouble ahead in the End Times, Jesus spoke of a great hope that far outweighs that time of trouble. That hope is known as the coming redemption, also known as the Jubilee.

What is it about the Jubilee that brings such great hope and anticipation of Jesus' Return to Earth?

The Trumpet of the Jubilee

Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month (*Lev 25:9*).

Life in the ancient world was tough, and many lived as farmers who were completely dependent on the produce of their fields. Those finding themselves in severe financial hardship could temporarily

sell their land and even themselves into slavery. The laws of the Jubilee then stipulated that a friend or relative could 'redeem' or buy back the land and set those who had become slaves free. If no redeemer was found, God Himself decreed that the debts of the poor were to be cancelled, the slaves set free and His people restored to their ancestral inheritance in the 50th year, the year of Jubilee.

Can you imagine the joy that the sounding of the Jubilee Trumpet would have caused in ancient Israel? At this once in a generation trumpet blast, slaves were set free across the nation and the poor were released from their long-held debts. In the streets of Israel long lost loved ones would be tearfully embracing and rejoicing together in the redemption of God. Could this ancient joy at the sound of the Jubilee Trumpet be a foretaste of the much greater joy to come at Jesus' Return?

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (*1 Thes 4:16*)

Let's explore a further link between Jesus' Return and the Jubilee, found in the book of Exodus.

The Glory and the Trumpet

The twelve tribes of Israel had gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai only three months after being set free from Egypt. In Egypt and at the Red Sea they had dramatically witnessed the power of God delivering them from bondage. Yet even the crossing of the Red Sea paled into insignificance compared to the encounter with the Glory of God which they were

about to experience in its full manifestation on Mount Sinai.

Moses describes a thick cloud enveloping the mountain, thunder, lightning, smoke and the entire mountain shaking as the Lord Himself physically descended. Many scholars view this dramatic appearance of God as being a powerful prophetic preview of the day when Jesus Himself will physically descend from the heavens. It is crucial then to note that God's awesome descent on the mountain was marked with an exceeding long and loud trumpet blast: When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain....

And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder... Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai (*Ex 19:13, 16-20*, emphasis added)

The word used here for trumpet is the word *Yobel* or Jubilee. In other words, the long blast on the mountain signifying God's descent was also at once a Jubilee Trumpet. Israel itself was truly in the midst of an amazing Jubilee experience, being set free from slavery and being on their way to inherit the promised land.

This amazing foreshadow of Jesus' Return, teaches us to expect the trumpet of the Jubilee, the trumpet of great joy and restoration, to also mark Jesus' Future Coming.

The Restoration of all Things

In Jesus' day, there was a great expectation that He would bring the Jubilee. After His death, the broken-hearted disciples spoke openly of their disappointment as they thought it 'was He who was going to

redeem Israel' (*Luke 24:21*). To their surprise and amazement, Jesus was risen from the dead, and spent the next 40 days speaking with His disciples about the coming Kingdom. It is in this context that the disciples eagerly asked, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (*Acts 1:6*).

So, when will the Jubilee come? A few chapters later in Acts, Peter picks up on the topic of the Jubilee explaining that Jesus "has to remain in heaven until the time comes for restoring everything, as God said long ago... through the holy prophets" (*Acts 3:21, CJB*). In other words, Peter has come to understand that while the full Jubilee restoration did not take place in Jesus' ministry here on Earth, there is coming a day when He will return. That Day will be the Jubilee, the restoration of all things as the prophets had foretold.

In that great day, not only will one person rise from the dead, but all the dead in Him will rise, their bodies made new and healed of all sicknesses and infirmities. In that day of restoration, Israel will return to her land, the Messiah will rule as King upon the throne of His Father David and the whole earth "will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (*Hab. 2:14*)



What a day it will be!
New book available now!
Learn more about the Jubilee context of Jesus' 1st and 2nd Comings in this exciting new book by Ps Enoch Lavender. Available from www.c4israel.org.nz or complete the coupon on the back page.



Calendar Themes

Throughout this year, we will be elaborating on the themes of the C4I 2023 Israel Calendar: Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee—75 years of Heritage.

October: Security IDF



2023 marks the 30th Anniversary of the Oslo Accords, which partitioned Judea and Samaria into three zones A, B and C. For many Israelis, it is a reminder of the failed land-for-peace process. Security remains uppermost in peoples' minds, especially as the number of terrorist attacks increases, reminiscent of the Intifadas. Then there is the question of sharing the security burden more fairly across the population and how the Ultra-Orthodox can be better integrated.

November: Diamonds



Diamonds continue to play a large part in the Israeli economy. However, with a downturn in marriage and economic hardship in the US and Western countries, there is less demand for engagement rings. Asia, once the new market, is also being squeezed. But Dubai-Israel diamond trading went from zero to \$1.75B in two years (2020-22). During the first seven months of 2023, Israel's Raw Diamond imports declined a colossal 46%, with polished exports dropping 25%.

30 November: Forced Expulsion from Arab Lands



UN Res 181 on 29 November 1947 sent shock waves across the Middle East that led to the expulsion of many Jews. Some 850,000 ended up in Israel with often only the clothes on their backs. By law, this expulsion is commemorated annually on 30 November as *Departure and Expulsion Day*. In 2021, a sculpture depicting the event was erected in Jerusalem. Designed by Sam Philipe, it is modelled on the iconic Yemenite image shown in May.

Experiencing God's Blessing—Part 3



The Israelites gathering Manna in the National Gallery, London. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

■ Keith Buxton

Former National Director | Bridges for Peace Australia

This is part three in a series of five articles sharing some thoughts from the Torah portion, or *parsha*, named *Ekev—Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25*.

Moses, now 120 years of age, continues with his series of farewell messages to the children of Israel as the Promised Land awaits them across the Jordan River.

Moses encourages the Israelites who have survived forty years of wilderness wandering to conquer and settle the land, to trust in God, and to discover the wonderful ways in which He will abundantly bless them. Israel's experience of these many promised blessings is however dependent upon a number of important conditions that are highlighted in various ways in our text.

We saw earlier that it was true for the children of Israel—and true for every believer—that he shall receive blessing from the Lord who (W-H-O) holds fast to the Word of God, displays true humility, and demonstrates obedience to our Lord.

Our Torah passage develops these three important conditions for experiencing the amazing blessing of our God. We have considered the importance of holding fast to the Word of God, and now explore the significance of a humble heart and an obedient spirit.

In this farewell address to the new generation of God's people about to enter into the land promised to His people, Moses recalls the hardships the Israelite people faced during their forty years in the desert. Yet, despite everything, they survived—their clothing did not wear out, their feet did not swell, and there was manna to eat.

God graciously watched over them and provided for them. As we read earlier in *Deuteronomy 8:3*: "He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna..."

Again and again throughout this *parsha* Moses stresses to the people that they must obey the commandments and

maintain their faith in God. In so doing, the people will enjoy lives of abundant goodness. But when the blessings come, they must be careful not to take the credit for all their wealth.

"Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest —when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

"Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—then you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth."

"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (*Deuteronomy 8:11-18*)

We tend to feel that when things go well, it is all—or at least mostly—our doing, and God may not get much if any of the credit. On the other hand, if things go poorly, we may be tempted to say that it is God's fault and not ours.

Psalms 149:4 says: For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. *James 4:6* reminds us that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Writes Adam Lieberman, a Jewish businessman who helps Jews of all backgrounds to see the beauty and relevance of their heritage: "In the same way you don't take credit for your sparkling blue eyes, the picturesque

sunset, or the gorgeous multi-coloured rose bush, so too, don't take credit for your monetary success. Know that the same source of 'nature' that surrounds you is the same source of everything else you have. If you can live with this reality, know that you'll literally be walking with God."

The idea of 'walking with God' has a real appeal to me, and brings to mind the declaration of the prophet Micah: He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (*Micah 6:8*)

The humble really do recognise that all that they have comes from God, and in all that they do they seek to give Him all the glory. But humility goes further than not taking credit for what God alone has accomplished on our behalf. It is also more than not 'puffing yourself up' when you are recognised for your achievements.

That reminds me, by the way, of the story of the person who was given a medal for humility. It was promptly taken from him when he walked around wearing it!

Importantly, humility means not being so caught up with our own interests that we care little for others who may need our help and support. *Isaiah 57:15* reminds us that the humble heart is in fact the very dwelling place of our caring and compassionate God:

"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

How amazing it is that the infinite, all-powerful, almighty God of all creation is here described as caring intimately for those who are most in need—those who are acutely aware of their need of restoration; the forgotten, marginalised and broken in society.

To care only for ourselves, and maybe also those immediately dependent on us, is simply not God's way. We'll return to this thought a little later.

Partakers of the Root

■ Rev Cheryl Hauer

International Vice President | Bridges for Peace

The Scriptures discuss over 100 species of plants. The olive tree is probably the most beloved, sacred and widely recognised. It is also the most commonly used to represent Israel in the biblical narrative. But why did the Lord pick this tree, its fruit and oil, as object lessons for His people?

This beautiful tree grew abundantly in ancient Israel and continues to be seen throughout the Land today. When describing the great beauty of Israel when favoured by the Lord, the prophet Hosea likens it to the olive tree (*Hosea 14:6*). Yet the olive tree has characteristics other than physical beauty that make it an apt illustration for Israel.

It is remarkably hearty and an evergreen. Although it can take a number of years for a new tree to bear fruit, once it begins, it is ever-bearing. And it is virtually indestructible. The tree is also famous for its extensive root system, spreading widely around the tree to absorb sufficient moisture. Only the smallest segment of that root system is required to send forth new shoots, so olive trees are known to survive the best irradiation efforts. In fact, the tree is so tenacious that its shoots grow through the rockiest soil. Finally, an olive tree can live to be thousands of years old.

