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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Israeli soldier and Ultra-Orthodox Jews at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest prayer site in the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

Pray for the Release of the Hostages

The Israeli government remains committed to a hostages-for-ceasefire-and-terrorists-release agreement with Hamas as long as the deal adheres to its red lines. It is understood that about 120 hostages remain in Gaza, and that dozens are still alive.

Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu has outlined Israel's red lines for a deal: The ability to resume fighting in Gaza until all war goals have been met; an end to arms smuggling from Egypt; no return of 'thousands' of terrorists to Gaza's north; and maximizing the number of living hostages released.

It remains incredible that the international community

continues to pressure Israel to implement a ceasefire, while Qatar is not made accountable for its sponsorship of Hamas. The world should insist on complete and unconditional release of the hostages before any ceasefire can take place.

Let us pray for the hostages and their families. Pray that a solution will be found as quickly as possible. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.

We look to the Lord God of Israel for salvation.

This is what God the Lord says— the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its

people, and life to those who walk on it:

"I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

"I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.

See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

Isaiah 42:5-9

3



How to End the War in Gaza

8



The Sanctity of Life

11



Jerusalem, the Burdensome Stone

15



Heart-wrenching Choices



Israel & Christians Today is the premier publication of Christians for Israel

Colophon

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Mission

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

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Jews Allowed in Judea & Samaria?

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich recently called for a series of measures to strengthen the Jewish state's hold on Judea and Samaria in response to the Palestinians' push for unilateral statehood and support for the International Criminal Court case against Israel.

Smotrich, who also has authority over civilian matters in Judea and Samaria, demanded the approval of 10,000 new housing units and the establishment of a new town for each country that recognises 'Palestine'.

In order to build in Judea and Samaria, it is necessary to have Israeli government approval. 'Judea and Samaria' are often referred to as 'the West Bank', and Jews who live there are often called 'settlers'.

From Israel's perspective, Israelis who will live in these housing units are simply exercising their right to live in territory administered by Israel and to which Israel has strong sovereignty claims. However, in the media and in international relations, such housing units are often referred to as 'settlements', and people who live in the West Bank are called 'settlers'. According to the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, Israel's establishment of Jewish 'settlements' in The West Bank and East Jerusalem is illegal.

Where does the word 'settler' come from? Why do people say "settlements are illegal"?

Many people do not realise that the word 'settlement' derives from Article 6 of the Mandate for Palestine (1922), which gave the Jews a *right* of 'close settlement' of the land of Palestine—including Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria:

"Article 6. The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights

and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish agency referred to in Article 4, *close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes.*"

In other words, the Mandate for Palestine did not *prohibit settlements*; it gave Jews the *right* to settle on the land!

That was because settlement of the land was necessary for the Jewish people to implement their self-determination as a people in their ancestral homeland.

Prior to 1948, the territories now often known as 'occupied Palestinian territories' (i.e. East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza), were part of the territory of the Mandate for Palestine, where a national home for the Jewish people was to be established. On 15 May 1948, an aggressive attack by Jordan and other Arab states resulted in Jordan occupying East Jerusalem and the 'West Bank' for 19 years. In June 1967, Israel reconquered these territories (and much more) in a defensive war fought against renewed Arab aggression in the June 1967 Six Day War.

The argument against settlements is twofold. First, it is argued that the West Bank is Palestinian territory. Second, it is argued that these territories are 'occupied' territories and that the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the occupying power from transferring or deporting its population into occupied territory.

Regarding the first argument, the fact is that East Jerusalem and the West Bank are contested territory. Israel and the Palestinians have competing claims. The Palestinians claim that they belong to the Palestinians and must become part of a Palestinian state. Israel disputes

this, asserting that East Jerusalem is part of the sovereign territory of Israel and that Israel has strong territorial sovereignty claims to the West Bank based on the Mandate for Palestine.

Regarding the second argument, opinions differ as to whether these territories have been occupied since June 1967 under international law. But even if they technically qualify as 'occupied territories', that does not negate Israel's sovereignty claims that existed prior to June 1967 (based on the Mandate for Palestine).

All of these issues are the subject of an Advisory Opinion that the UN General Assembly has asked the International Court of Justice to issue on the 'legal consequences' of Israel's violation of Palestinian self-determination rights and its 'prolonged occupation' of these territories. The Palestinians and many other states demand that the Court rule that Israel's occupation has become illegal and that Israel should completely and unconditionally 'withdraw' from East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In all likelihood, the Court will issue an opinion that will (in large part) support the Palestinian claims.

All of this is in conflict with the fact that the God of Israel is bringing His people home. He is settling them in the land.

What we are witnessing is a huge clash of paradigms—between the God of Israel and, on the other hand, the nations of the world who are determined to divide the land based on a biased and twisted interpretation of international law.

We must pray for the nations of the world and for the judges of the ICJ—that they will exercise their duties with honesty, fairness and justice. That they will acknowledge that this land belongs to the God of Israel and that it cannot be divided without incurring God's judgment.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray that the unity among the Jewish people may remain strong and pray that all the hostages may be freed.
- The people of Judea and Samaria live with the daily threat of terror. Pray that God may protect them and that they may live in peace in the Biblical Heartland.
- The situation in northern Israel is very tense. Many evacuees are not yet able to return home and are forced to stay in hotels. Pray for the situation in northern Israel.

Israel and the Nations

- The United Nations repeatedly comes up with accusations against the Israeli government. Pray that God may break the council of the United Nations.
- Recently, Norway, Ireland and Spain have expressed support for the recognition of a Palestinian state. Despite this, we know that Israel's future is in God's hands. Pray that plans to divide Israel will not succeed.

- "See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labour; a great throng will return." (*Jeremiah 31:8*) Thank God today that He is gathering His people and bringing them back to His land.

Antisemitism

- "All day long they twist my words; all their schemes are for my ruin. They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, hoping to take my life." (*Psalms 56:5-6*) Pray that the enemies of the Jewish people may be scattered.
- Antisemitism is nothing new. Unfortunately, for centuries, the Church has played a large role in this, too. Old texts and images contain terrible stories of blood legends, forced conversions and pogroms. Pray for repentance in the Church. Pray that we, as the Church we, will ask God for forgiveness for the terrible things we have done to His people.

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

How to End the War in Gaza

■ David Makovsky & Dennis Ross

Australian/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

For Israelis, it's still 7 October. It is not just the shock and the horror of that day. The hostages are a daily reminder of a continuing trauma. President Biden has focused on a deal that gets the hostages released and sets in motion a process that leads to the end of the war in Gaza. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu says the war can only end with Hamas' military destroyed, it no longer being in control of Gaza and with the hostages returned.

The two share the same basic objective, but neither has offered a clear enough explanation of when and how the war can end. From the beginning, Netanyahu has spoken of "total victory", which is a slogan and not an objective. True, sloganeering leaves room for Netanyahu to manoeuvre. But his desired endpoint is clearly broader than Biden's goal of making Hamas "no longer capable" of carrying out large-scale attacks on Israel.

If Netanyahu's definition is too broad, Biden's is too narrow. It leaves open the possibility of Hamas being able to reconstitute and rebuild itself. But there is a path forward that both leaders could forge together. And it would be based on the demilitarisation of Gaza and the guarantee that it could never again be militarised.

Israel is already close to dismantling Hamas as a military force. Once Israel completes the destruction of the remaining battalions in Rafah and central Gaza, Hamas will no longer have organised military units with clear command and control. To complete demilitarisation, Israel must destroy enough of the Hamas military infrastructure—its weapons labs, production facilities, depots and tunnels—so that reconstitution becomes impossible without ongoing resupply.

These are measurable objectives. Because the Israelis are close to defeating Hamas as a military, the Biden Administration should now seek to reach an agreement with the Israeli Government on how much is enough when it comes to destroying the military infrastructure. In turn, the Israelis should ask the Biden Administration to outline everything the United States and its allies will collectively do to cut off money, materials and weapons to Hamas, ensuring it can never rebuild itself.

Gaza's border with Egypt must be secured to prevent smuggling above and below ground. Even though Israel tried to restrict what went into Gaza, Hamas successfully smuggled everything it



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with Israeli PM Netanyahu: US-Israel agreement on the essential parameters for post-war Gaza remains indispensable. | Photo: GPO/Flickr

needed to build both the 500 kilometres of tunnels and a military-industrial base capable of producing missiles and bombs. A US-Egyptian agreement on managing this border is therefore essential. The United States can provide sensors to detect and stop any tunnels from being rebuilt, but Egyptian President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi must know that shutting down smuggling will be a test of the US-Egyptian relationship. The Biden Administration could provide a significant financial incentive to Egypt to stop the smuggling by allowing Egyptian contractors to take the lead in the reconstruction of Gaza.

Stopping the smuggling is crucial. But if there isn't a credible team on the ground to manage the reconstruction process, Hamas will end up diverting legally imported reconstruction materials for its own purposes. Let's be clear: A UN-brokered effort to halt the diversion of reconstruction materials clearly failed after the Israel-Hamas war of 2014. The United States will have to do better. It will have to put in place a mechanism to track materials from their point of entry, to storage, to end-use. Any diversion would need to immediately halt reconstruction.

For the 'day after', the Biden Administration has been planning an international task force with Egyptians, Emiratis and others providing security as the Israel Defence Forces withdraw following the hostages being released. Such a task force needs to have Palestinians as part of the administration. But these Palestinians need to be untainted by association with Hamas or any other faction. Palestinians with proven track records, like Salam Fayyad or Jihad Alwazir, could play such a role. Both are products of the

International Monetary Fund system and know a great deal about development and the realities in Gaza.

Though the Israelis might be on the verge of demilitarising Gaza, they have not disarmed all Hamas fighters and have little prospect of doing so no matter how long they stay. The question, therefore, is how the international forces deal with the remaining Hamas holdouts. Will they try to impose order? Or will they seek some kind of understanding with these fighters to keep the peace? And will there be any circumstances in which they would accept Israel responding to a threat they cannot contain? (Certainly, they must know that Israelis will act against any direct threat to Israel.)

Any outside actor planning to stabilise Gaza must be prepared to answer these difficult questions. But they are particularly sensitive for Arab leaders who do not want to be seen as using force on Palestinians on behalf of Israel.

We have not tried to address all issues, including whether this process can begin without a political horizon for eventual Palestinian self-governance— or at least clarity on whether the Palestinian Authority is actually going to be reformed. But not all questions need to be answered to start thinking about an endgame.

If the United States and Israel can agree on an endpoint to the war, many other things can fall into place. If not, far worse outcomes are looming in the region.

Dennis Ross is the Counsellor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and former special assistant to President Obama. David Makovsky is the Institute's Ziegler Distinguished Fellow and a former official on the US State Department's Middle East peace negotiating team. This article was originally published on the Washington Post website. © Washington Institute (washingtoninstitute.org), republished with permission.

Short News

EL AL Flourishes



EL AL, Israel's national airline company, appears to have made a turnover of 685 million euros in the first quarter of 2024. This is partly due to EL AL's monopoly position. Because of the war and worries about safety, many airline companies froze their flights to and from Israel. During the first quarter, the profit amounted to almost 81 million euros. | Photo: Shutterstock

Helping ICC Punishable

Persons helping the International Criminal Court to arrest Israeli representatives are likely to be punishable in the United States. The American House of Representatives passed a law for it at the beginning of June; the law still has to pass the Senate. The proposed law is in response to arrest warrants issued by the ICC for PM Netanyahu and Minister of Defense Gallant.