The Olive's Versatility

The fruit itself provided many of life's necessities in ancient Israel. Oil for cooking, lighting, cosmetics and medicine came from the olive, while the fruit was an important food. Its hard, marbled timber was used for furniture, panelling and statues. Its oil anointed prophets and kings, and according to *Deuteronomy 7:13*, it was one of the three essential products of the Land of Promise.

Olive oil was the only food exported during the Second Temple Period while being important on the domestic front, too. It was an essential part of every diet and is mentioned dozens of times in Scripture alongside wine and grain as a staple food. Ancient Israel also relied on olive oil as fuel for light.

In other words, olive trees were critically important to God's chosen people. When He spoke to them using analogies of the olive tree, they knew what He meant. When He said that Israel would be strong and hearty, that His covenant would be the root system that would nurture them wherever they were planted, that regardless of their enemies, the nation would be virtually indestructible, that they would bear fruit and fulfil God's mandate to be a light to the nations, that they would outlive their enemies...the olive tree was their living example.

Grafting

Grafting is a method of plant propagation used in agriculture and horticulture where the tissues of one plant are encouraged to fuse with those of another. The practice is thousands of years old. Farmers in the ancient Middle East used it to strengthen their crops and improve their yield, and it is mentioned in Scripture several times.

In its simplest form, a cutting from a plant



Olive trees symbolically represent Israel in the Bible, its oil has civil and religious importance in lighting the way with lamps and the menorah. | Photo: Lightstock

that contains genes to be replicated (the scion) is placed in an opening on the host tree (stock). The raw tissues from both scion and stock must come—and stay—in contact for a successful graft. Both must be kept alive and healthy during the process until the two have completely fused. A vascular connection takes place so that sap can flow freely. However, often, the structural tissue of wood does not fuse, and the physical point of the graft remains weak. The graft area must be wrapped and protected—sometimes for the entire lifespan of the tree—to keep the new branch from being broken off.

Most often, a scion that is a superior fruit producer is grafted to a stock with a strong root, resulting in a sturdy plant with prolific fruit. In the case of the ancient Israelite farmer, his olive grove would be strengthened as he grafted scions from his cultivated trees to wild stocks. The scions were superior producers, while the wild stocks had sufficiently healthy root systems. Grafting had many benefits, including producing sturdier, hardier plants and dramatically increased fruit production.

Partakers of the Root

For Christians, *Romans 9–11* are crucial chapters in Scripture. Here, the Apostle Paul lays out God's scenario regarding the relationship between Israel and the Church. It is made clear that God's covenant with Israel is an everlasting covenant. *Romans 9* tells us that the adoption as sons of God, the covenants, the law, the service of God and His promises all continue to belong to the Jewish people. Paul gives sound responses to those arguing that God is through with the Jewish people: "Certainly not!..." (*Romans 11:1*). *Romans 11:29* also tells us that the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. When He says He has entered into an everlasting covenant with the people He has chosen, He means exactly that.

God again uses the olive tree to help us understand what Paul calls the 'mystery' of this relationship. *Romans 11:17* is a great example: "And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them; and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree..." The message for us today is astounding.

Paul teaches that we, as Christians, are the wild olives bearing little fruit with a weak root system. The scion comes from the wild tree and is grafted into the domestic tree rather than the other way around. And some, not all, of the natural branches have been removed to make a place for the scions from the wild tree. We are to be grafted in among them, not replacing them, not overtaking the tree and forcing the rest of the branches out, but partaking of the sap together.

The raw tissue must come—and stay—together for the graft to be successful. We are living in a day of restoration and relationship-building between Christians and Jews, and we must be willing for that raw tissue to be exposed. We must look honestly at our history with the Jewish people and be willing to own it. We must be willing to see ourselves as the Jewish people see us after nearly 2,000 years of Christian antisemitism.

Both scion and stock must remain alive and healthy during the grafting process. For nearly 2,000 years, the Church ignored that admonition and attempted to promote its own life at the expense of the Jewish people. Today, we must aim to support the Jewish people, bringing life and encouragement wherever possible.

As the relationship between Christians and Jews strengthens and the graft takes, we are seeing an exchange of ideas, an openness of communication, and a flow of the sap. Christians are learning about their history and connecting to their ancient heritage. Jews are discovering that many Christians are, in fact, their friends and not the enemy that has marked Christianity in the past. We are learning together about the things we share in common.

But we must remember that the graft needs to be protected. Structurally, it remains very fragile, and we must work to be prayerful and sensitive, recalling Paul's admonition that the grafted branches can be broken off if we fall again into arrogance, boasting against the natural branches (*Romans 11:19–21*). We should fear what might happen if we forget that the root supports us (*v18*).

Romans 11:33 proclaims, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and

knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" How can we begin to understand the goodness of the Lord who grafted us—wild olives that we are—into His olive tree, which is Israel, allowing us to become partakers of the root and fatness of that tree? How can we comprehend His kindness that made way for us as Gentiles to come alongside His people and become a part of what He was already doing? And what can we possibly say in response, but thank you.

Continued from page 7

Although it is not directly mentioned, it also seems to reflect the glory of the Lord's actual presence among His ancient people in Jerusalem—after His return. But there is also a dire warning in *verse 12*: "For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined." Clearly there are many nations that fall into that category.

In the final months of his earthly life in 2003 the renowned Bible teacher, Derek Prince, carried a deep burden for the welfare of the United Kingdom, as many intercessors do today. He believed that *verse Isaiah 60:12* would be Britain's fate if we are not prepared to repent before the Lord of our past actions, and once again to re-align ourselves with his purposes for Israel, as we were 100 years ago. The Lord's ancient edict in *Genesis 12:3* will come to pass either way: "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you."

Today, as the reborn State of Israel passes its 75th anniversary against all odds—humanly speaking—should we not be looking to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and worshipping Him for His faithfulness to His covenant promises?

Hugh Kitson is a documentary filmmaker who has made many films about Israel. His films about the British Mandate for Palestine include "The Forsaken Promise" – a three-part series (Hatikvah Film Trust 2006) and "Whose Land?" Part One presented by Colonel Richard Kemp (Title Deed Media 2017) – see www.whoseland.tv.

This is the final article in a six-part series exploring the significance of the British Mandate for Palestine for today.



The 144,000 Jews and the End Time Revival

■ **Dr Simon Smelt**

Retired Economist

“For if their (Israel’s) rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” (Romans 11:15)

Paul declares the reconciliation of the world in *Ephesians 2 and 3*. The Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens but fellow heirs with the Jews, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise. What of the life from the dead foretold in *Romans 11*? To give Paul’s sentence its full force, we should expect life from the dead not only for the Jews (as in *Ezekiel 37*) but for the whole world. Where is this in Scripture?

In *Romans 8*, Paul speaks of the anxious longing of creation for the revealing of the sons of God and how all creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth. The *Book of Revelation* describes the denouement. If we follow its narrative, we can see how God’s eternal purpose and plan is fulfilled through Israel.

In *Revelations 5*, the Lamb is the only one found worthy to open the book and its seven seals. Breaking the first four seals brings the four horses of the apocalypse. Breaking the fifth seal (*Revelations 6:9-11*) reveals the martyred saints crying out, “How long, O Lord?” They are told to “rest awhile” as their number is not yet complete. The church—that is, believers—is gone: raptured or martyred. But there is more to unfold.

With the sixth seal, *Revelations 6:12-17* describes calamity upon calamity. The most terrible aspect is people’s reaction. From kings to every slave and free man, they call on the mountains to fall on them and hide them from “Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Think of unbelievers in your circle: indifferent to the things of the Lord, confused, misunderstanding, accusing their maker, following other gods, or whatever. The sixth seal strips it all away. Those who remain know who they are dealing with, but they neither repent nor beg for mercy. Instead, they beg the mountains to hide them from Him.

Before the wrath of the Lamb, the total depravity of humanity is exposed. Sinfulness comes face to face with the power and mercy of God. The Lamb bears the wounds that show His right to judge. Before Him, there can be no more excuses, only light or dark.

There is a warning here about evangelism, which presents a love-only Jesus. As modern culture redefines right and wrong in ideological terms, we need the message of salvation from sin to provide a moral compass and to begin to comprehend the goodness and severity of God and the wrath of the Lamb. Speak *John 3:16*, but read on to *verse 19*: “This is the judgement, that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light”—exactly the scenario of *Revelations 6*.



Men touching a Torah scroll at the Western Wall. | Photo: Lightstock

The nations are in darkness, deep darkness. Yet, there is still hope. With the church gone, others must arise to bring His light. With the fullness of the Gentiles complete, now is Israel’s hour (*Romans 11:25*). Israel is “a people that shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations” (*Numbers 23:9*). Their path differs from the nations plunged into darkness and terror.

The Lord speaks to them thus: *Isaiah 60:1-3*: “Arise, shine

and as first fruits. In heaven, they follow the Lamb everywhere and sing a new song. In the Old Testament, a new song is the heart cry of one’s experience of the Lord. The 144,000 have a unique experience of Him, so only they can sing their new song (*Revelations 14:3*.)

They are uniquely equipped to bring light to the deep darkness of the nations. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, they are felled by the Lord only to rise up with

The northern tribes are sometimes termed ‘lost.’ However, both the Old and New Testament show that a remnant moved south and joined with the southern tribes. The Lord knows who can be assigned to which tribe.

for your light has come... For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples, but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

Zechariah 12:10: “I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on Me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”

When the remnant of Israel sees the wrath of the lamb, they do not flee, for they recognise—at last—their Messiah. *Revelations 7:3-8* introduce the 144,000 bond-servants of the Lord drawn from every tribe of Israel, twelve thousand from each tribe. The narrative dramatically contrasts the 144,000 with the preceding terror among the Gentiles and with the multitude of martyrs who come next.

The list of the twelve tribes appears odd: Dan is absent, while Joseph is listed along with his son, Manasseh. However, the Old Testament lists the twelve tribes in assorted ways: Dan is omitted in *1 Chapter 4*, while *Ezekiel 37:16* lists Joseph along with his son Ephraim. Perhaps Dan and Ephraim failed to make the cut in *Revelations 7* because both suffered from idolatry.

The northern tribes are sometimes termed ‘lost.’ However, both the Old and New Testament show that a remnant moved south and joined with the southern tribes. The Lord knows who can be assigned to which tribe.

Revelations 7 next describes the great multitude of martyrs coming out of the Tribulation to stand before the Lamb. From the gentiles who fled from the wrath of the Lamb, somehow innumerable martyrs arise from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

This is the work of the 144,000. Sealed with the name of the Lord, *Revelations 14* describes them as chaste (pure

unquenchable enthusiasm and a new understanding. They evangelise not with invitations to coffee or church but to martyrdom. They are the *maskilim* (those with insight)—described in *Daniel 11:33 and 35, and 12:3 and 10*—who will shine and lead many to righteousness in the end times.

Isaiah 49:6 “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Perhaps modern technology enables the 144,000—Israel is at the cutting edge of hi-tech communications. By whatever means, the light goes forth, and the number of martyrs will be complete.

In *Revelations 6*, the depth of humanity’s evil and turning from God is demonstrated. In *Revelations 7*, His salvation penetrates even that. The Lamb triumphs. Absent the church, this is through Israel, just as it was in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 62:1, “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning.”

At last, Israel fulfilled its purpose to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (*Exodus 19:5*) At last, Israel is made jealous (*Romans 11:14*)—accepting Jesus as Messiah. At last, gentiles can be directly grafted into their (Israel’s) olive tree (*Romans 11:24*)—a more vigorous graft than being grafted onto a gentile church whose members are grafted in ‘against nature.’ At last, Jew and gentile can join together as one new man, fitted together into a holy temple (*Ephesians 2*.) At last, the bride is ready (*Revelations 19:7*.) At last, the pains of childbirth end.

Here is life from the dead.



12 tribes of Israel on postage stamps.

Rami Sherman Visits New Zealand

■ Ps Nigel Woodley—Flaxmere

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | NZ

Major Rami Sherman of the famed Israeli raid on Entebbe airport in Uganda in 1976 was welcomed to our Church on Sunday evening, 3 September.

Rami took us through his perspective of the raid as the operations officer of *Operation Thunderbolt*, its official codename. From first hearing of the Air France passenger jet with over a hundred Jews, mainly Israelis, being hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, his special forces unit was placed on alert. The Air France airliner was hijacked on route from Athens to Paris, having departed from Tel Aviv hours earlier. The plane was forced to land in Ben Ghazi in Libya, where it was refuelled and then taken to Entebbe airport in Uganda.

It wasn't until the terrorists began threatening to kill hostages that the Israeli special forces began an operational plan to rescue them. In the shortest possible time, they managed to concoct a plan which left no room for failure. Part of the plan required obtaining a look-alike black Mercedes vehicle to resemble that of Ugandan President Idi Amin's. They managed to get hold of a white coloured Mercedes in Tel Aviv, paint it black and place a couple of Ugandan flags on it to make it look official. This would be the lead vehicle coming off the first Hercules transport that landed. In the dark of night, it was hoped the soldiers guarding Entebbe airport would believe it was another visit from their president. Idi Amin's sympathies lay with the terrorists, as did those of his soldiers.

Initially, the plan of deception worked until a burst of gunfire broke the silence. It was then that Yoni Netanyahu, commander of the raid and brother to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, received what proved to be a fatal injury. Rami was behind the lead vehicle. He became responsible for extracting Yoni from the field of action and taking him back to the Hercules, where a medical unit was on standby to attend to Yoni's wounds. Unfortunately, they were not successful, and what was a successful military raid in extricating over a hundred Jewish people from the clutches of terrorists was tinged with the sadness of losing a much-loved and respected commander.

I watched all this unfold in real life as a fifteen-year-old living in Motueka in Golden Bay. Etched in my mind is something I will never forget. Within six months of this successful raid, two blockbuster movies had been released immortalising this amazing story. We had just been watching the whole thing unfold before our eyes on the evening news, and then we were sitting in the little movie theatre in Motueka watching the dramatised version. Rami Sherman was part of the team which made the raid famous. It is another feat in the modern history of Israel, which could easily find its place etched in the heroic campaigns and exploits we read about of Israel in the Biblical book of Judges.

It was an honour to host Rami for what was a good meeting where his audience was held spellbound from the beginning of the plan to rescue the hostages through to its successful conclusion.

■ Anna Pickett—Waihi

Waihi Israel Support Group

For a meeting to be successful, there is much to be organised. Christians for Israel and the Waihi Israel Support Group together did what was necessary to make the visit from Rami Sherman and Bryce Turner an occasion that the 50+ people attending will not easily forget. After an introduction by Bryce Turner and before the main speaker, Rami Sherman, began his talk we were treated by a *Shofar* blast by Selwyn Vivian. That surely got the attention of the guests.

What did the people come to listen to? First of all, they came to listen to Rami Sherman, who had participated in the rescue of the hostages from the plane that had landed at Entebbe in 1976 during Idi Amin's rule over Uganda.

Rami was the Operation Officer of the Sayeret Matkai Unit under the command of Yonatan Netanyahu. He was one of the advance party of 33 officers and soldiers who led the operation which freed the hijacked hostages.

The hijackers demanded the release of 40 Palestinians and militants imprisoned in Israel, plus another 13 prisoners from four other countries, plus a large ransom payment in return for the hostages. If the demands were

not met within 48 hours, the hijackers would start to kill hostages. For me, what made Rami's talk so riveting was his emphasis on the many people who put their lives on the line to rescue the 104 Jewish hostages and the courageous 12 people from Air France Aircrew who chose to stay with the hostages. No country in the world condemned the capture of this plane with its passengers. Idi Amin was in full support of the hijacking. The lives of all those people hung in the balance. Rami recounted the story of extraordinary planning, leaving no margin of error, resulting in an outstanding rescue mission into hostile territory amazing rescue. Yonathan Netanyahu, brother of the current Israeli PM, died during the course of the operation.

There is a great deal more to say about the Entebbe rescue, named *Operation Jonathan*, but I encourage you to research what happened and learn about one of the most amazing rescues this world has ever seen.

Thank you, Christians for Israel and Bryce Turner, for bringing Rami Sherman to Waihi to share with us this amazing account where so many people put their lives on the line to save the precious lives of their Jewish brothers and sisters.



Rami Sherman shared his story at Parliament in 2018 and had his audience sitting on the edge of their seats as the story unfolded.
Left to right: MP Tim McIndoe, Rami Sherman, Nigel Woodley, Ambassador Yitzhak Gerberg, MP Alfred Ngaro, and Richard Brader.



Selwyn Vivian blowing the Shofar in Waihi.



Rami Sherman in the home of Ate Moala.



Peter Stevenson with Rami Sherman in Pathway Christian Centre.



Rami Sherman with Beth Mather from Bridges for Peace in Hamilton.



Ben Sedley from the Wellington Jewish Community Centre with Rami Sherman.



Nigel Woodley from For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up with Rami Sherman in Flaxmere.

Believing Without Israel *Enlargement or Fulfilment Theology—Part 7*

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

In this series of articles Rev Cornelis Kant explains how it happened that the role of Israel was seen as insignificant in the development of our Christian faith and in the history of Christian theology.

People who no longer consider that Israel and the Jewish people have a special role in our Christian faith, no longer like to speak of replacement theology, preferring instead to speak of enlargement or fulfilment theology. Israel has not been replaced, but God's people have been broadened. Every person who believes in Jesus Christ, Jew or Gentile, may call himself a child of God and now belongs to God's people. The term 'replacement theology' retained the negative connotation of medieval anti-Judaism. 'Enlargement' or 'fulfilment' theology, on the other hand, sounds more sympathetic and inclusive. Jews still matter, too. But do they really? Has anything really changed in this kind of theological consideration about Jews and Israel?

Old Wine in New Wineskins

A closer look reveals that, in fact, very little appears to have changed. It turns out to be old wine in new wineskins. Israel as a land and people no longer has any significance in a theology of enlargement or fulfilment. Jews only belong to the new people of God when they have converted to Jesus. The only difference from classical, medieval replacement theology is that it is now often respected and appreciated when these Messianic Jews continue to adhere to the Jewish way of life, such as celebrating the Sabbath and Jewish festivals. There has been a rediscovery and appreciation of the deep Biblical value of Judaism, but the vast majority of Jews, who do not yet recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah, do not belong to God's people in this renewed theology. So, in fact, despite the changed terminology, little has changed. In fact, neither the Jewish people as a whole nor Israel as a country any longer play a significant role in God's plans. Only the Christian church is, and remains, the centre of God's people in this renewed replacement theology. The question that arises is how these theologians deal with the abundance of biblical testimony to the continuing significance of Israel and the Jewish people. Let us take a closer look at such testimony through a number of topics and Bible texts.

Old and New Covenant

In the faith experience of many Christians, God's covenant with Israel is the 'old covenant', and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the 'new covenant'. The Old Testament is the book of the old covenant, the New Testament is that of the new covenant. The term 'old' then still has the connotation of being obsolete or having passed away. The new covenant holds the future. However, that perspective is absolutely at odds with the Bible. God's covenants with Abram, Isaac and Jacob and, in fact, with the entire nation of Israel, are eternal and unceasing. To

Abram, the Lord God says: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (*Genesis 17:7*). At the establishment of the covenant, words such as 'everlasting' and 'throughout their generations' are evident. He remains their God forever. This is repeated and confirmed by Paul in the New Testament when he says: "Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises" (*Romans 9:4*). At the end of his letter, he even says that Jesus came "to confirm the promises given to the fathers" (*Romans 15:8*).