UNWRA Must Leave

Israel allows UNWRA thirty days to vacate a plot of land in the North of Israel that it is using without permission. Furthermore, the Israeli Land Authority presented a bill of nearly 6.5 million euros to UNWRA for all the years that it used the land and the buildings illegally. The buildings were built without a proper license, on land of the State of Israel.

Gazan Evacuees are Suffering



Since Hamas' massacre on 7 October 2023, almost one hundred thousand Gazans have left the Gaza Strip. They left for Egypt. Reasons can be medical assistance, but there may also be hefty payments to cross the border at Rafah. Once in Egypt the circumstances aren't easy. Egypt imposes serious limitations on the Gazans for security reasons. Also, people who came to Egypt for medical reasons are facing long safety checks. | Photo: Flash90

Israel and the Failed Strategy Against Iran

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

Israel and Iran are engaged in a multi-front war that could at any time develop into a regional conflict of unprecedented proportions, as we will see.

Perhaps the biggest problem for Israel is the attitude of the world community, which is overwhelmingly obsessed with the war against Hamas in Gaza and also appears to be blind to the nuclear danger that Iran poses to the entire world.

The United States and Israel agreed at the end of June to conduct a strategic dialogue after a long visit to Washington DC by Yoav Galant, the Israeli Minister of Defense.

Galant held a series of conversations with senior US government officials among them Lloyd Austin the US Secretary of Defense, Jake Sullivan the US National Security Advisor, Amos Hochstein the US envoy to Lebanon, and, Antony Blinken the Secretary of State.

After the meeting with Austin, Galant made an unusually dramatic appeal to the United States, saying that time is running out to halt Iran's nuclear programme while warning Austin that now is the time for the US to take action against Iran and its nuclear programme.

"Now is the time to fulfil the promises made by all US administrations in recent years and prevent a nuclear Iran that will pose a danger to the entire world," Galant said.

Iran has again made major progress in its nuclear programme recently and now has enough highly enriched uranium to produce six atomic bombs in a short period.

We are currently in phase three of the multi-front war against Israel, and this involves opening multiple fronts...

New cascades of P-6 centrifuges are currently installed at breakneck speed in the underground uranium enrichment plant Fordow, making the enriching process even more massive.

At the same time, Iran refuses to allow full inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and also refuses to answer questions about undeclared nuclear activities.

In addition, several Iranian government officials and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have recently hinted that Iran could produce a nuclear weapon if threatened by Israel.

The so-called E3, the European superpowers Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, now want to bring the Iranian nuclear file before the UN Security Council in the hope that the severe sanctions against Iran that have been abolished will be reinstated.

However, this has proven to be insufficiently effective in the past and at this point, it will no longer make a difference for Iran because time is on its side.

It appears that the regime in Tehran is using the current chaos in the Middle East and the war against Israel to break out into an atomic bomb, as was always planned in the four-phase plan drawn up by the liquidated commander of the Quds Force of Iran's



Smoke and fire after rockets and drones fired from Lebanon hit open areas in the Golan Heights. | Photo: Flash90

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Qassem Soleimani.

We are currently in phase three of the multi-front war against Israel, and this involves opening multiple fronts and creating chaos in phase four; a regional war will break out, and Iran will use that chaos to take the final steps towards producing a nuclear weapon.

In fact, when one looks closely at the bigger picture of the war that Iran is waging through its proxies in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Judea and Samaria, the heartland of Israel, it is clear that the current strategy is not good. The same goes for the strategy to shut down Iran's nuclear programme.

Take, for example, the actions taken against the piracy and aggression of the Ansar Allah or Houthi militia in Yemen against shipping traffic in the Red Sea and other waters around Yemen.

The almost daily attacks on civilian shipping and warships of Western countries in these waters have so far been answered by defensive actions with interception batteries and by air strikes on Ansar Allah bases and missile launchers.

However, the only thing that could put an end to the aggression of this Iranian proxy is an extensive ground operation in Yemen and military action against Iran itself, which supplies all weapons and ammunition to Ansar Allah.

Now, the international community is allowing this Iranian proxy to bring 90 per cent of shipping traffic to a standstill in the Red Sea, and as a result, companies have to pay millions of dollars extra to transport cargo through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

Israel itself has so far taken no action against Ansar Allah, despite the non-functioning of the port of Eilat, attacks on the resort town at the Gulf of Aqaba and terror against Israeli ships in the waters around Yemen.

Then there is the so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), a group of Shia militias previously called al-Hashd al-Sha'abi and co-founded at the time by Soleimani.

IRI continuously attacks US bases in Iraq and Syria with kamikaze drones and missiles and also occasionally attacks Israel, as was the case in late June when Eilat in the far south of Israel was attacked with a kamikaze drone. The plane caused no damage because it exploded over the Gulf of Aqaba.

IRI can exercise its terror virtually unhindered and has rarely been attacked by the US or Israeli military.

When we look at Hezbollah in Lebanon, we see the same pattern so far.

Since 8 October, when this part of the war began, Israel has contented itself with carrying out air strikes, artillery fire, and a series of assassinations of Hezbollah commanders.

All military experts agree, however, that to remove this Iranian proxy from the border area around Israel, a ground manoeuvre will have to take place, but so far, Israel's political leaders appear to have bowed to foreign pressure and have still not made the decision to allow the IDF to carry out the ground operation for which it has been training for months.

Hezbollah also sees the pattern and plays along by occasionally creating pauses in the shelling and then launching massive attacks again, as happened at the end of June when a huge rocket attack and an extensive drone attack were carried out in the north within two days. This is clearly part of the attrition strategy employed by the Iranian axis.

Iran itself feels untouchable and does not pay any price for the terror it organises through its proxies since military action against the Islamic Republic, whether aimed at stopping state terror or against the nuclear weapons programme, seems out of the question because the West always opts for diplomacy and is very averse to military operations.

In the case of Iran, however, this has clearly proven to be counterproductive, and to understand this, one need only look at Israel's current war with Hamas.

For more than sixteen years, Israel tried to keep the tiger in its cage with limited IDF operations and non-military means and even allowed Qatar, which hosts Hamas's top leadership, to send large sums of money to Gaza. The consequences of this policy were disastrous, as we now know.

Galant appears to be right by now, sounding the alarm to the Americans about the nuclear programme and insisting on a strategic dialogue with Iran.

After all, it is five to midnight in the fight against the fanatical imperialistic regime in Tehran and its nuclear weapons programme.

Eyewitness 7 October Recounts

■ Leon Meijer

Chairman | Christians for Israel International

Shani Teshuva is an eyewitness to the 7 Oct. attacks on villages around Gaza. When she was in the Netherlands for a short visit, Christians for Israel's Chairman Leon Meijer asked her a few questions.

Shani, can you tell us something about your hometown and how it was living there?

"I live in *Kibbutz Zikkim*, which is a small *kibbutz* just a few hundred meters from the northern border of the Gaza Strip. The same distance to the west is the Mediterranean Sea. A small army base is located right next to our *kibbutz*. There is also a small dairy farm and some greenhouses where we grow vegetables. In the *kibbutz's* factory, mattresses are produced. It is a lovely place to live. We never lock our doors. Everyone knows each other, and the children can play wonderfully together. Of course, in recent years, there have been rocket attacks time and again. But as crazy as it may sound, we got used to them. When the children went outside, they didn't promise us that we would be home on time like in a normal family. Our kids had to promise to run to an air raid shelter if the air alarm went off."

What happened on the morning of 7 Oct.?

"Every Saturday, I take my bike and cycle about 25 kilometres early in the morning. I ride to the beach first and then pass a few other *kibbutzim* and then return back home. Because of the heat in Israel, I ride early in the morning when it is still cool. I was up early that day, but contrary to my expectations, it was not as hot as the days before. That's why I decided to wait a little longer to go out of the gate. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be alive now. At 6.29am, all hell broke loose. Thousands of rockets flew over us. Normally, the Iron Dome (Israel's air defence system) takes the rockets down, but because there were so many of them, the Iron Dome ran out of missiles. Missiles started falling on our *kibbutz*, and my husband was asked to help evacuate people. To make matters worse, the network went down, and we could not reach each other by phone. Around 8.30am, we heard other sounds, mortars being fired at us just a hundred metres away. The navy called us— fortunately, the phone was working again—and reported that hundreds of infiltrators were



Shani Teshuva. | Photo: Maura Eshel

coming into the country via the sea, and they could not stop them all. Our security team was fortunately alerted and managed to stop infiltrators. Our *kibbutz* was saved from much worse by the warnings. Meanwhile, terrible reports were seeping in via WhatsApp about our neighbouring villages, where hundreds of people had been killed and kidnapped."

Several months have passed since 7 Oct. Are you, and the people of the kibbutz, able to resume life?

"It is very difficult. After 7 Oct., I stayed with relatives. Most people from my *kibbutz* were evacuated to hotels. While it still is not safe at the *kibbutz*, as Hamas is still firing rockets, I returned back to my home. About 40 per cent of the people have returned to the *kibbutz*. Almost 30 per cent of the residents do not want to come back. It is too traumatic; 19 people were killed on the beach, and eight soldiers were killed at the small army base next to the *kibbutz*. Everything reminds us of what happened on 7 Oct. And yet we pick up our lives again, not knowing what that will be like."

During your stay in the Netherlands, you spoke at a meeting of Christians for Israel. What would you like to share with us?

"First and foremost, thank you. Thank you for your support and love. We realise that we are not alone. We need friends and here in the Netherlands I saw a venue filled with friends. Make sure you are well informed, by using good information you can expose the lies and help people understand what is happening."

Short News

EU is Helping Yad Vashem



The EU is co-sponsor of a new exhibition at Yad Vashem that revives Jewish communities that were destroyed during the Holocaust, using modern technology. Yad Vashem chairman Dayan is grateful for this support. "Only by telling the story of the lively communities that existed before the Holocaust, we can fully understand the enormity and scale of what was tragically lost during the destruction of the Shoah." The exhibition is on show this summer. | Photo: Shutterstock

Covering Defense Expenses

Amir Yaron, director of the Bank of Israel, states that the Israeli Government must ensure that defense expenses should be covered in the Government's budget. "A thriving economy demands certainty, and certainty demands a thriving economy", he told Reuters. The war must not be accompanied with an open cheque for permanent defense expenses. Proper financing must be found."

One Million Jerusalem Residents



Traditionally, around *Yom Yerushalayim* (commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967), figures about the city are released. These figures show that this year, Jerusalem has over one million residents, 1,005,900 to be exact. In a little more detail, the figures show that more people are leaving than entering the city (-7,200). At the same time, more new immigrants chose Jerusalem as their first destination in Israel. The figures also show that more people are using public transport, that the employment rate of Arab women continues to rise and that a lot of construction is going on in Jerusalem—construction of 5,800 homes has started. | Photo: Flash90

Free at Last!

There was great joy when, on Saturday, 8 June (*Shabbat*), four Israeli hostages were rescued alive from Nuseirat (Gaza). After eight months of great uncertainty and fear for both themselves and their families, the Israeli army carried out a highly daring and successful rescue operation. A month of preparations preceded the rescue operation.

Noa Argamani was held in the house of a wealthy Gazan family and was moved several times by the hostage-takers. The three other hostages, Almog Meir Jan, Andrey Kozlov and Shlomi Ziv, had been together for months in the house of Al Jazeera journalist Abdallah Aljamal and his family, who were killed in the rescue operation. The house where they were being held was just two hundred metres from the house where Noa was being held.