There is, however, an old covenant to be renewed or replaced by a new covenant. This refers to the covenant that God made with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai when He gave them the law: the 613 commandments, prohibitions and statutes. The people of Israel had just been delivered from centuries of slavery in Egypt. They had lived from generation to generation in pagan Egypt with all its gods and goddesses and a pagan way of life. In the Promised Land, too, they would face Canaanites and Philistines, with numerous gods and goddesses and their likewise pagan way of life. So, the people of Israel needed a large set of precepts and commandments. But throughout the Bible, it becomes evident to us that Israel would never be able to perfectly observe them all. So then, God makes it clear through the prophets that there will be a new covenant. In the perception of most Christians, this is Jesus' new covenant with the church, as opposed to the old covenant with the people of Israel. But that is incorrect. The prophet Jeremiah confirms that the new covenant will also be made with Israel: "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (*Jeremiah 31:31-33*).

When Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples centuries later, He said, when passing the cup of wine: "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (*Luke 22:20*). At that moment, He was alone with His Jewish disciples, and they were



| Photo: Shutterstock

celebrating the Jewish Passover. The new covenant is, therefore, established with the people of Israel and is brought about through the suffering and death of Jesus as the Messiah and King of Israel, announced by the Old Testament. Only with the missionary command after His resurrection and with the conversion of the Roman Cornelius and his entire house (*Acts 10*) does it become clear to everyone that through faith in Jesus, conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit, a Gentile too can become a child of God and receive eternal life. We, too, can share in the blessings of God's new covenant with Israel. Paul describes it this way: as Christians from the Gentiles, we are grafted in as 'wild branches' onto the tree of Israel. So, as Christians, we do not coincide like two drops of water with the Jewish people, but we are deeply connected to them and may share with them the blessings and living water of the new covenant, in which Jesus plays the key role.

The old and new covenant will co-exist for now. Jeremiah clearly says that the new covenant will involve the full restoration of Israel and the return of all Jews to the land of their fathers. This is a promise that will be fully fulfilled in the end times. In that same end time God will pour out His Spirit on all His people, and they will see who their Messiah is. The writer of the letter of Hebrews clarifies the meaning of the new covenant, which is referred to in *Jeremiah 31*: "By calling this covenant 'new', he (God) made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear" (*Hebrews 8:13*). So the old covenant still exists and is gradually going to disappear and make way for the new or renewed one: "For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest of times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (*Acts 15:21*). So it is evident that the simple classical contradiction: old covenant is with the Jews, new covenant is with Christians, is a thoroughly false contradiction.

Washing Hands

In this series, 'Signs of Faith', objects, procedures and concepts that express Jewish faith are explained and discussed.

Washing your hands before eating or when you have been to the toilet—it is simply a matter of hygiene and the most normal thing in the world. And in corona times, we have become accustomed to doing it a bit more often. It has almost become a ritual.

In addition to ordinary hygiene, ritual purity is also important in Judaism. That is why it is also a precept to ritually wash your hands. You do this, for example, when you get up in the morning, before you eat bread or after you have been to the toilet and dried

your hands. You pour some water from a bowl over both your hands and pronounce the blessing that goes with it. Hands are also washed before prayers. There are also other times when it is obligatory, such as when leaving a cemetery. Before the *kohanim* (priests) pronounce the priestly blessing in the synagogue service, the Levites ritually wash the *kohanim's* hands and feet.

This is actually also where the origins of ritual hand washing lie. Before their service in the temple, priests had to ritually wash their hands and feet (*Exodus 30:17-21*). Moreover, the Bible (*Leviticus 10:10*) distinguishes between holy and unholy, pure and impure. In daily life, you come into contact with various degrees of impurity at all sorts of times. It

has to do—in a nutshell, we cannot go into it too deeply—with the presence of death in life.

The Pharisees in ancient times longed to elevate themselves and all Israel to a nation of priests. Every Israelite is a priest, and every table is an altar. That is why, among other things, they wanted to introduce ritual hand washing, which was actually only obligatory for priests in the temple, for all people. Of course, this was not without controversy. We hear an echo of this in *Matthew 15* and *Mark 7*.

Washing hands before eating bread is an expression of obedience to the commandment to be holy before the Lord. Moreover, it expresses the expectation of the Messiah so that Israel will be able to eat in a state of ritual purity when the temple is rebuilt.

Recommended Reading

Israel in the Biblical Worldview, An Introduction

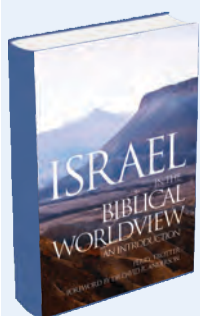
By Perry Trotter

In an era where any keyboard warrior, albeit safely hidden behind a computer screen, can claim an opinion as fact, authoritative and yet approachable scholarship remains surprisingly rare. When 'research' is done in seconds, and the findings of a search engine held as incontestable truth, relatively few take the time to test and verify information before holding it as an indubitable certainty. Perry Trotter respects time. Having clearly invested a considerable amount of his own in the preparation of this text, Trotter forgoes much of the story-telling and entertainment often used to woo the reader, favouring a focussed and deliberate structure. Valuing the reader's time, Trotter launches directly into each chapter quickly and efficiently—straight to the point. Concisely yet masterfully, Trotter brings a remarkable depth of understanding without engaging in the emotive storytelling so often hurled by those professing expertise in—and usually opposed to—Israel.

Framed as an 'introduction', the material is delivered in two parts. The first part delivers a map, a summary of the Creator's design for Israel and the Jewish people. Handling the biblical data deftly but expertly, Trotter traces Jewish history and demonstrates an intrinsic intertwining with the identity and mission of the Messiah. Inevitably, this leads to a study of the foundations of antisemitism and the miraculous survival of the Jewish people through some two thousand years. Although skillfully delivered in a manner that makes such biblical ideas accessible to those without theological honorifics, this is no lightweight sermon. Before the reader assumes that the ugly thread of antisemitism winds only through the long-established kingdoms and empires of the northern hemisphere, Trotter analyses an uncomfortable history in his homeland of New Zealand with characteristic honesty and objective scholarship.

Part two focuses in on the prevalence of replacement theology, analysing the substance—or lack thereof—of each 'popular' replacement technique. Aptly titled 'turning the text on its head', this section deals with the distortions and manipulation required to support a replacement theology. Faithful theology, it is argued, must embrace Israel's place in the biblical worldview. Trotter asserts that "failure to adequately distinguish between the two entities, Israel and the church, is a cause of deep confusion."

This work comes complete with glowing endorsements from a variety of scholars and educational practitioners, one of whom offers a poignant recommendation: "...buckle up—you're in for a ride!"



Those Who Bring Good News



| Photo: Shutterstock

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

This is part thirteen in a series of articles based on the book *Rejoice, You Nations, with His People*, by Johannes Gerloff.

Unconditional love (*Romans 9:1-3*), awareness of the privileges of God's people (*9:4-5*), accepting God's absolute sovereignty (*9:6-33*), and an exclusive way of salvation (*10:1-13*) are the basis of the Apostle Paul's theology regarding Israel.

From these presuppositions, the Apostle now constructs—in a truly rabbinical way—a chain of conclusions that flow into the quotation of the prophet Isaiah: "How pleasing are the feet of them that proclaim good news of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!" (*Isaiah 52:7*).

It is all about preaching. The focal point of *Romans 9-11* is Israel. At the beginning of his letter, Paul introduces himself as having received "grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all Gentile nations" and reminds his readers immediately, "to whom you belong" (*Romans 1:5-6*). In the more immediate context of our passage, he emphasises: "I speak to you Gentiles" (*11:13*). Note that at the beginning of *Romans 9*, he did not write about 'our brethren' but rather emphatically about 'my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh' (*verse 3*). Talking in this way about Israel, he included himself but not his readers. The same can be observed in the beginning of *chapter 11*.

Paul addresses Gentiles about preaching to the Jewish people. According to my observations, *Romans 10:14-21* is the only text in Holy Scripture which is explicitly addressed to non-Jews dealing with the preaching of the gospel to Israel.

Therefore, this passage and its context perform a key function in answering the question of whether the Gentile Church has a calling to preach to the Jewish people and what that calling is. At the beginning of our chapter, Paul revealed what drove him, without leaving any room for doubt: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to the (one, true) God for (Israel is), that they may be saved" (*Romans 10:1*). In the subsequent verses he then states that, according to biblical doctrine, only those who "call upon the name of the Lord" will be saved (*10:13*). Now, the Apostle begins to build on that foundation:

But, how can they call on someone, in whom they do not believe? (*Romans 10:14a*)

How shall they turn to the only one who is really able to save if they do not have a relationship with him? This 'calling upon', this key to salvation, is conditional upon a relationship that is built on trust and faithfulness, which the Bible calls 'faith'. Only faith trusts the Saviour fully. And exactly this is the precondition for salvation—crying out to the Saviour from a desperate heart.