The successful rescue operation caused a wave of gratitude and euphoria in Israel. On the beach near Tel Aviv, the news was shared by lifeguards over a loudspeaker, resulting in huge applause. At synagogues, large sheets of paper were put up with handwritten messages about the liberation action, to ensure that Orthodox Jews (who do not use mobile phones or watch TV on *Shabbat*) would also be quickly informed. Israelis

on holiday abroad danced in the streets and sang the *Hatikvah* (Israel's national anthem).

Although the liberated hostages looked good at first sight, it has since become clear that the hostages faced almost daily abuse (both physical and mental) and were given little or nothing to eat at times.



Noa Argamani reunites with her father. | Photo: Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sitting Shiva

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

When a Jewish person dies, the loved ones left behind go through a process of mourning, which is called 'Shiva'. During *Shiva* the grieving loved ones are embraced by their family and community in a public setting. The home of the mourning family is open for visits from the community.

Shiva means seven, indicating that the mourning period lasts for seven days. *Shiva* begins immediately after the funeral of the beloved deceased. Typically, the family are seated at a lower level than all other seating, indicating that their grief has brought them low. It is this posture that leads to the term 'sitting *Shiva*'.

Family and community generally bring meals to the grieving family and talk respectfully about the lost loved one, remembering their life and bringing comfort to those in mourning.

Why do I Bring up the Custom of Sitting Shiva?

Comparatively speaking, 7 October has been described as Israel's 9/11. On a per capita basis, the number of lives destroyed in Israel by Hamas last year would be the equivalent of around 35-40,000 Americans. 9/11 saw 3,000 lives lost; and brought America to a standstill. America then went on to wage a two-decades-long war in Afghanistan to deal with the Taliban, who were behind the worst terror attack on US soil. 3,000—not 40,000.

What Israel experienced on 7 Oct, 2023, was so devastating, so catastrophic, that not one single Israel has been unaffected by it. The entire nation is in a state of grief, and yet they have not been afforded the dignity and respect of mourning their losses. Israel needs a respite to sit *Shiva*. Yet she can't.

Israel is fighting a war for survival, being attacked daily by Hezbollah terrorists—a proxy of Iran, from Lebanon on her northern border.

Israel continues to be attacked from the Gaza Strip. Hamas—a proxy of Iran—still has a stranglehold throughout Gaza and is still able to launch rockets—albeit in smaller numbers—because Israel has been hampered by the international community.

Israel has also been attacked with a barrage of 350 plus missiles and suicide drones from Iran, the biggest terror state in the world.

Egypt will not allow safe passage for Gazan civilians into its territory and is opposed to Israel entering Rafah in Southern Gaza to complete their efforts to destroy Hamas and rescue hostages.

There are riots and protests in the streets of Jordan, demanding war against Israel and declaring solidarity with Hamas.

Terror cells and attacks are coming out of PLO/PA-controlled towns in Judea and Samaria almost on a daily basis.

Security personnel all over Israel are dealing with internal terror attacks and attempts, and up to 250,000 Israelis are refugees in their own country.

Throw into this mix the UN ignoring its corrupt UNRWA arm, which has been funding, promoting and actively participating in radicalising Gaza's children and terrorism itself.

The UN refuses to condemn Hamas while condemning Israel.

Most nations of the world are trying to force Israel to reward Hamas with a state—which will be used as a launching pad from which to repeat the 7 October massacres. Many nations have already unilaterally recognised Palestine as a state.

Then there is the duplicity of the US, which has given with one hand while taking away with the other in a bid to manipulate Israel into making dangerous concessions that will only harm her.

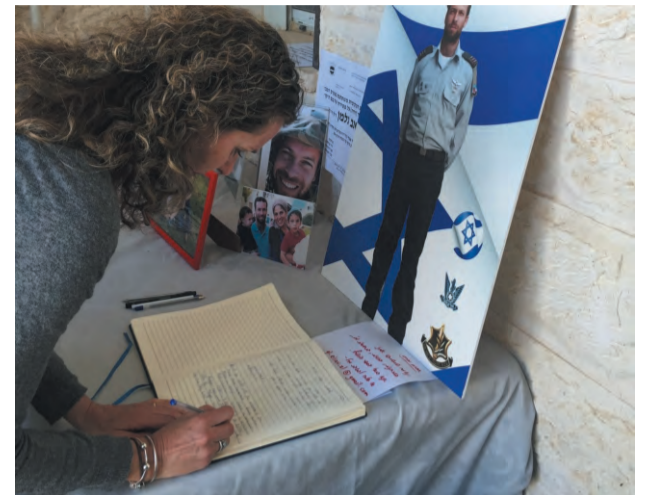
Also, an unprecedented rabid wave of antisemitism is sweeping the world beyond comprehension. Hundreds of thousands of people are marching through the streets of cities all around the world, calling for Israel's destruction and the targeting of Jews in those countries shocked every Israeli to their core.

The eruption of scenes of antisemitism on college campuses and universities is reminiscent of Germany from 1937–1939.

In the midst of all this hatred and malice, the Jewish people are still in unresolved mourning. One of the greatest areas of need at the moment in Israel is the desperate need for trauma counselling for the entire nation, and most especially for those who either survived 7 October or who raced to southern Israel to try to deal with the aftermath of 7 October. Israel simply doesn't have enough resources to deal with this human disaster.

While we believers are unable to intervene to stop the war, reverse the course of our governments or hold every antisemitic, racist protagonist accountable according to the law, we can pray for the Jewish people. Pray for the leaders of Israel—especially Prime Minister Netanyahu, reach out to your Jewish friends and neighbours and offer them friendship and any comfort you can. Mourning and grief for them at this time is, quite honestly, overwhelming.

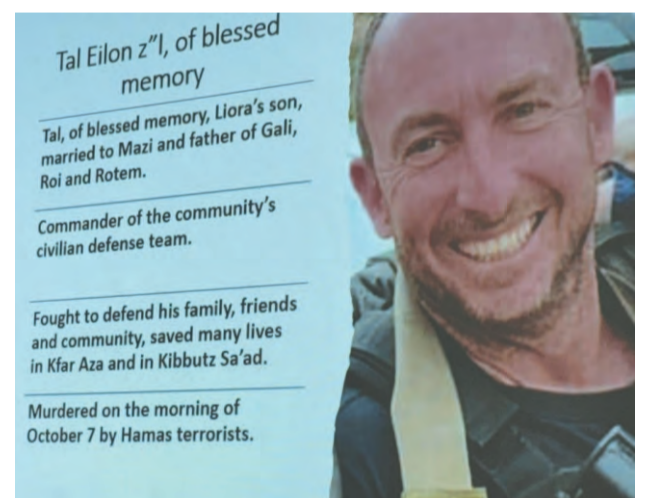
| Photos: C4I Australia



One of our C4I International leaders signing a guest book at a family's home that was sitting *Shiva* over the loss of their son.




Danielle Mor from the Jewish Agency showing our ANZAC solidarity team a presentation on how our aid is bringing comfort to Israelis.



One of the slides shown in the presentation, showing an Israeli father who was a soldier killed in the October 7 massacre




An elderly couple at a grave side in Jerusalem reading prayers and scriptures of a loved one who had passed away.




HOLY BIBLE


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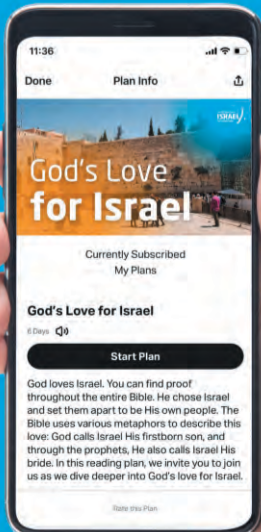
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SCAN ME

What's it Like Now?

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

These days, raising money is big business. In New Zealand, it was only days after the 7 October attack that we began to see the big international 'humanitarian' agencies all over our screens, raising money for the innocent victims of the 'Israel/Gaza war'. Only a couple of weeks later, the massive anti-Israel PR machine had very effectively twisted the narrative, and so the aid agencies no longer hid their actual intentions. They set about producing videos and advertising worthy of an Oscar. Carefully-staged images of war-torn streets destroyed buildings, and hurting people, flooded our minds from every direction. The world was raising money for the innocent people of... Gaza.

It didn't matter that ethnic cleansing, internal displacement, or war have left millions around the world in dire need. A quick scan of the UNHCR data shows that in the Sahel region 31.7 million, Syria 14+ million, Ukraine 10.2 million, Afghanistan 11.4 million, Sudan 15.1 million, South Sudan 3 million, Yemen 26.1 million, Myanmar 1.5 million, Venezuela 7.7 million, as well as millions more in Iraq, Central Africa, and Central America, are in a terrible crisis.

We must stand with Israel like never before. We must bless Israel like never before. We must show Israel that it is not alone.

However, the world stopped focusing on anything but the numbers issued by the Hamas Ministry of Health. Not only did these other humanitarian crises around the world disappear from view, but the actual innocent victims of Gaza's attack never got even a mention.

Gazans need aid, and the world—albeit with questionable efficiency—is delivering that aid. Gaza will need help for a long time, regardless of the governance structure after the war.

What isn't reported is what we went expressly to see, and to share, and to help.

The ANZAC *Solidarity Mission* of April 2024 took 13 people from the far side of the world to visit Israel. In a whirlwind visit, the team visited sites where so many had lost their lives, been maimed, or captured. As we listened to the words and hearts of survivors, relatives, and brave volunteers who faced the task of reverently attending to the dead, it was heartbreaking. What cut even deeper was the common theme of loneliness, of the world having left them to stand alone. As Israel faces major budget cuts and other economic moves in order to fund the ongoing war, rockets are increasing from the north. It was a privilege to be able to spend several weeks after the *Solidarity Mission* just helping.

If you hadn't been to Israel before, wandering along the streets of Jerusalem might not reflect that there is a war on at all. If, however, you've experienced the crowds, had to look carefully to find your tour bus amongst hundreds of buses, or waded through the packed streets of the Old City markets, it now feels like a ghost town. Countless shops, markets, and stalls are gone. Having narrowly survived the Covid shutdowns, businesses simply couldn't survive yet another tragedy. Tourism, especially, has been devastated.

With the destruction of many agricultural kibbutzim in the Gaza Envelope and the major agricultural zone of

the north of Israel burning and raining Hezbollah rockets, there is difficulty obtaining some basic food items. Prices have increased exponentially, especially given the challenges of importing food. A huge percentage of the agricultural labour force has left after many overseas workers were slaughtered or kidnapped in the Gazan attack. The inevitable tightening of work permits from Palestinian areas and the massive call-up of reserves to the army presents Israel with a massive challenge.

With hundreds of thousands of internally displaced refugees fleeing first the Gaza Envelope and then being evacuated from the north when Hezbollah began firing rockets in earnest, a huge sector of the Israeli population is refugees. Forced to live away from their homes, their families, and their jobs, this impacts not only those families but the people involved in trying to house and shelter them. Children, already traumatised by the sounds and experiences of war, have had most of a school year severely disrupted or cancelled altogether. The effects of 7 Oct will leave scars on every member of Israeli society for life.