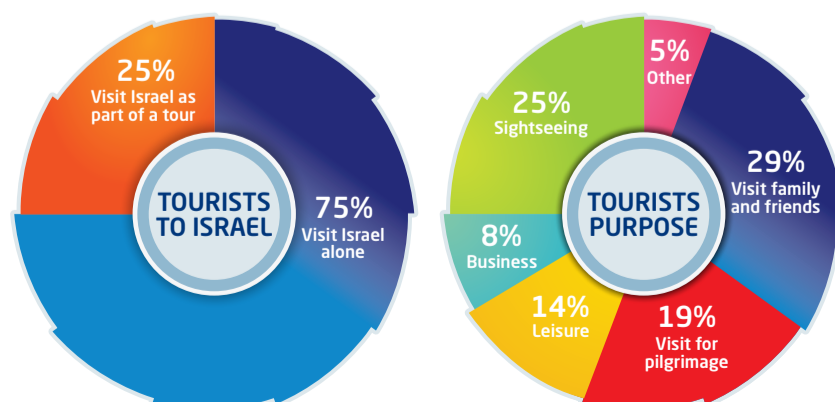
How are they to believe in somebody, of whom they have never heard? (*Romans 10:14*)

A faith-relationship does not come automatically. It, too, has a precondition, namely, hearing. Actually, this is a truth which the Apostle explicitly states again in *verse 17* of our chapter: "Faith comes from hearing." Without getting to know what the object and substance of our faith is, it cannot grow. Listening to the revelation of the Word of God—and continuing to listen—is an indispensable foundation of our trust-relationship with the heavenly Father. 'Blind', 'uninformed' or even 'stupid' faith is totally unknown to biblical thinking.

Certainly, Jesus promised the kingdom of God to children in a special way. "Out of the mouths of children and babies", the Creator has established praise to himself (*Psalms 8:2; Matthew 21:16*). These statements, however, are not an excuse for laziness in studying Scripture. Our Creator created us as a unity of spirit, soul and body. He looks for a total commitment, including that of our mind. Furthermore, even a little child knows why it runs trustingly into the outstretched arms of his own father, whereas he will intuitively harbour a healthy distrust towards a foreigner. Biblical statements about the advantage of receiving the Word like little children in no way nullify the words of Jesus, that there is a special blessing for those "that hear the word of God and preserve it" (*Luke 11:28*).

Facts Speak

Israel Tourist Statistics



Tourism & Israel's Economy



Tourism accounts for **2.8%** of Israel's GVA as of 2018



3.6% of the Israeli workforce are directly employed in the tourist industry

Times of the Gentiles

The History of Jerusalem—Part 5



Mosaic Map of Jerusalem, 542-570, 6th Century AD. | Photo: Lightstock



Jerusalem at the time of Christ. | Photo: Lightstock



■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. *Luke 21:23*

It is the most famous city in the world with a long, illustrious, and troubled history.

Four thousand years in total, with its second millennium being under Israelite rule. The ministry of Jesus of Nazareth was the watershed; from the point of His rejection and crucifixion by and at Jerusalem, the city would enter into a turbulent period called the "Times of the Gentiles." In any case, before Messiah rules from Jerusalem, the city will be subjected to a variety of Gentile imperial occupiers for the next two millennia. If you visit the holy city in the future, you may hear some of their names.

Volumes have been written about Jerusalem after the time of Jesus. The city has been invaded and occupied dozens of times. Our main purpose is to give you a general overview from the time of Christ to the eve of the Crusades. You will better appreciate the present when you understand the past.

Roman Rule: Three Stages

Stage One from 63 BC–70 AD: Jerusalem's central position, geographically and theologically, gave it a front-row seat to a grand imperial parade: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and now Rome. The first stage of Roman rule in the holy city commenced in 63 BC with the entry of Pompey. It was characterised by a pagan Rome over a Jewish city. The first Jewish revolt of 66–70 AD commenced against the empire. Stage One continued until the city's destruction by Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, in the year 70 AD. The city and Herod's temple were completely obliterated, and its smouldering rubble served as a camp for the Roman X Legion. It remained in its devastated condition for the next sixty years.

Stage Two from 130–312 AD: In 130 AD, Roman Emperor Hadrian decided to build a thoroughly pagan city on the ruins of Jerusalem. He called it Aelia Capitolina. This action lit the fuse of a second Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar Kochba. He was proclaimed 'The Messiah' by Rabbi Akiva. The Jews under Bar Kochba retook Jerusalem, offered sacrifices on the temple mount (minus the temple), and decimated the Roman troops. It took the empire three years under Sextus Julius Severus to brutally crush the revolt.

With Bar Kochba's defeat and death, Aelia Capitolina was established, and the second stage of Roman rule began: a pagan Rome over a pagan city. The Romans built a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount and a temple to Venus on the site of Calvary. Though meant to overwrite Judaeo-Christian sacred memories, this sacrilege inadvertently made the future identification of these sacred sites easier.

Stage Three from 312–638 AD: Stage Three of Roman rule began in 312 AD when the faith Rome once tried to destroy was adopted by its Emperor, Constantine. Now we had a Christian Rome ruling over a Christian city: Heathen Aelia was transformed into Christian

Jerusalem. Constantine's mother, Helena, went on a well-known pilgrimage to the holy city. She 'discovered' Calvary, the 'true cross,' a 'holy tunic' and 'holy nails.' Helena ordered the destruction of the temple to Venus, thus making room for the construction of Christendom's most sacred shrines: these included The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Eleona (Ascension) on the Mount of Olives, and the Church of the Nativity in nearby Bethlehem. Two of these churches still stand today.

First Muslim Period: 638–1099AD

The Christianised Eastern Roman Empire ruled Jerusalem for three centuries, except for a brief occupation by the Sassanid Persian Empire (614–629 AD). During this torrid period, the Persians destroyed many buildings and massacred many residents. The Roman Christians at Constantinople recovered Jerusalem in 629 AD, only to lose it for good nine years later.

Islam came to Jerusalem early in its history. The city, under the leadership of Patriarch Sophronius, peacefully surrendered to Caliph Omar in 638 AD. It became part of the Jund Filastin province of the Arab Caliphate.

Though Jerusalem was under Muslim rule for the coming centuries, as you are about to see, the actual Muslim regimes and their capital cities changed.

638–750 AD: Jerusalem was ruled by the Ummayyad dynasty out of Damascus. During their tenure, two famous Muslim sites were constructed on Mount Moriah: the Dome of the Rock in 691 AD and the al Aqsa Mosque in 702 AD. Both buildings still exist.

750–877 AD: Abbasid Empire, based in Mesopotamia and the new city of Baghdad. At one point, the Abbasids governed all the way to Spain.

877–1071 AD: Egyptian/Fatimid rule out of Cairo. It was their Caliph al-Hakim who made it his mission to entirely destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which he did in 1010 AD. His action helped spawn the Christian Crusades decades later.

1071–1099 AD: Seljuk Turks—the Turks migrated from Central Asia westward. Originally adherents to Shamanism, they adopted Islam en route to settling in Asia Minor. They replaced the four-hundred-year Arab leadership of the Muslim community and dominated the Islamic world for nearly a millennium. Their harassment of Christian pilgrims en route to Jerusalem provided another pretext for the Crusades.

While the Ummayyads adorned Mount Moriah, known as al-Haram al-Sharif (the noble sanctuary) and the Temple Mount, with their famous buildings, Jerusalem did not prosper for many centuries. It was never the capital of any entity except for the Crusader Kingdom (1099–1187) and the British Mandate (1922). While one could argue that it was trodden down by the Gentiles over the years, it also remained on the map by attracting Jewish and Christian pilgrims from all over the known world.

In the next article, we will learn about Jerusalem from the time of the Crusades to the beginning of the twentieth century.

To be continued.

'Some scholars begin this period with the Babylonian captivity around 586 BC. That's when Nebuchadnezzar conquered and destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's temple.'

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

More Jewish Voices in Advocating Pro-Life Options Needed



Orthodox Jewish law permits abortion when the unborn child is putting the mother's physical life at risk. For some rabbinic authorities, the dispensation has been extended to consider the mother's emotional and psychological state as factors before making a final decision. Although abortion on demand is prohibited, it is my belief that most Jews within the Orthodox community, and certainly those of other denominations within Judaism, advocate or passively accept pro-choice legislation throughout the mother's pregnancy.

For Jews who do not follow the tenets of Orthodox Jewish law, many rabbis and Jewish leaders have happily adopted 'my body, my right' as some type of Jewish value. As an Orthodox Jew, I find this position repugnant and twisting of the sacred text to be accepted within the general society. I feel that Jews who take these types of counter-Jewish law positions are suffering from our collective PTSD deriving from 2,000 years of living in exile. We would rather be loved by the general society than be stewards of God's law.

For the Orthodox Jewish community, the option of having pro-choice legislation ensures that if a mother's physical life is at stake at any point in the pregnancy, one may terminate the baby. The problem with this stance is that tens of millions of unborn babies, who never endangered their mother's life, have paid a severe price for such legislative acceptance. Furthermore, Jewish law also advocates to ensure that non-Jews uphold God's law.

Over 94% of abortions have nothing to do with any medical complications with the mother. Besides issuing an occasional organisational statement and a few clergy appearing in the media to discuss the topic, many Orthodox rabbis and institutional leaders have passively stood aside on this issue.

The world should not think that the only Jewish voice out there is the one who is okay with on-demand abortions. With the Day of Atonement around the corner, it is a time of deep personal and collective introspection and reflection over our walk with God. Part of the eighty formal confessionals declared during the Day of Atonement service include: *We have committed iniquity! And for the sin, we have sinned before You by desecrating Your name!*

Regarding the first confession, the Hebrew term for 'iniquity' is *avon*, crooked. In the context of this confession, we admit to God that we have used convoluted reasoning to persuade ourselves to sin. The second confession is an admission that we have brought discredit to our people or faith and thus about God Himself.

We must go beyond issuing statements and work with our Christian brothers and sisters in providing alternatives to abortion by working on banning on-demand abortions as well as funding pregnancy centres. Millions depend upon us!

David Nekrutman is an Orthodox Jewish theologian with over two decades experience in the calling of Jewish-Christian relations. He currently serves as the Executive Director of The Isaiah Projects and is the Jewish Adviser to The Chosen.