The mass evacuations took place in several waves. Many were evacuated under gunfire while the Hamas attackers were still fighting. Others had barely hours to

gather together some basics and run for their cars. Still more tried to stay but soon became crushed by the constant air-raid sirens, rockets exploding overhead, or simply the reality that the Hamas attack had become a full-scale war that would not be over quickly. Many—tens of thousands—who are now jobless, away from their homes, and struggling to put food on the table do not have the means to simply buy new clothes as children outgrow them or for the changing seasons.

As the war has progressed, the number of rockets coming from Gaza has diminished. Although many thousands of homes were severely damaged or destroyed in the attack or the associated rocket fire, some brave Israelis are now starting to make their way back to their homes. In many cases, it is nine months since they left. Nine months of dereliction, often with windows blown out by explosions overhead or even just animal damage. So many Israelis who are already living with the tragedy of 7 Oct are now returning home to a whole new catastrophe as they enter homes that are often unliveable.

So, What is it Like in Israel Right Now?

It is hard. Still recovering from the loss of so many murdered in the attack, Israelis carry on. Facing the grinding pain of knowing that there are 120+ Israelis still being held by the same savages that committed such atrocities, every Israeli is connected; every single one feels it in some way. Faced with the war in Gaza, the pending war in the north, and the never-ending barrage of condemnation from everywhere else in the world, Israelis literally have the weight of the world on their shoulders. They are standing for what used to be basic values: decency, respect for all mankind, and being able to feel safe in your bed at night. They are facing an enemy who glorifies death—especially if they kill Israelis in the process. And the rest of the world seems to agree.



ANZAC team assisting due to a severe shortage of horticulture workers.



Bringing blessings to refugees in the Jordan Valley.



Sorting and packing clothing for refugees at Erin's Angels, Tel Aviv.



A huge need for workers in the fields.



Forests from deserts - planting trees of hope.

The Sanctity of Life

■ Mandy Worby Christians for Israel Australia

I mentioned in another article that our group, during our ANZAC solidarity tour, donated blood at Magen David Adom, the Israeli version of the Red Cross and Ambulance Service. But that's not Christians for Israel's only connection to this amazing organisation.

In fact, Christians for Israel Australia raised funds to actually purchase a Rapid Response Vehicle for MDA, which was outfitted and presented officially in May 2023. Our team was informed that the vehicle was



A ZAKA volunteer showing us the carnage to vehicles that many Israeli citizens were killed in during the massacre of 7 October.



Mandy Worby donating blood at Magen David Adom in Jerusalem.



Ian Worby with the rapid response ambulance donated to Magen David Adom by Christians for Israel Australia last year after raising \$40,000.



The ANZAC Solidarity team with a ZAKA volunteer who also drives a Magen David Adom ambulance in the Gaza Strip.

already in use and had saved lives and delivered babies by that stage. So, going to MDA in Jerusalem to donate blood was a bit of a no-brainer for us.

Blood donations are important at any time within growing communities, but especially so during wartime. I remember shortly after 7 October, seeing photos of Israelis all over the country lining up to donate blood because it's inherent in their DNA to do all they can to save lives. So we were very happy to do our bit to help keep people alive during a very difficult time in Israel.

Even a brief reading of the Bible reveals how vital blood is and why it's so crucial in the sacrificial system. *Leviticus 17:11* says, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life." (CJB)

Blood equals life... and through blood sacrifice, atonement is provided... resulting in life. It's a shame that the cost of life comes with the shedding of blood, but that's the reality, isn't it?

While we were lined up in recliner chairs with cannulas draining our blood into bags, both the staff and other donors were asking where we were from and why we were donating. The staff were amazed, and a woman giving a donation was moved to tears and thanked us over and over again for travelling from the other side of the world to stand with and support them.

The response made me quite sad if I'm honest, because it shouldn't have been a shock, it should have been the norm. There should be people all over the world lining up to enter Israel to help them in this time of need. It's the fact that such love and practical support is so rare that makes me so upset. Again, it raises the question that Avi the raspberry farmer asked us... "Why do they (the world) hate us so much?"

That most of the world doesn't care if Israel and the Jewish people are wiped out is a demonic indictment of the world we live in.

We had an MDA representative come to speak to our group one evening at our hotel in Jerusalem, and he shared the work of MDA with respect to the 7 October massacre; he spoke of the carnage and the magnitude of what his nation has experienced. He's still dealing with the shock.

He was professional; he provided information and answered our questions until someone asked him how he was coping personally. He was very quiet for a few moments as he gathered his thoughts. He said he's actually not coping well; he's not sleeping, he's not eating much, and in 5 months, he has lost 15kg as a result. He also carried the responsibility of leading 600 men under his personal command... which amounted to a lot of stress. He's traumatised by what he's seen and experienced, and like the rest of his countrymen, he hasn't had time to grieve because they're fighting for their right to exist while so many in the world are condemning them and want them gone from the earth.

How is anyone supposed to come to terms with all that?

Another organisation that Christians for Israel supports is ZAKA, a 100% volunteer organisation made up of Orthodox Jewish men whose job is to go immediately to the site of terror attacks, accidents or disasters.

There are 1500 volunteers stationed all over Israel, and what they're most known for is carefully searching for not only the bodies of the deceased but even the body parts, no matter how small. In Jewish belief, the human body is sacred because it's made in the image and likeness of God. Also, Jewish belief holds that the body is necessary for the resurrection, and as such, it's especially traumatising for the Jewish community to consider that their loved one perished in ways that destroy the body.

The Holocaust is a primary example of this because so many Jews were turned to ash in the crematoriums, and there were also many victims on 7 October who were so badly destroyed that there was very little left to find.

We actually met with some ZAKA volunteers in the Gaza Envelope where approximately 400 vehicles—or the remains of vehicles—have been piled up, most of them burned-out shells resulting from the murderous rampage of Hamas terrorists on 7 October. Some were unrecognisable as vehicles. Many showed bullet holes and huge openings in windshields as direct fire and RPGs were fired into the vehicles at close range, and the sight was jarring. Inculcated to us by the sheer volume of this car graveyard... but it was such a small number compared to more than 1200 vehicles in total that were destroyed by the terrorists...along with the lives inside them.

The ZAKA representative who walked us through the car graveyard shared his story of hearing about the attack on 7 October when the news finally reached him, and he immediately made his way to the Gaza border to help, not realising the magnitude of what he was about to see.

He left his job and has been working voluntarily every day since the day of the attack, and like everyone else involved, he's struggling with all he's seen and experienced.

It's one thing to deal with death when there's a natural disaster or an accident, but when human beings (and I struggle to call them that) deliberately inflict the most indescribable cruelty and barbarism on innocent people, there's no way to reconcile that.

Forgive me for being a little graphic for a moment, but when infants are tortured and killed before the eyes of their parents; when women and girls are raped with knives and machine guns and have their body parts removed and played with; when young men are castrated alive and have them stuffed down their throats; when unborn babies are cut from their mothers bodies and decapitated; when people have their organs cut from them while they're alive; and when young children are tied together and burned alive...you can't reconcile that.

I'd like to say I'm sorry for those descriptions, but I'm not. That is what Israel was faced with on 7 October, and it's why she will not stop until the satanic terrorists who committed those atrocities and war crimes are destroyed.

ZAKA faced those atrocities and worked tirelessly to collect the bodies and body parts of their countrymen and women, to give them proper burials and to treat them with honour and dignity.

Christians for Israel's emergency fund has equipped ZAKA's volunteers with the urgent recovery supplies and protective gear they need.

| Photos: Christians for Israel Australia



CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand
and
South Pacific Edition

August 2024

Defame, Deny, Destroy

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel NZ

As this edition goes to print, all around the world, the pro-Palestinians are sharpening their knives following the advisory opinion of the ICJ. Most Israel supporters didn't really get excited, as—like most UN announcements these days—the outcome was a foregone conclusion. Whether it was the abysmal track record of anti-Israel decisions, determinations and resolutions that constantly stream from the UN, or the careful choice of 'unbiased, objective' persons generally chosen for any UN panel, committee or jury, or perhaps even the presidency of the ICJ going to a rabid Israel-basher who directly condemned Israel over 210 times during his tenure as Lebanon's representative at the UN, either way there was never going to be any semblance of impartiality and fairness. The only line of interest was to note that there were objections and that at least one jurist has been horrified by the complete bias and catastrophic failure of the legal process—releasing a detailed dissent.

Back home in New Zealand, led by the usual Hamas supporters from the Māori Party and their cronies, the pitchforks are being sharpened. As always, the words of the ICJ—already a pathetic piece of prejudice—are being twisted to support any and every other ridiculous accusation they can throw at Israel.

But 120+ hostages remain in captivity.

Hamas, albeit severely diminished, remains the government of Gaza. Hamas has promised to repeat Oct7.

There is no outcry in the highest echelons of UN power; those suits are too busy condemning Israel. It seems that the only useful people in the UN—and there certainly are some very passionate and dedicated people in various arms of the organisation—are busy doing useful things like helping refugees to settle and... no longer be refugees. Alas, with regard to Israel, we don't get to deal with those people. Israel has to deal with a refugee organisation that specialises in creating more refugees and educating their children to murder Jews.

As predictable as the ICJ determination are the chants, slurs

and slogans of the Israel-bashers all around the world.

Applying a blatant double standard to any situation involving the decrying of Israel has become so commonplace that the perpetrators no longer even attempt to hide it.

Unfortunately, what is also predictable is the silence of those who know better.

There is a beautiful place of solitude and serenity beside the Sea of Galilee in Israel. It has been a tremendous privilege to take many travellers on our Study Tours to visit this place, Tabgha. It is reported to be approximately the place where Jesus addressed Peter, challenging him three times to 'feed my sheep' and restoring him from his shame. There are many sermons to be found in this story, but what seems to stand out right now is the circumstances that led Peter to need such restoration. Theologically one can argue the correctness of the application, sure, but the story certainly seems to apply here. You may recall that in Jesus' hour of need, when Peter was questioned as to whether he was a follower of Jesus, indeed, if he even knew Jesus, Peter caved in. Having travelled with Jesus, having heard the teachings and seen the miracles, when it came time for Peter to stand up and be counted, he faltered. Peter could not claim ignorance. He could not blame his position on misinformation in the local newspaper, on social media propaganda, on YouTube 'experts', nor even on his own upbringing; Peter knew the truth but was afraid to stand up when it counted.

Right now, we see exactly this happening throughout the world, especially in the Western world and even in the church. We see academic research coming from the USA, for example, that shows the vast majority of people actually support Israel in its battle to remove Hamas and get the hostages back. But you wouldn't believe that when you look at the news. In virtually every sector of society the loudest voices—generally also the same groups behind the violence, threats, vandalism and destruction of public property—are calling for death to Israel.

There was a time, not too long ago when people who hated and despised a particular racial group met in secret. They donned cloaks, hoods, and even white pointed hats and quietly made their depraved plans to commit genocide.

Arguably the Nazi industrialised murder was done in a far more open manner, but when it became apparent that their evil was to be destroyed, the Nazis went to great efforts to destroy the evidence of their crimes.

Looking at some of the rallies and demonstrations around the world, the cowardly practice of hiding behind masks seems to be prevalent. But what is interesting is that the group they are supporting make no attempt to hide, at least not to hide their intentions. That group, supposedly locked up in an impenetrable 'open-air prison', sent hundreds—of thousands—of savages through the border into Israel, wearing GoPro cameras they had imported especially for the occasion; they live-streamed their atrocities for the world to see. That group, and others in the same general area, have for decades made their charters public, documents clearly stating their intention to wipe out Israel.

That group is still the government of Gaza. That group—evidently with the assistance of many 'civilians'—is still holding 120+ hostages including the elderly, men, girls, children, even a baby.

Israel remains effectively under siege, and the shameful words of the ICJ have just given more weapons to the enemies circling the tiny country. As the biggest part of the war in Gaza comes to an end, leaving what will inevitably be a long and arduous task of securing every square metre and engaging in special missions to get the hostages, the next phase looms in the north. The war against Hezbollah, which will likely, therefore, include Iran and the rest of its proxies, seems to be a matter of 'when' rather than 'if'. With Hezbollah rockets being fired into Israel every day, destroying and killing, where is the outcry? And when the crisis in Israel has not eased but indeed worsened, we cannot back down and leave Israel alone. Right now, we are considering the next steps to support Israel from New Zealand.

Two thousand years ago a Jew was being executed in a most horrendous manner, and even his friend denied knowing him—three times. We cannot let more Jews face the extermination promised by Israel's enemies. We cannot remain silent.

Thank you for supporting Israel.

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Not to Speak is to Speak

■ Todd Vincent

ICEJ Northland

What is it that God does with all His heart and all His soul? The answer is found in *Jeremiah 32:41* (TLV).

“Yes, I will delight in doing good for them (the Jewish people), and with all My heart and all My soul, I will in truth plant them in this land.”

Was this just for Jeremiah’s time? No!

Psalm 33:11 tells us, “The plan of Adonai stands forever, the purposes of His heart from generation to generation.

Paul seals it in the New Covenant, confirming in *2 Corinthians 1:20*. “For in Him all the promises of God are ‘Yes’. Therefore, also through Him is the ‘Amen’ by us, to the glory of God.”

What’s true then is true today. With all His heart and soul God seeks for the Jewish people to be planted in their land. He delights in doing good for them.

We don’t have to search far today to see those who are aligned and those who are opposed to God’s plan. Today, we are witnessing a separation between those with and against God’s plan for Israel. Hearts are being exposed. God is using the current conflict to reveal what lies beneath. Beliefs, attitudes and mindsets are being brought to the surface.

Perhaps no better place to see this is at a rally for Israel. As in other cities, here in Whangarei, there have been many rallies for Israel. People gather to show their support for

Israel from both the Jewish and Christian communities.

It goes without saying that there’s also opposition.

Most rallies go off without incident. On occasions however, those gathered to show love for Israel, have been met with physical and verbal abuse. Just last month, a man on a bicycle physically and verbally assaulted those at an Israel rally in Whangarei. This person was clearly in opposition to Israel. But there was something else happening. It wasn’t that he simply disagreed with Israel, instead he exploded with rage. He used almost every foul-mouthed word imaginable. The boiling hatred in his heart bubbled over and was exposed for all to see.

Some might say that people are angry because of what they’ve seen. The TV news pumps scenes from Gaza into our living rooms night after night. It’s challenging because the narrative given by the media is that it’s all Israel’s fault.

Most Know That This is a Lie

The problem with a lie, however, is that it will deceive a heart not willing to hear the truth. A false narrative feeds on a lie until it becomes full blown hatred.

This hatred is something I witnessed at Auckland Museum on 15 October. Auckland Museum decided to colour their building in blue and white in support of Israel. A small group of us had gone up to see the lights and wave our Israeli flags in support. As the evening progressed a crowd of around forty anti-Israel protesters started to circle the museum.



The picture above is fast becoming the image of the hour, her name is Di, she is a Christian who stood alone with an Israeli flag while an anti-Israel group surrounded her.

What followed was truly shocking. The hatred towards the small group of Israel supporters was visceral, and aggressive. Eventually the police were called, and our little group needed protection with a line of police. This incident, by the way, happened before Israel entered Gaza, and just a week after Jews suffered the worst attack since the holocaust. What we witnessed that night was anti-Jewish hatred pure and simple.

The Jewish community in New Zealand is facing this type of hatred daily. As Christians this is not a time to be silent. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

We Must all Choose and Declare

■ Bobby Meyer

Kosher Kitchen | Christchurch

A gathering of faithful supporters of Israel has met at the Bridge of Remembrance, Christchurch, every Sunday since 15 October 2023. Braving the summer heat and the winter cold, a group of between 60 and 200 people have come out to stand in solidarity. The weather has not stopped the determined assembly, and neither has the heckling from pro-Palestinian opposition.

Each week begins in the same way, with the blowing of the *Shofar*. A clarion call to action, the group assembles and is addressed by Bobby Meyer and Judah Solomon-Gibson, leaders of the Christchurch Rallies. This is followed by a brief address from a guest speaker, followed by the singing of ‘*Am Israel Chai*’ and Hebrew prayers. Following this, and accompanied by violin and trombone, the group sings ‘*Bring Them Home*’, followed by *HaTikvah*. Resolute and reverent, the group then marches in silence through the streets of central Christchurch, as it has for 40 weeks; each week praying that this might be the last.

7 October, ‘Black Saturday’, Israel was invaded by Islamic terror groups, Gazan civilians and Hamas. These hate-fuelled Islamic death squads, without regard for any moral code or sense of humanity, entered peaceful Israeli communities and slaughtered over 1,200 innocent people; bound together entire families and burned them alive; tore babies from their mothers and put them into ovens or beheaded them; committed acts of necrophilia; mass-raped both males and females; dismembered; mutilated and tortured innocent people—including

babies, children, the elderly and disabled. In an unfathomable act of cruelty, they took the bodies of some they had murdered that day, together with 253 innocent people, as hostages into Gaza.

Today, 120 terrified and tortured people, including children, the elderly and disabled, remain captive in underground hell-holes at the mercy of Islamic extremists. Daily, they endure mental, physical and sexual abuse—in silence.

Israel, as a nation that values human life above all else, entered its enemies’ land, Gaza, in order to free the hostages and safeguard its people, sovereignty and continued existence. Predictably, the majority of the world looked on from the sidelines and did little more than criticise Israel’s humanitarian goals and justifiable military actions. To our nation’s shame, those critics included our New Zealand government—namely, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters. Whilst I do not have any expectations of Prime Minister Luxon to uphold or defend moral values—even those to which he pays cursory lip service—I am deeply disappointed in Minister Winston Peters as he was once an advocate for Israel.

Our religious, political and community leaders have abandoned Israel at a time when it most needs friends, and in doing so, have discarded the very people, the Jews, who gifted the world the Biblical laws and moral principles upon which free nations were founded and flourished.

Whilst our leaders disregard the Judeo-Christian principles that New Zealanders value, and reject the



Supporters gather at the Cathedral Square, Christchurch.

authors of these moral ethics, they are strengthening the voice of those that detest and seek to destroy these principles. New Zealand should neither bow to tyranny within its borders, nor idly stand by whilst its friends buckle under the burden of tyranny.

As benefactors of a free nation, we have a responsibility to hold our leaders to account and demand that they acknowledge their moral duty, correct their path and treat Israel as a friend, not an enemy. Surely, we cannot claim sincere adherence to moral laws whilst we turn away from our friend, Israel.

We should neither waiver nor weaken our resolve to make a stand and declare that we stand in solidarity with Israel. But, let us not simply, in privacy, speak words of horror and sorrow at Israel’s bruising—rather, we must declare ourselves publicly and tell those who would hear, “*Never Again Is NOW*”.

Israel's Enemies Attack the Rule of Law

■ Andrew Tucker

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

Mobilising anti-Western UN member states, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is using the international courts in The Hague to undermine Israel's security and to achieve international recognition of the Palestinians' right to establish an independent Palestinian state that would seek the destruction of the Jewish State of Israel.

The PLO has never changed its Charter since 1968 and is still committed to the use of violence (*jihad*) to achieve the destruction of Israel.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has been asked by a group of 87 member states in the UN General Assembly to issue an advisory opinion on the legal status of the Israeli 'prolonged occupation' of the territories referred to by the UN General Assembly as the 'occupied Palestinian territory' (OPT).

It is expected the Court will shortly issue an Advisory Opinion that will be devastating for Israel.

At the same time, the ICJ is entertaining a series of cases under the Genocide Convention alleging that Israel is committing genocide. These cases are still in their preliminary phase, and the Court has not yet decided whether Israel is guilty of genocide. Yet the Court's preliminary rulings have been used widely to justify the conclusion that Israel is committing genocide.

Just down the road in The Hague, the International Criminal Court (ICC) is claiming the jurisdiction to prosecute Israeli leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity - even though Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute and Palestine is not a state.

Together, these cases represent a full assault on the rule of law. The legitimacy of the international courts, and of the UN system as a whole, is at stake.

The request to the Court is the result of a campaign launched by PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas in 2011 and implemented in concert with about half of the states in the UN General Assembly in the past decade. The first step was elevating Palestine to 'UN non-member observer state status' in 2012. This absurd resolution provided the Palestinians with the opportunity to upgrade their lawfare against the Jewish people and avoid negotiations.

The questions posed by UNGA Resolution 77/247 to the ICJ are twisted, prejudiced, and one-sided. They ask the Court to assume an "ongoing violation by Israel of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination" resulting from

Israel's "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

Addressing these questions would require an immense fact-finding task beyond judicially manageable standards.

Instead, the ICJ is being asked to rely on one-sided and inaccurate reports and materials from other UN organs and agencies known for their anti-Israel bias. Israel has no control over how these materials, which serve as evidence, are produced and submitted to the Court, resulting in a violation of due process. The UK's written submission to the Court underlined the "highly partisan nature of the terms of the Request."

The questions posed to the Court are highly controversial. Firstly, they aim to establish a new presumption in international law, specifically that a "prolonged occupation" is inherently illegal. This presumption is baseless. Secondly, they reference "the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem". This term is ambiguous and seems to extend beyond the typical discussion about the legal status of East Jerusalem. It deceptively suggests Israel's infringement of religious freedom concerning the holy places in Jerusalem for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, with the ultimate intention of laying the background for converting the city into an international zone and removing the Israeli presence." Third, they ask the Court to assume that East Jerusalem and the West Bank are "Palestinian". Fourth, they assert that the Palestinians have an absolute right to statehood, bypassing any obligation to negotiate terms and conditions ensuring Israel's security.

The essence of the Palestinian claims is a complete rewriting of history. Supported by the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union, and other states, the PLO disputes the validity and legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the Mandate for Palestine sanctioned by the League of Nations (1922). This is an extraordinarily bold move in their lawfare agenda, undermining the foundations and legitimacy of the whole of the modern State of Israel. The foundational character of these two international instruments was recognised in Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948.

It is about time to recognise that this conflict is not territorial but existential. The cancellation of the Mandate for Palestine is intended to lay the legal foundation for the extinction of the



Anat Meir mourning near her husband's grave Sayeret Matkal soldier David Meir, who was killed by Hamas terrorists on 7 October. | Photo: Flash90

Jewish state and its replacement with a Palestinian Arab state from the river to the sea, in which Jews and other non-Muslims would be forced to live as dhimmis.

Elevating Palestinian self-government to full statehood would be suicidal for Israel and disastrous for peace. Granting full statehood to the Palestinian people at this stage, with their failed self-government authorities, will result in a failed Palestinian state. The likelihood is that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) would soon take over the PA in the West Bank and that the Iranian regime—through its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)—would extend their oppressive influence in the area exponentially increasing Israel's existential risk.