Sukkot, the Most Beautiful Time of Year

■ Kees de Vreugd

Theologian | Christians for Israel International & Editor | Israel & the Church

“Why don’t you build a *sukkah*?” The amazement of my neighbour on Mount Zion, Rabbi Goldstein of the Diaspora Yeshiva, puzzled me a little. As far as he was concerned, the fact that I lived in Jerusalem and sought an encounter with the Jewish people would have been reason enough for me to put up my own booth in the garden. And wasn’t it also the intention of the Eternal One that the nations should celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with Israel (*Zechariah 14*)? On the other hand, he could appreciate that I still found it somewhat presumptuous for a Gentile to build such a booth—and besides, I was alone at the time. But of course, I gladly accepted his invitation to visit him in his *sukkah*. And so there I was one afternoon in 2004, sitting in a *sukkah* on Mount Zion after all.

Guests

It was not the first time, and certainly not the last that I would sit in a *sukkah* in Jerusalem. From the gigantic structure next to the centre of one of the major Chassidic movements (the Belzer Chassidim, if I remember correctly) to the *sukkah* in the car park near a friend’s apartment, everywhere the *sukkah* is open to receive guests. I learned in the *sukkah* that there is a tradition in Jewish mysticism that the *sukkah* is visited by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. They are called the seven shepherds of Israel, and during *sukkot*, they are the *ushpizin*, an Aramaic word meaning ‘guests’. They take turns coming in, a different one every day. But they do not come when there are no guests in the *sukkah*. Hospitality is one of the core values of Judaism and certainly of the *sukkah*.

Living in a Sukkah

What is a *sukkah*? What does it mean to live in the *sukkah*? The Jewish oral *Torah* (the *Talmud*) answers these and similar questions. The oral *Torah* makes practical what is assumed in the written *Torah*. Living in the *sukkah* means at least sleeping during the night and eating the main meal during the day. Besides, you spend as much time there as possible.

The Hebrew word ‘*sukkah*’ is related to a verb that means ‘to cover’. So, what is really important is the rooftop. The *sukkah* recalls the forty years that Israel was living in the desert under God’s care. The *sukkah* is also a symbol of the transience of existence. The used materials all have a temporary quality. One week a year, you leave the safe and solid environment of your house to live in the booth.

The rooftop (Hebrew: *schach*) consists of plant material, like branches, leaves or bamboo stems, but so sturdy that it will hold for a week. When is the rooftop fully-fledged?



A Jewish man praying during *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles) in Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

If you have more shade than the sun inside the *sukkah*. But through the rooftop, you must still be able to see the open sky. The *sukkah* should not be under a canopy or a tree or something similar. The *sukkah* must have at least two solid walls, one partial wall and a door. But mostly it is built with four walls. Contrary to the rooftop, the walls can be made of anything, like boards or canvas, provided the canvas is attached properly and doesn’t flap in the wind.

Joy

Indeed, the first time I sat in the *sukkah* was in that large Hasidic *sukkah* during a study tour in the early 1990s. My father and I were invited in amidst the festivities and seated at a small table, where immediately a Jewish man with his beautiful *shtreimel* (fur hat) on his head came to sit with us and began to explain half in English, half in Yiddish using the *gematria* (the numerical value of words and letters) that joy (see *Leviticus 23:40*) was the essential commandment of the feast that was reflected in everything.

In the years I have been in Jerusalem, I have consistently experienced the period of *Sukkot* as the most beautiful time of the year. Why is that? Perhaps because of the special atmosphere that prevails in the city then, an atmosphere that takes possession of the city even days in advance because everywhere, in the gardens, in the car parks, the balconies and sometimes just in the middle of the street, huts of foliage are being built; because everywhere in the market and in the shop the *etrogim* (the *etrog* is a musk lemon, the fruit of the splendid tree mentioned in *Leviticus 23:40*) and the palm and other

branches are for sale, where buyers carefully inspect them with a magnifying glass to see if they are completely flawless. Perhaps because of all those people, Jews and Gentiles, who come to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate the feast, making it vibrant and sizzling.

Perhaps, because at such times, Jerusalem offers a momentary glimpse of its eternal destiny, where God will dwell with man and Israel and the nations will worship Him in unison. May it be so, soon and in our days.

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL VIDEO ON DEMAND

Our new digital catalogue of premium teaching resources will help inform and inspire you, wherever you are.



www.c4israel.org/video-on-demand

The PA and Israel Arabs

Continued from page 3

PA officials say that the PA will use the new conservative government’s attitude towards the Israeli Arabs to vilify it internationally. The PA maintains close ties with Israeli Arabs. Senior PA officials confer with Arab-sector leaders, who make pilgrimages to PA headquarters in Ramallah for meetings with Abbas and participate in events held by the Palestinian leadership, such as the convening of the PLO Executive Committee.

The Israeli Arabs’ Higher Monitoring Committee maintains a very close relationship with the PA, primarily via the head of the committee, Mohammed Barakeh, who often visits Ramallah and participates in official PA and Fatah events.

There is a free flow of Israeli Arabs to PA-controlled areas and to the Temple Mount. They go to the former for academic studies (thousands of Israeli Arab students attend PA universities), family visits and shopping. The city of Jenin, in particular, with its low prices, has become a weekend shopping centre for Israeli Arabs.

To avoid harm to the city’s economy, the defence establishment does not restrict Israeli Arabs’ entry to Jenin; they are one of the residents’ primary sources of income.

The PA’s glorification of terrorists also extends to Israeli Arabs involved in terror. Alongside its policy of paying salaries to terrorists serving prison sentences in Israel and stipends to families of those killed or wounded attempting to carry out terrorist attacks, the PA also pays salaries to Israeli Arabs who engage in terror. Indeed, they and eastern Jerusalem Arabs get slightly higher wages than those from Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The rewards incentivise Israeli Arabs to commit terror attacks.

The Israeli Arab leadership sees itself as representing an essential part of the Palestinian people, known as ‘the inside’ or the ‘Arabs of ‘48’ in Arabic, and as a primary side of the triangle that includes the Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Most of the Israeli Arab leadership opposes normalisation between Israel and Arab countries before reaching an Israeli-Palestinian political settlement.

In my assessment, Israel’s weak policy towards the PA is

seen as Israeli irresolution which was evident in the lack of preparation and timidity towards the riots during ‘Operation Guardian of the Walls’. That policy encouraged the Israeli Arabs’ audacity and could lead to problematic scenarios in future clashes. The Israeli leadership, therefore, needs to demonstrate a tough line towards the PA and Hamas.

Israel needs to continue its ‘separation policy’ between Gaza on the one hand and Judea and Samaria on the other, thereby obstructing the tripartite relationship that the Israeli Arab leadership wants to create with the PA and Palestinian factions in Gaza.

Israel must adopt a deterrent security policy that lays down red lines. This includes legislating harsher punishments for disturbing the peace, blocking roads, throwing stones and firebombs, and incitement.

Col (ret) Dr Jacques Neria, a special analyst for the Middle East at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, was formerly a foreign-policy adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the deputy head for assessment of Israeli Military Intelligence.

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PNG Opens Embassy In Jerusalem

■ **Tony Davenport**
Vision Christian Media | Australia

Papua New Guinea's prime minister James Marape says his nation's strong Christian faith was one of the reasons for opening an embassy in Jerusalem this week. PNG is only the fifth country to open an embassy in the Israeli capital. It's effectively a symbolic move, underwritten by the Israeli government which will pay for the running costs of the office for the first three years.

At a ceremony attended by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr Marape said: "Today is a milestone moment for my country Papua New Guinea. We are here to give respect to the people of Israel to the fullest." The Times of Israel quotes him as saying his country subscribes fully to the teachings of the Bible.

Mr Marape added that Papua New Guinea opened its embassy in Jerusalem "because of our shared heritage, acknowledging the creator God, the Yahweh God of Israel, the Yahweh God of Isaac and Abraham. Many nations choose not to open their embassies in Jerusalem but we made the conscious choice. For us to call ourselves Christians, paying respect to God would not be complete without recognising that Jerusalem is the universal capital of the people and nation of Israel."



PNG prime minister James Marape and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. | Photo: Facebook

"You have been the great custodian of the moral values that were passed for humanity," the PNG leader said to Mr Netanyahu.

Mr Marape told the ABC that: "For the first three years, the nation of Israel is paying for the cost of the embassy. But going forward they've indicated land available for us and we look forward to proceeding, setting up our permanent mission there." Israel's affairs in the Pacific

country will continue to be managed by its embassy in Canberra, Australia.

PNG established diplomatic ties with Israel in 1978 and has previously maintained a consulate in Tel Aviv. It is one of the Pacific nations that regularly vote with Israel at the United Nations and has told Israeli leaders it would continue to do so. Most nations have their embassies in Tel Aviv because of the Palestinians' claim to Jerusalem as their capital.

Short News

Mass Redundancy by Abbas



At the beginning of August, PA Chairman Abbas dismissed nearly all regional mayors: thirteen out of sixteen, of whom four were in Gaza. What caused this mass redundancy is not clear. The Palestinian news service Wafa reports that Abbas is going to put together a committee with important persons who will advise him on candidates for the created vacancies. But whatever the reason may be, it is clear that Abbas is old and in poor health, and his control of power over the cities in Judea and Samaria is waning and risky. | Photo: Flash90

Faster Diagnosis of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's

Aviv Mesika's LacriScan diagnostic test uses a patient's tears to diagnose Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease at a very early stage. The new test, which is still in the initial stages of development, is more sensitive than previous tests and checks for multiple chemical markers in the brains of patients with the mentioned diseases. While there is currently no cure for the diseases, swift detection can allow for more effective management of them, graduate student Mesika says.

No More Sore Feet

Actic Medical is the creator of the Hybrid+ insole. This insole has bio-sensors that can measure the pressure, temperature and movement of the foot so as to inform the wearer of impending foot ulcers. The patient can then redistribute the pressure of the insole on their own.