The Palestinians have consistently and deliberately refused to comply with the most important and crucial one: to stop

violence and incitement to violence towards Israel and Israelis. Meanwhile, 70% of civilians in Gaza continue to support Hamas in one way or another, and the PA continues with the pay-for-slay scheme.

The fact is that the UN has been hijacked by a large number of tyrannical and rogue regimes under the guise of conventional states. Its reputation has sunk to the lowest level, and some have begun to predict its demise, at least in its current form. The credibility and legitimacy of the international courts are being dragged into this demise.

It is time for civilised and democratic countries to start thinking of total reform.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international lawyers who challenge the delegitimation of Israel and promote the fair use of international law. You can support the work of thinc. by making a donation to Christians for Israel. For more information about thinc.: www.thinc-israel.org

Green Party Woes

The Green Party's woes continue, and the curious case of their continuing woes has even made the headlines. Golriz Ghahraman was charged with shoplifting in January. The charges related to several events in upmarket boutiques in both Auckland and Wellington. She pleaded guilty in March and was sentenced on 27 June. Despite a request, Golriz failed to escape conviction. The Judge noted that despite the mental health reports, her condition was not a causative factor, and it was not 'spontaneous, isolated offending'. During her sentencing in Auckland Golriz wore two Palestinian necklaces, a black dress with a *kiffeyeh* and a watermelon brooch signifying her political allegiance.

At the same time, Chloe Swarbrick MP stood on the steps of Parliament chanting "From the River to the Sea" alongside other Green MPs in defiance, despite being told not to do so.

On 17 June, Co-leader Marama Davidson announced she had breast cancer and would be taking four months off for treatment from July, leaving Chloe as the sole leader. Marama was associated with the Gaza flotilla and is a strong pro-Palestinian supporter. Earlier this year, the story broke regarding migrant labour exploitation involving MP Darleen Tana. She was on leave for months and then ousted from the Green Party. It is not known whether she will remain in Parliament as an independent.



An Open Letter to the Church of NZ

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Spiritual Leader | Beth Melekh
International Messiah Following Jewish Community

This letter is not written in anger, nor am I an angry person generally speaking, although those who know me would be right to call me passionate.

This is a loving albeit firm warning to New Zealand Christians concerning the proliferation of supersessionist and pacifist forms of Christian antisemitism in the Church of Aotearoa, NZ.

The exponential rise in these forms of Christian racism since the events of 7 October 2024 has become a long brown cloud of pollution settling on the Christian community of this country.

The hour is late, and those sitting on the fence will suffer the fate of the wicked. My preference is true repentance, salvation, and eternity.

My family and I have suffered numerous acts of antisemitism in NZ since 7 October 2023. I've been accosted on the street by a Palestinian immigrant family of five while on my daily walk. Two of my daughters (each one living in a different part of NZ) have received death threats from Arab Muslim young people. And the daily jabs on social media platforms continue.

Additionally, due to my position as a Messianic Jewish Spiritual Leader, I've received a number of antisemitic messages from Christians concerning the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Christians who disguise their antisemitism using the banal excuse that they are simply anti-zionist.

What follows is my response to those Christians who stand with Israel's enemies and or take a neutral position concerning the current escalation in the conflict between Israel and her enemies. To the self-righteous, those ignorant of the whole of God's Word, who love to say to us Jews:

"Love your neighbour as yourself! Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you and severely persecute you."

How liberally do those of you who live in safety use words you don't understand? How quickly you devise solutions for a conflict you know so little about, an issue you're unwilling to investigate properly because ignorance is easier and popular opinion is comfortable. Your source of information is the secular media (spirit of the air) rather than the voice of the Holy Spirit.

How easy it is for you, whose worst enemy was your high school bully, or your nasty employer, or the elder on the church board who disagrees with your

idea for the new building project, to talk about loving enemies. Do you show love to your enemies? And what exactly does loving one's enemies look like? Do you know? Does your love have eternity in mind, or is it band-aid love?

How quickly the armchair Christian flings Jesus' words around as accusations against His (Jesus') Jewish brothers and sisters. How justified you must feel in your moral superiority, you righteous ones who stand by and watch while the enemies of Israel increase and seek to annihilate the Jewish people globally. Your forebears did the same from 1933 to 1939.

Tell me, in what part of the text "Love your neighbour" is it inferred that a man who rapes your daughter qualifies as a neighbour? And in what part of the text "Love your enemies" does it infer that a man who murders your husband and decapitates your infant children should go unpunished? Or is God a god of injustice? Your false Jesus is unjust, but the true Jesus is not. Nor does He say, "Love your enemies but don't honour the Law of God."

Does "Love your enemies" mean letting them hide behind their children while shooting and murdering innocents? I assure you, in the context of Jesus' words, it does not.

The same Jesus who said, "Turn the other cheek" in order to de-escalate marketplace squabbling also said, "Now take up a sword". The same Jesus who said, "Bless those who curse you" took time to make a whip and used it on the Temple merchants, cursed the symbolic seat of hypocritical leaders and said, "Don't give the children's food to their dogs (a Biblical euphemism meaning 'enemies')."

The greatest blessing I can pray for a member of Hamas (Palestinian terror organisation) is that God's wrath be upon him unto repentance. Is that what you had in mind?

The blessing I pray for the children of Gaza is "God, protect them from their own people, who use them as shields while firing at non-combatants."

What blessing would you like me to pray for you?

You say, "Ours is a ministry of reconciliation!" Do you know what that means? Do you realise the price for that reconciliation was paid for by the blood of the Lamb of God?

In a sin-affected world, there is no peace without bloodshed. Reconciliation is offered to all, but only the repentant receive it. Or do you believe, contrary to Scripture, that the unrepentant are reconciled?

You say, "I choose peace," but you refuse justice, rule of law, judgement,



French Israelis light memorial candles as they gather at Paris Square in Jerusalem in a demonstration against antisemitism in France following the murder of Mireille Knoll, an 85-year-old Jewish woman in Paris. | Photo: Flash90

accountability, restitution. Therefore, your peace will fall to pieces because unless you submit to all the attributes of God, you will receive none. Peace without justice is a false peace. Love without accountability is false love. Facts devoid of context are lies, and mouthing Scripture does not equate to understanding it or living it.

Next time you're considering sending me a trite comment based on decontextualised words you've appropriated from the Jew Jesus in an attempt to convict me by your fallen spirit, remember that the Holy Spirit bears witness between you and I, and I know the true Messiah, the Author and Goal of the words you're misusing. The messiah you're comfortable with is not the Messiah.

By His very nature the sinless King Messiah disrupts the sin affected creation causing great discomfort. There is a holy discontent in the journey of sanctification. Refining is the domain of holy fire, a purging of the temporal comfort of sin.

The King of Love is also the King who "Hates the wicked". It is only natural that the Supernatural One would offend your nature and that His eternal kingdom would disturb your fading fiefdom.

A genuine truth seeker will accept the limitations of our race. The pale-faced Jesus of the pacifist and the gambling Jesus of the underdog are fabrications for placating the humanitarian, an ironic figure given that humanism seeks no saviour but herself.

The messiah you're comfortable with will never roar like the Lion of Judah, he will never make a whip or turn over tables, nor will he speak harsh words like "You hypocrites... whitewashed

tombs... it is not right to give the children's food to their dogs (enemies)... go and stop sinning!"

Your comfortable messiah sits at the head of the UN, crying out, "Peace, peace!" but there is no peace, only the funding of those who shed the blood of the true Messiah's people.

The blood of your messiah is the venom that poisons your mind; his body is a candy that rots your soul. He screams abuse and throws rocks at Jewish families in Samaria and Judea; he despises Zion and hates her friends. Your messiah is no messiah at all; you call him "Jesus", but that's not his name. His name is Delusion; you sit beside him and feel secure as you ride the bus to oblivion. Your eyes can't see the torment that awaits you.

The messiah you're comfortable with is not the Messiah at all. If you have ears to hear, repent!

New Head of MFAT

Mr Bede Corry is now the new chief executive of MFAT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Until recently he was our Ambassador in Washington DC and before that our High Commission to London. Interestingly, he was previously Deputy Secretary of Defense giving him a greater understanding of the military and defense environment. Now is the time to start writing letters in support of Israel. Write to Mr Bede Corry, Chief Executive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Private Bag 18 901, Wellington 6160. Let him know about the numbers of Kiwis supporting Israel and opposing UNRWA funding which aids terrorists and educates Palestinians to hate Jews.

Iran in Support of Hamas in Gaza—Part 1

■ Dennis McLeod

Representative | Christian Friends of Israel NZ

In 1979/80 Iran became a *Shia* Republic—her mission—to spread Islam at home and abroad, from India to the Mediterranean.

Shia hate Sunni Muslims, but they try to hide this fact. Since 1981, Iran has been using the war in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, PLO and ISIS in Syria to destabilise the area.

They share the common view that the West, USA, and Israel are enemies of Islam. Iran went to war in Iraq to destroy Sunni Islam. Over a million people died, but that did not matter to Iran as it was a means to an end to take over Iraq and spread Iran's influence in the area. Iran was on friendly terms with the West before the Islamic revolution in 1979. The new leaders painted the West as an enemy of Islam; that ideology gained support from other Arab states for their takeover of Iran and enabled them to succeed in their takeover.

The Abraham Accords have lessened some of the hatred among some leaders of Middle East countries. Iran does not like the softening attitude towards the West. That prompted the 7 October attack to stop the Accords and to turn the Arab world against what the Accords stand for.

Many Iranians supported the Islamic takeover, but now, more than half the country longs for change. But again, the leaders suppress dissidents with the constant threat of death. Reliable sources estimate that the execution rate of dissidents in Iran's per capita of its population exceeds that of China. Thousands have been put to death, quashing any protests to keep control.

Since 2015, Iran has tried to destabilise the area using the Arab Spring in Syria, Lebanon, PLO and Hamas in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and even in Jordan, trying to create a regional war. It has stopped Saudi Arabia from joining the Abraham Accords and used its influence in India to prevent China from increasing its influence with Russia.

Iran used Hamas to take control in Lebanon in 1992. Its representatives met in Beirut with one purpose: to get Syria and Hezbollah to destroy their common enemy, Israel. Over the years, nobody has been prepared to punish Iran for her actions, giving her free reign for her programmes, in the same way that the nations of the world gave Hitler free rein when they refused to help the Jewish people in 1938.

The fact that the West is an enemy of Islam, according to Iran, has not been recognised or acted on. It seems that Western nations are afraid of Iran and its proxies and keep silent. New Zealand is a good example. Our country does not hold an embassy in Israel, but in Iran, it has its largest embassy in the Middle East. The reason is probably to protect mutual trade interests.

Although trade has declined over recent years, New Zealand showed its hand in the 1980s. Four Iranian dissidents were murdered in Germany. Many countries withdrew their ambassadors from Teheran, including New Zealand. Iran threatened New Zealand with cancelling its meat contract with New Zealand unless it returned its ambassador to Iran. Our ambassador was returned within seven days.

Obama and Biden have tried to appease the leaders of Iran, but Islam only sees the actions of the American leaders as weakness. Under Trump, there have been no attacks on American facilities. Since Biden became



Threatening Israel and displaying Iranian-backed forces for war with Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

President, there have been 167. Iran was afraid of Trump, no matter your thoughts on him, but now all has changed since Biden took office.