Tel Aviv Light Rail



Mid-August, the time had come: the inauguration of the Tel Aviv light rail. The so-called 'red line' is 24 kilometres long and will visit five municipalities. From Bat Yam in the south of the Tel Aviv region to Petah Tikvah in the eastern part. When completed, the three light rail lines and three subway lines are expected to transform Tel Aviv, long served solely by buses and shared taxi vans. | Photo: Flash90

Israeli President Unveils Plaque

■ **Marie-Louise Weissenböck**
Christians for Israel Austria

As part of his state visit to Vienna, Austria, Israeli President Isaac Herzog unveiled a plaque honouring the Jewish Austro-Hungarian pioneer, publicist and journalist Dr Theodor Herzl on Tuesday, 5 September 2023. This commemorates the main founder of political Zionism on the facade of the house in Berggasse 6, where Herzl lived at the time of the First Zionist Congress (1896-1898). Here he published his book *The Jewish State*, paving the way for the political Zionist movement, which

was completed with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Herzl died on 3 July 1904, and was buried in the Döblinger Cemetery in Vienna. His remains were transferred to Jerusalem decades after his death in 1949, where they were reburied at the Herzlberg.

Present were the mayor of Vienna, Michael Ludwig, Minister of Europe and Constitution Karoline Edtstadler, members of the World Zionist Organisation, representatives of politics and culture and guests of honour.

In his speech before the unveiling, Herzog declared that "the friendship between

Israel and Austria has never been closer." He also praised the fight against antisemitism. "The uncompromising fight against antisemitism waged by the Austrian government should serve as an example to many nations and countries, and we greatly appreciate it."



President Isaac Herzog delivers his speech before unveiling the plaque. | Photos: Marie-Louise Weissenböck



The President of the State of Israel, Isaac Herzog and his wife, Michal Herzog, unveil the plaque to commemorate Theodor Herzl, which was placed on the house where he lived in Berggasse, Vienna.

A Story of an Anthem

■ Tal Hartuv

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

I am convinced that *HaTikvah*, our Israeli national anthem, is the most beautiful in the world. I confess I am biased, but even though I have my personal reasons (please read on), I am not alone in thinking it is the best in the world.

On that rare occasion when Israel wins a gold medal at a sporting event, and the flag is raised to the tune of *HaTikvah*, footage of those three minutes is shared by millions of Israelis on social media. Truth be told, most don't know, or care, or will even remember, who won what; what is important is that our anthem is being played to the world.

Israelis are known for being tough, yet *HaTikvah* never fails to bring a tear to even the toughest and roughest of them all. This applies to those who have defended our land in many a war. No matter how tough, all will unashamedly dry a tear from their eye when they hear our anthem. Some would argue that the tears are because the melody is in a minor key. Of over 200 national anthems, only about a dozen are in a minor key. Most are joyful, party-going and march-like. But *HaTikvah* is not. Yet *HaTikvah* moves people, not because it is in a minor key.

“Israelis are known for being tough, yet *HaTikvah* never fails to bring a tear to even the toughest and roughest of them.”

The words to our extraordinary anthem were penned by Naftali Herz Imber, a Jewish Hebrew-language poet who was born in today's Ukraine. Written in the 19th century, it was not intended to be a tune. It was simply a poem about the Jewish hope of a future Israel and the hope of returning to our land after two thousand years. But the poem became an anthem and one which tells of an endless history and espouses an eternal future. *HaTikvah* is a declaration of facts. It rises to its name by the existence of our past, present, and future. *HaTikvah* is a statement that the people of Israel live, and against all odds, we are still here.

While the author of the words is not disputed, the origin of the tune has caused speculations for years. There were those who claimed that the tune came from the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana from his piece, *Die Moldau*. Others were sure that it found its genesis in a work of the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. But neither is true. Thirteen years ago, due to the historical research of Israeli-born pianist and musicologist Astrith Baltsan, the mystery was solved, and the enigma of where the tune came from was finally laid to rest.



Israeli President Shimon Peres sings *HaTikva* with young Israelis during the opening of the Israeli Presidential Conference at the International Conference Centre in Jerusalem 13 May 2008. | Photo: Flash90

Through her pedantic research, Baltsan discovered that the melody has been a journey that fittingly mirrors that of the Jewish people in the diaspora. Both melody and nation

have travelled the world for centuries. Baltsan discovered that the melody goes back 600 years to a Sephardi prayer for dew. In Hebrew, dew is *Tal*. *Tal* is in our daily prayers. *Tal* is the consistent, unseen, yet nourishing moisture of God on our land and souls, without which we would die.

That is my extra reason for loving *HaTikvah*. In my very name, it reminds me there is always hope and continued healing.

Songs today by various artists are familiar all around the world. What is true now was true then. Melodies travelled then and travel today. After the Jewish people were expelled from Spain and Portugal (these are the Sephardim), they took with them their melody for the prayer for dew. The tune lulled its way across land and sea, hummed by people here and there until it eventually found its way to Italy, where the tune was set to words. The tune to the Sephardi prayer for dew soon became a popular Italian love song, *Fugi, Fugi, Amore Mio*, which can still be found on YouTube today.

The tune was a hit! It spread and ended up in today's Moldova, where it was set to a new set of lyrics. This

time, the original tune for the prayer for dew now hosted the words of a Moldovan gypsy folk song about a cart and oxen.

A Jewish melody in danger of being lost to the Jewish people did not stay lost. Unknown to the Jewish people themselves, that tune for the prayer for dew, which became about an ox and a cart, was restored to the Jewish people. Hope was born again. It arose as *HaTikvah* when 17-year-old Moldovan Shmuel Cohen immigrated to the land of Israel. When Cohen, who knew the Moldovan folk song, came across Imber's poem in Israel, he decided that there would be no better tune to set it to music than the Moldovan tune he had heard at home.

It was a perfect fit. Thus, unknown to everyone, the melody had travelled the world mirroring the Jewish journey of the exodus, the dispersion after the destruction of the Temple, the banishment from Spain and eventually the journey of the Jewish remnant who came to the land after the Holocaust.

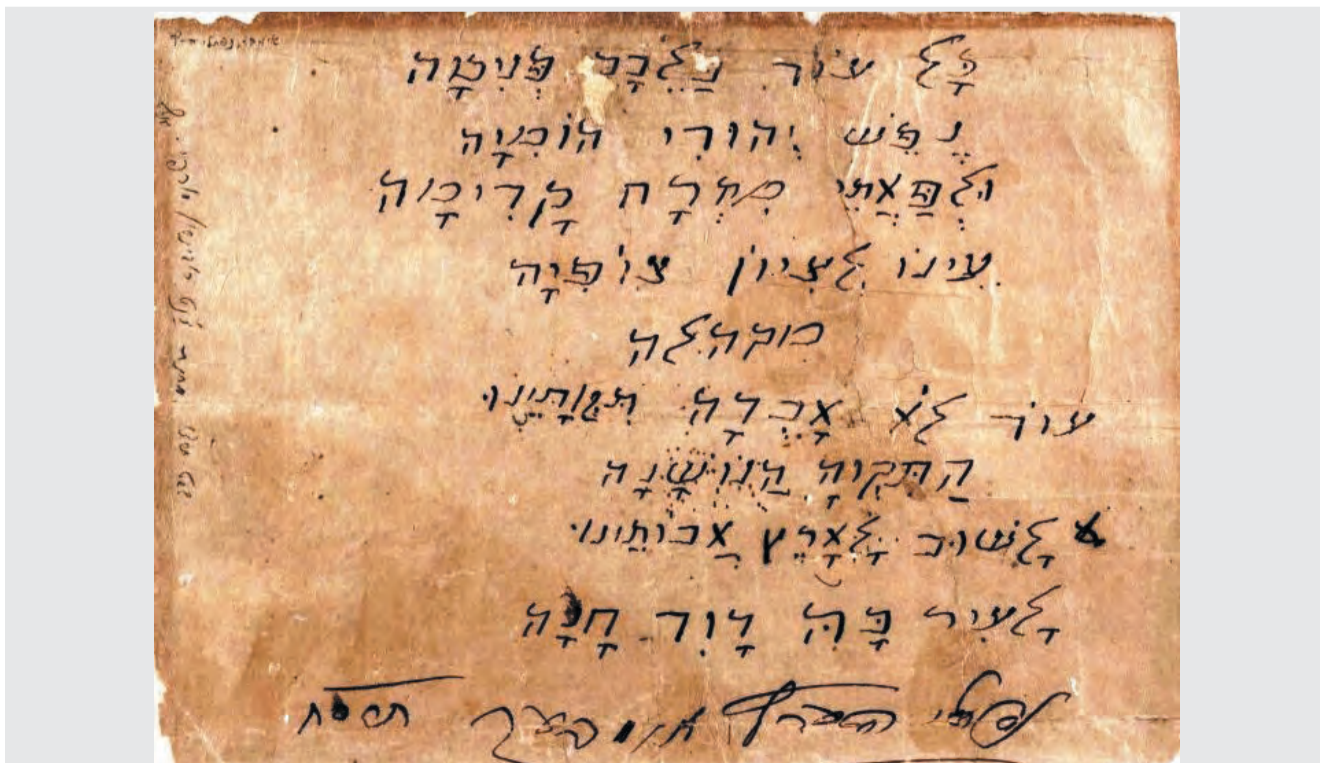
Like any Jewish story, even a Jewish melody needs a bit of persecution to emphasise the hope. During the 1930s, when the British were ruling the land of Israel, they pettily forbade the Jewish radio station to play *HaTikvah*. Undeterred and familiar with the similar sounding Smetana's *Die Moldau*, the radio played that instead. The British could not blacklist a work of classical music, and there was not a Jew in the land who did not read between the lines.