Appeasement has not worked. Nobody is prepared to declare Iran a terrorist state. The world ignores the terror perpetrated by Iran's proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and other groups within the area. The West should not support Iran. However, to punish Iran is seen and promoted as punishing Islam. The rest of the world does not want to be seen in this light and is scared of the problems that it would cause. Many city areas around the world are no-go to anyone not agreeing with the protestors marching in the streets calling for the destruction of Israel. In Iran, thousands of protestors are murdered, as are women who refuse to wear the *hijab*. Fifty-five per cent of Iran's population are Persian. Many regard themselves as colonised but are very much deterred from fighting for their freedom by the number of people being killed and imprisoned. Syria has control of only sixty to seventy per cent of its country due to the actions of Isis over the past years. Iran does not want the same in their country, so any protestors are violently dealt with. The West has allowed Islamic operatives into their countries for years. They are paying the price for not vetting those who cross their shores. The protests against Israel are led by the very people who were welcomed to enjoy a better life.

Iran has been funding the PLO for years in its attempt to annihilate Israel. Several steps have been taken to destroy Israel.

Step One: Attack and destroy. Failed.

Step Two: Take over all legitimate claims to the land. Failed.

Step Three: Plant Hamas operatives in Western lands to re-educate younger generations, especially university students, the future world leaders, in a plan to stop all support for Israel.

The use of suicide bombers did not start happening overnight. Arafat instigated the education of young men with the concept of blowing themselves up as martyrs in the 'glorious' cause of destroying Israel. We are now into the third generation of Israel hatred being promulgated through schools and universities throughout Gaza and all areas under PLO control and

in Iran. A change in education is vital if the next generation of young people is to have a positive attitude towards Israel.

Lebanon has been taken over by Hezbollah with the backing of Iran. Hezbollah controls every aspect of the country. They claim that northern Israel will become uninhabitable because Lebanon has the firepower to keep the north clear of people. For the people to return, Israel will have to do something to neutralise the danger. The West will no doubt turn a blind eye.

With the backing of Iran, Hamas claims they will give a five-year truce in exchange for a Palestinian state. Then what? Imagine how many Iranian weapons would be stored over the five-year period. The present Gaza border with Israel is about 41km long, which cannot be fully defended. 7 October showed this. The 'West Bank' border is nearly 780km in length, creating a situation impossible to defend. The hilltops of the west bank are approximately 10km from the Mediterranean Sea. Those are the 1948 cease-fire borders that the protestors claim as the future border of their Palestinian, and therefore Jew-less, state. Before 1967, Syria sat up on the Golan, firing at farmers and school children at will. Just imagine what the heart of Israel would become if Hamas sat on these hills with their Iranian-built weapons.

Now, Hamas is offering a five-year truce in exchange for a Palestinian state. Why only five years? I would suggest that if Hamas is genuine, they should commit to total peace for five years, and any breaking of that peace, with attacks in any form, would add a year to the peace agreement for each breach of the truce. At the end of five years of total peace, they could have their state. As Hamas has proven that it will not honour a peace agreement, that would test its resolve on any treaty proposed. To date, Hamas has continued to breach all ceasefires implemented since they came to power.

Iran is a danger to world peace. They seek world domination by Islam, something they are quite open about. Israel is in their sights and was supposed to have been destroyed by July 2022. They are now ramping up their nuclear programme. What is their next plan?

In my next article, I will examine further the influence of Iran in its support of Hamas in Gaza.



From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



The Struggle is Not Yet Over

The full blast of summer has arrived. While many of us are free to enjoy an outing to the beach or stay inside an air-

conditioned space, we can't ignore the sad reality that has marked our lives for the past nine months of the ongoing war in Gaza, the skirmishes up north and the heavy toll in casualties. We all remember that there are still over 120 people at the hands of Hamas and thousands of people who had to evacuate their homes along the border with Lebanon.

This is the core of the reality that Israelis have had to deal with over the last nine months. Not a day goes by without a thought of how they are. How many are still alive, and in what conditions? This is what most Israelis are concerned about. That is the reason why so many of us go out Saturday nights and raise our voices, calling on the government to leave no stone unturned so every single hostage is back. We were delighted when some hostages were rescued in a valiant operation, but there are so many who are still held by Hamas.

The fate of the hostages is not just the concern of their families. For so many of us, it is the core of our identity as a nation. Simply put, Israel will be a different country if the hostages are not brought home. This is the message that the people are sending the government. As I write this on a hot Friday afternoon, the news informs us that there is a renewed effort to reach some agreement over the hostages. The entire nation hopes that something positive will emerge and sooner rather than later, the hostages will be reunited with their families.

Israel faces other serious challenges as well. The situation along the border with Lebanon needs to be addressed as soon as possible. No one in his right mind wishes for an all-out war, but how long can this country go on when tens of thousands of residents of Galilee are dispersed all over the country while their homes and livelihoods are subject to Hezbollah's shelling? Unfortunately, over the last months, we have witnessed a very troubling tendency of growing criticism of Israel. It is no secret that large segments of Israeli society are critical of the government over its conduct and are calling for new elections and the establishment of a state commission to investigate all the issues concerning the war. Nevertheless, we will stand firmly against those voices that ignore the basic fact-Israel and Israelis were the victims of terrorist aggression by Hamas. At the same time, all of us extend our heartfelt sentiments of gratitude to those around the world who recognise the true reality and express their support in our struggle. A special note of appreciation goes to all of you who have always stood by us.

Elimination of Sexual Violence

19 June 2024 was the first observance of the 'International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence' since the 7 October massacre. Thus, it was especially important to raise awareness for victims and survivors of sexual violence as a systematic and wide-scale weapon of war in the 7 October attack and during the brutal captivity of Hamas in Gaza, whereas another 120 hostages are still being held.

An online event was held to mark this important international day, during which the documentary 'Screams Before Silence' was screened. In this documentary, American businesswoman Sheryl Sandberg interviews first responders to the Hamas-led attack at the Nova Festival and survivors of abductions to the Gaza Strip. It is freely available to watch online at <https://www.screamsbeforesilence.com/>

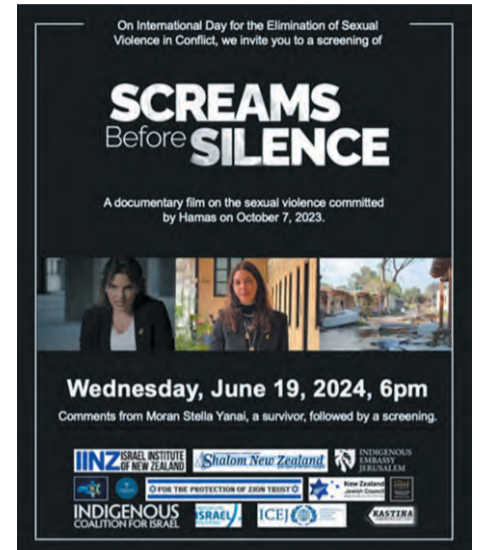
The screening featured a recorded interview with Moran Stella Yanai, who was captured at the Nova Music Festival on 7 October. The story of her brutal kidnapping into Gaza is hard to witness. Her capture was filmed and live-

streamed by a group of terrorists as she begged for her life alone in a ditch.

During her time in captivity, she described how she was often left hungry and thirsty. Her captors constantly monitored her actions, and she was unable to express emotion, especially as a woman. Daily necessities, such as going to the bathroom, were restricted. After 54 days in captivity, she was released with other hostages in a ceasefire deal.

Moran Stella Yanai was interviewed by Karin Horen, who was born in Israel and now lives in Auckland. She shared her view on how the Israeli and Jewish communities in New Zealand have been affected since 7 October, including the loss of family members and a significant increase in antisemitism.

The event was supported by the following organisations: Shalom New Zealand, Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, New Zealand Friends of Israel, For the Protection of Zion, New Zealand Jewish Council, Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, Indigenous Coalition for Israel, Christians for Israel New Zealand, Indigenous Christian Embassy



Jerusalem and the Embassy of Israel in New Zealand.

The Embassy of Israel in New Zealand welcomes all efforts to raise awareness of the atrocities committed by Hamas and other terrorist organisations on and following the 7 October attack and to call for the release of 120 hostages still being held in Gaza.

Also see Recommended Viewing: 'Screams Before Silence' on page 10 of the international pages.

Never Again is Now

■ Mandy Worby Christians for Israel Australia

On 9 June, the *Never Again is Now* (NAIN) event was held in Brisbane, Australia in the Roma Street Parklands on a glorious sunny winter's day. The event was organised with local Christian and Jewish leaders in conjunction with the NAIN co-founder, Rev Mark Leach who flew up from Sydney to MC the event.

Mark and other concerned pro-Israel believers began this grassroots movement after the shocking slaughter that took place in Israel on 7 October last year. Immediately following that terrorist massacre, a wave of both celebration of the carnage and rabidly vile antisemitism erupted around the world. Mark was horrified to see that same hatred on display outside the cathedral he works at in Sydney on 10 October. While the hatred and violence were celebrated, Mark stood alone on the cathedral steps holding a single Israeli flag and was promptly threatened and chased by the rioters.

It was from this experience that a determination grew inside him to rally Christians, Jews and other honest, fair-minded people to gather together to

show solidarity with Israel, but in particular, to stand for the right of Jewish people in Australia to be safe and protected from vilification, violence, calls for genocide, and targeted attacks because of anti-Semitic hatred.

The first NAIN event took place in Sydney several months ago when around 12,000 people rallied together in the Domain, followed by subsequent rallies in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, and most recently, in Brisbane.

The Brisbane event saw between 1,500 and 2,000 people in attendance, with many Jewish, Christian and secular speakers all beating the same drum—"Say no to hate, mate!" There's no room in Australian society for the vile, genocidal antisemitism. It was encouraging to hear voices from Christian, Jewish, political, and civic leaders joining their voices to collectively say no to the hatred and violence being perpetrated against Jewish Australian brothers and sisters.

All the speakers spoke of their revulsion of the rising antisemitism in local communities being championed as free speech in universities, and the lack of political leadership, both federal and state, in doing nothing to stem the tide

but they gave their commitment to consistently push back against it.

There was a police presence, of course, but the rally was very peaceful, as pro-Israel rallies always are, and no protesters showed up to cause a disturbance. Australian flags were also waved proudly, and Israeli flags were waved with great enthusiasm and support. The feeling among those in attendance was warm, friendly, and very enthusiastic.

Israel is Australia's closest ally and friend in the Middle East. There is a strong and very emotional historical connection to Israel. Australian armed forces played a pivotal role in liberating the Holy Land from 400 years of Ottoman occupation, which paved the way for the rebirth of the State of Israel, as prophesied in *Isaiah 66*. That's a history we should be proud of and a history we must protect.

Australia has been the recipient of God's blessing because of its relationship with Israel. If that were to end by betraying God's people, the consequences would be devastating. Read *Genesis 12:3*.

Christians for Israel Australia has been supporting and attending these events. There are more rallies being organised for Sydney and Melbourne. Details can be found at www.neveragainisnow.com.au

First Nations Celebrate the IEJ

Up to two hundred First Nations' chiefs, grand chiefs and tribal representatives gathered at the Muckleshoot Reservation, near Seattle, USA, at the end of May, to celebrate the recent opening of the Indigenous Embassy in Jerusalem (IEJ) and to meet the directors of the embassy, Hon Alfred Ngaro and Dr Sheree Trotter.

Grand Chief Lynda Prince called the summit, which included tribal leaders from Metis/Algonquin, Carrier-Sekani, Coast-Selich, Ojibwe, Inuit, Cree, Haida, Apache, Cree Mohawk, Hopi, Cowichan, Lakota and Piante gathered, along with representatives from South Africa, Hawaii, Tahiti, Chinese, Fijian, Kenya, Taiwanese, Mexican and Borneo.