Most moving of all was when *HaTikvah* was played at the end of World War II. A British Jewish chaplain named Leslie Hardman led Bergen-Belsen Holocaust survivors in a Kabbalat Shabbat ceremony, which took place outdoors in the middle of the horror. It was none other than a choir of human skeletons who found it in them to reach beyond the depths of their despair and sing of hope from the depths of their brokenness. That gutting performance was recorded by the BBC yet lay undiscovered for years in the Smithsonian Institute.

But our eternal history has proved that not the British mandate, the BBC, the mighty Smithsonian Institute, or the Romans, Babylonians, Egyptians or any other adversary has ever extinguished our hope or our gratitude to God for the *Tal* (dew) of the morning where *HaTikvah* is always found.



Portrait of Jewish poet Naftali Herz Imber. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Original text of *HaTikva* by Naftali Herz Imber. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Emotional Farewell



■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

It is half past five in the morning: 26 Jewish teenagers (aged 13-16) say goodbye to their parents in the Ukrainian city of Lviv. What an impressive and emotional moment. These teenagers are part of Israel's *Naaleh* programme, which means that they will go to Israel for their high school education. After that, they go to college, and once they are settled, they hope their parents and grandparents will also come to Israel permanently.

The Jewish Agency in Israel asked our Christians for Israel team in Ukraine if we could take these young people with our bus to the airport in Warsaw, Poland. We met the teenagers and their parents after they had travelled to Lviv from all corners of Ukraine. I spoke to a 15-year-old boy and his mother. He shared: "I was not raised religiously, but together with my mother, I have been exploring our Jewish roots for some time now. We already eat kosher, celebrate the Jewish holidays and pray every day." His mother was visibly happy that her son could leave for Israel to build a new future.

During the farewell between parents and children on the bus, the air raid alarm sounded. This added an extra dimension to the already emotional farewell. At the border crossing with Poland, we had to wait no less than eight hours for all luggage, documents, and the bus itself to be checked. It gave us the opportunity to interact with the teenagers and to record this event. They all made a cheerful and lively impression, and they came well-prepared and motivated. We sensed that they were really looking forward to going to Israel. "I want to go to a religious school in Jerusalem to get to know my Judaism even better," said a 14-year-old girl. Another teenager mentioned: "I'm not religious yet, but I really feel like a Jew. And in Israel, I want to learn more about my Jewish

religion." A 14-year-old girl told us that in Israel, she wants to do something meaningful in Israel. "My reason for going to Israel is that I really want to contribute to Israeli society." Overall, it was very inspiring and impressive to get to know these Jewish teenagers from Ukraine a little better. We hope they will all have a blessed future in the promised land.

Aliyah in the Bible

Rev Cornelis Kant: "The prophets speak at length about the fact that God will bring back His people at the end of time, in preparation for the coming of His kingdom. During this particular trip with so many young people going to Israel, I often was reminded of these prophecies. For example, in *Ezekiel 37:21 and 22*, we read: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them, and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.'" And if you read *Isaiah 49:22*, you also notice how this links us as Christians to the return of the Jewish people: "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders." Knowing this and being involved in it humbles me, but I also find it a privilege.

Scan the QR code to view the video report of this trip, or go to the website:

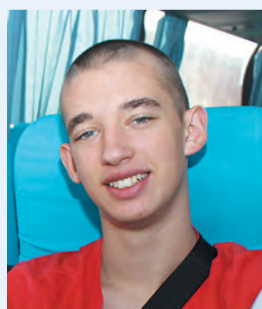
www.c4israel.org/lviv-israel



Sofia

My name is Sofia, and I'm from Odessa in southern Ukraine. I came to Lviv because I am leaving for Israel this week. My mother, my sister and my grandmother stayed behind in Ukraine. In Israel, I hope to

study, but my dream is to do something meaningful in Israel when I finish school. I am very excited and happy that I can go to Israel. Once I am there, without my mother, I believe I will mature faster. An uncle, aunt and niece already live in Israel. My plan is to settle in Jerusalem. I would like to thank you for your support; you really helped me a lot!



Vladyslav

My name is Vladyslav, and I am 14 years old. I come from Odessa. It was five years ago that I visited Israel, and then I fell in love with the country, the people, the culture and the food. I wanted to go back and study

there. So when I heard about the *Naaleh* programme and saw presentations from schools in Israel, I knew I wanted to study in Israel, become an Israeli citizen and then find a good job. I do leave my family here in Ukraine, and that is sad. But I have a good feeling about this step. An aunt of mine lives in Israel, and she showed me a lot of the country five years ago. I was not raised religiously, but I want to learn more once I am in Israel. Christians for Israel gave me good support while making *Aliyah* and I would recommend the organisation to others.

Overview of our projects

Part of our mission is to comfort Israel and the Jewish people through prayer and action. If you would like to support one of our projects you can complete the coupon on page 16 or make an online donation. Thank you very much for your support!

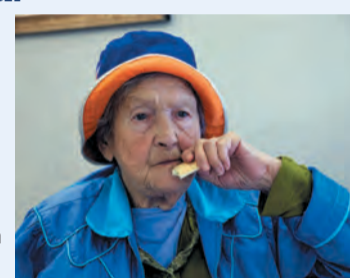
Aliyah

Aliyah is the Hebrew word for the return of the Jewish people to Israel. We support Aliyah mainly from Ukraine (and the former Soviet Union), but also from India and France. Furthermore, we help new immigrants (in Hebrew: olim) to integrate into Israeli society.



Hineni Soup Kitchen

We help the poor of Israel, by providing them with food. We do this in partnership with the Hineni Center in Jerusalem, headed by Benjamin Philip. Your gift for the soup kitchen goes directly to the purchase of food.



Holocaust Survivors

We support impoverished Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine through various projects which provide assistance to survivors of the Holocaust. Those survivors are elderly and will not be among us for long, and there is a growing demand for practical assistance.



Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

You can support the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, the heart of Biblical Israel. The main purpose is to encourage the people in the Biblical Heartland and to show them that there are Christians throughout the world who support them and share the belief that the areas of Judea and Samaria are part of Israel's inheritance.



Food Parcel Campaign Ukraine

We distribute food parcels amongst Jewish people in Ukraine. These parcels are handed out to Holocaust survivors, needy families, and the sick. Those food parcels are a sign of friendship that demonstrates your support for our Jewish brothers and sisters and that they are not alone.



Arab Christians

Life for Christians in Bethlehem is often not easy. Christians for Israel supports the First Baptist Church of Rev Naim Khoury in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The members of this church spread the gospel among Arabs and share their love and heart for Israel and the Jewish people.



For country-specific or further information on our projects, go to our website, www.c4israel.org.nz



No Way Back for Yelena

■ Koen Carlier

Christians for Israel Ukraine

Kharkiv (Kharkov) and several cities in the same province have been under fire again in recent weeks. It seems the Russian army is capturing more territory. Kharkiv was once a big city with 1.4 million inhabitants, but today about half of the people have left. We regularly head to Kharkiv to pick up Jewish families for their departure to Israel.

Yelena was one of the people who recently left for good, and what a 'journey' she had made in order to finally leave for Israel! Yelena: "When the air raid sounded in Kharkiv—for the umpteenth time—I fled with the other residents to the shelter of our rather small apartment building. I only had my passport and birth certificate with me, just in case.... We heard tremendously loud explosions, and rockets hitting close by; those were terrible, frightening moments. A few hours later, it was quiet, so we went outside, I was just horrified when I saw the damage, I knew there was no way back, I couldn't stay there anymore!"

Reflecting on the Past

Emotionally, Yelena continues: "I fled with nothing but the clothes on my back plus my passport and birth certificate, and was completely covered in dust. I used whatever transportation was available—bus, train, on foot—to Riga, the capital of Latvia. Being a professor of psychology at Kharkiv University, I thought deeply about what had happened to me and our family history. About my grandfather, who was deputy minister of education in Ukraine, but as a Polish Jew, was murdered by the communists in 1937, and about my grandmother, who ended up in prison. I contemplated going to Israel years ago, but because I didn't know Hebrew and loved my job here at the university so much, I kept postponing my departure.



The destroyed apartment building in Kharkiv. Photos: C4I

"After arriving in Riga, my plan was to leave for Israel from there. However, for the Israeli embassy, my passport and birth certificate were not enough, I also needed my grandparents' Jewish documents as proof that I had the right to go to Israel!"

Miraculous

Deeply disappointed, Yelena wondered what she could do. Going back to the war zone seemed impossible, but there was no other option because she needed additional documents! Miraculously, the documents were still in her destroyed apartment when she returned. Yelena then went to the synagogue for advice. That is where she got in touch with the team of Christians for Israel who provided her with support in her Aliyah.



Yelena and Koen Carlier, right before her departure to Israel.

A few days ago, Yelena sent us a few messages from Israel. She is settling in the Haifa area, still busy with her integration process. She thanked us again for the good care and practical help on her departure to Israel.

Task to Help

The nations have a task to help with the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. The prophets of Israel had predicted and written this down thousands of years ago, as in *Isaiah 49:22*. In the coming period, we hope to help hundreds of Jews to travel to Israel from Ukraine via Moldova! Right now, it is still possible!

Do you want to be involved? The cost to help one person make Aliyah is \$300. Any amount is welcome!

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

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- My donation for ministry costs, print & post \$.....
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ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

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- First Home in the Homeland - \$765 \$.....
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- Food Parcels in Ukraine - \$26 each \$.....
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- Hineni Soup Kitchen - \$15 per meal \$.....
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- Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC) \$.....
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- Israel Alzheimer's Centre \$.....

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Check out our website for a full list of essential resources

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Note: Donation statements are generated annually at the end of the financial year. Christians for Israel NZ does not currently qualify for charitable status.