The summit was a celebration of indigenous culture, beginning with a grand entry and opening ceremony. The three day convocation was filled with song, dance, drumming and music, displays of indigenous arts and crafts, along with protocol ceremonies, speeches and discussion.

Guest speaker Melodie Greeyes, a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, stated, "The sound of the 120 drums by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people for the First of the First Nations, Israel, was a heavenly declaration that "now is the time for the Indigenous voice to be heard standing with Israel!" The establishment of the IEJ is a physical manifestation of the open gate and welcome by Israel to foster meaningful relationships. I am excited to be alive at this time to stand with Israel".

Grand Chief Lynda Prince, who, along with one hundred chiefs, had met at the Israeli Knesset in 1999 to discuss an indigenous embassy, was appointed the IEJ envoy for Turtle Island. She was honoured with the gifting of a Korowai in a traditional Māori ceremony led by young Māori leaders Tawhiri Littlejohn and Shaquille Buckley.

Grand Chief Harvey Yesno, chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation of Ontario, commented on the uniqueness of the embassy being indigenous, that it is not just for one group, or one continent.

"It's an opportunity to create a hybrid of how traditional embassies operate. It can be a model of working cross-culturally in a way that is not affected by borders, even continents. We can make that work. We're in an age of technology, which supports a multidimensional aspect of life. Our worldview incorporates all aspects of life."

Yesno also joined the IEJ delegation, who attended the rally in Toronto, where fifty-thousand people marched in solidarity with the Jewish community, which had recently been subject to a spate of antisemitic attacks.

Yesno commented, "I needed to show up, to show the public that we were standing with Israel.

I was motivated by the appreciation of many people who came by just to say thank you. Others were crying. Just the fact that we were there. I had my headdress, which was given to me as a leader. I wanted to demonstrate to the Jewish people and to Israel that I was not going to be silent anymore."

Indeed, Canada, like most Western countries, has experienced a massive upsurge in antisemitic attacks in the period since the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel. While the IEJ delegation was in Vancouver, the Schara Tzedek synagogue was subject to an arson attack that charred the doors of the temple. The newly appointed Envoy of IEJ, Grand Chief Lynda Prince, issued a statement addressing the incident, and the IEJ



'March' IEJ delegates joined a 50,000-strong march in Toronto. | Photos: Perry Trotter

delegation met with the Jewish community in Vancouver to show their support.

The New Zealand delegates were joined by First Nations leaders in Toronto and had several meetings with Jewish leaders, organised by Andria Spindel of the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation, including with United Jewish Aid's President and CEO Adam Minsky and VP Noah Shack and the founder of Allied Voices for Israel's ED, Daniel Koren and Lea Bloom, Director of Operations.

In addition, on 10 June, a historic meeting of Jewish and Indigenous leadership took place at the Israel Consulate in Toronto, hosted by Consul General Idit Shamir. The meeting proved a rich time of sharing and connecting. The local First Nations leaders, Chief Claire Sault and Grand Chief Larry Sault, of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, opened the meeting with a traditional welcome and former Grand Chief Harvey Yesno of Nishnawbe Aski Nation from Northern Ontario co-facilitated.

According to Trotter, "The trip to Turtle Island (North America) was an important time of building



Grand Chief Harvey Yesno.

relationships with the First Nations of America and of extending our network of indigenous relationships globally as we work together to stand in support of Israel. Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem has given the First Nations supporters of Israel an important mechanism by which to develop their connections with local Jewish communities, and it has provided a platform to express their support for Israel."

Kiwis in Gaza

Did you know that Kiwi Anzacs fought in Gaza? Three major battles took place in Gaza, and many Kiwis are buried there. The Allied forces left Cairo in January 1916 and crossed the Suez, beating back the Ottoman forces. They then fought along the northern Sinai coastal area for most of 1916, arriving in El Arish in mid-December. January 1917 saw the battle of Rafah before the conquest of Gaza got fully underway. Most memorable were the first two battles for Gaza on 26 March and 17–19 April, respectively. Probable Anzac victory was snatched by poor intelligence and a late British decision to withdraw. That led to a more disastrous result in the second battle for the Ottoman stronghold. From then on, the Allies had to wait *in situ* for the heat of the summer to pass before the third battle of Gaza (1–2 November) and the conquest of Beersheba in late October, which was commemorated in the JNF Anzac trail. The Kiwis returned to Gaza in 1918.

There are two Commonwealth War Graves (CWG) cemeteries in Gaza—Deir el Belah and Gaza. Deir El Belah lies in central Gaza. 13 Kiwis, who died between May 1917–Oct 1918, are buried there. Gaza CWG cemetery lies east of Gaza City, midway between the coast and the Israeli border. A total of 20 Kiwi Anzacs lie buried there. Many Kiwis died of sickness including pneumonia in October–November 1918 after the war was over. That raises the presumption that they were poorly equipped for the winter conditions and were run down by poor rations and fatigue. A sad end indeed.

Unfortunately Kiwis have been unable to visit the cemeteries for decades. Australian diplomats visit annually in protected convoy. From November 2023 both cemeteries were closed to visitors, but you can see images and clips of the cemeteries online.



Recommended Viewing

I Shall Not Hate

by Tony Kan

We started out wishing that *I Shall Not Hate* would be a hopeful message of equality, justice and coexistence, but it is instead hijacked by factual omissions, making this documentary just another disappointing piece of deceptive Palestinian propaganda that will recruit even more ‘useful idiots’.

When I first heard this documentary was being screened at DocEdge, I was told it was about a Nelson Mandela figure, Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish, who has risen above the death of three of his daughters in Gaza at the hands of the IDF in 2008, and was spreading a message of forgiveness.

However, the documentary presented a history that is in keeping with the prevailing Palestinian narrative.

The documentary mentions Israeli actions in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war yet omits the Arab invasion of the fledgling state of Israel just hours after its declaration of Independence. It shows Israeli bombardment of Gaza yet omits Hamas’ publicly declared objective to destroy Israel.

Israel is described as an Occupier, yet we are not told that Gaza cannot be occupied as Israel withdrew from there back in 2005. The audience is not told that Hamas had assassinated its political opponents and now rules unopposed.

Israel’s bombardments in several wars are shown without informing us that each Gaza-Israeli War was preceded by Hamas-led violence which had provoked that war. Images of slain civilians many of whom are Abuelaish’s relatives are shown but it omits to tell us that Hamas are using civilians as human shields.

We are not told Hamas started a war on 7 October, and then sheltered in their tunnels while their civilians pay the price, only for Hamas to harvest images of wounded, maimed and dead children to push to Western media to undermine support for Israel.

How could this documentary have been made by Tal Barda, a French American born and raised in Jerusalem, as she would be very aware of these omissions?

We watched the screening with Director Yariv Mozer, who is an award-winning filmmaker and teaches at the Steve Tisch Film School at Tel Aviv University, where he taught Barda. Ironically, his documentary, *‘We Will Dance Again’* had its world premiere the evening before.

He told us Barda would be conscious of these omissions and has refused to give consent for it to be shown in Israel. It’s likely the documentary would turn her into a pariah there.

Yet Barda stated during the Q&A session that followed the screening, that it would be shown on Israeli television.

As the evening progressed, Mozer struggled to contain his anger and the omissions became apparent. “She was one of my students at Tel Aviv University and we are friends. I will have to think carefully about our next conversation.”

Promises, Covenants & Israel—Part 2

■ Christopher J Archer

Co-chair of the New Zealand Israel Friendship Association Inc.

In the biblical context, a divine covenant is not necessarily more important than a promise. In the *Book of Numbers*, it declares, “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (*Numbers 23:19*). If God makes a promise, he always keeps it. The major difference seems to be that a promise is unconditional, whereas a covenant is (usually) an agreement between two people. If, for example, we consider the greatest of all covenants, namely, the one which *Yeshua* (Jesus) instituted with his disciples at the *Passover* just before his death, we see that he takes the symbols of the *Passover*: bread and wine, and he re-applies their significance to his own soon-coming sacrificial death. In the Ancient Near East a covenant was ‘cut’ not signed, and it was confirmed by the sacrifice of an animal which was slaughtered, then dismembered, while the covenanting partners walked between the separated parts. This procedure apparently carried something of a warning like, “This is what will happen to you if you break the covenant.” There is a very strange picture of this method of affirming a covenant in *Genesis 15:17*. In the New Covenant which Jesus instituted, he is the sacrifice. The partnership is between himself and the repentant sinner who appropriates the benefit of the covenant, according to St Paul, ‘by faith’. The eternal scope of this covenant is affirmed in *Hebrews 9:14*. It is a ‘new’ covenant, in fulfilment of the prophecy in *Jeremiah 31:31-34*, because it fulfills the religious obligations which the Mosaic Law demanded.

In the current discussion, however, we are limiting our focus to those promises and covenants that directly impact Israel’s God-given right to exist on the land it now occupies. One of the most significant verses relating to this discussion follows on directly from the *Jeremiah* section cited earlier. It is a promise, although it reads more like a unilateral declaration, “This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name: “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,” declares the Lord, “will Israel ever cease being a nation before me.” (*Jeremiah 31:35-36*). It is difficult to conceive of a situation, at any time in history, when this statement does not apply.



Sun setting behind the infamous death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau where one million Jews were murdered between 1941 and 1945. (Data from Auschwitz.org). | Photo: Betty Archer 2022

At this point, I want to recommend an e-book by Dr Nigel Woodley which is entitled, *Modern Israel is still Ancient Israel*. (www.fortheprotectionofzion.com).

This discussion was the topic of Nigel’s PhD thesis and, apart from being a very readable and comprehensive treatment of the subject, it addresses the fundamental question, “Can Modern Israel claim an unbroken lineage with Ancient Israel?” Obviously, if it cannot be proved, conclusively, that Modern Israel is the legitimate heir to these ancient covenants and promises, any further discussion is futile. We fall back to disputing UN resolutions, and to arguments criticising British hegemony of the land during the mandatory period from 1920 to 1948.

During the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony, there was one particular theme which caught my attention in the speeches of the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog and Prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. They both spoke passionately of the ‘resurrection’ of the nation. This was the first time that I had noticed this significant shift in the national narrative. No doubt both men were conscious of the context of the day. Both speakers were referencing the vision of the ‘Dry Bones’ in the prophecy of *Ezekiel* (*chapter 37*) which is a popular metaphor in Messianic communities. This chapter begins with the prophet standing in a valley filled with dry bones. With successive prophetic pronouncements these bones take shape, become clothed in flesh, and stand as a mighty army. After this introduction, through the mouth of the prophet, the Lord addresses the whole House of Israel, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people,

will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.” (*Ezekiel 37:12-13*)

This is the source of these two inspirational speeches. Of course, the speeches refer only to the survivors of the Holocaust who lived to reach Israel so, at best, ‘resurrection’ is a powerful metaphor. The biblical text, by way of contrast, refers to the six million men, women and children who perished at the hands of the Nazis, who were buried or cremated, and who are still to be brought back to the land of Israel. “Impossible!” you say. Of course it is, according to natural wisdom. However, if we consider the words of *Yeshua* the perspective immediately alters. One of his most famous declarations occurs at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus. In his conversation with Lazarus’s sister, Mary, he speaks the words that have defined Christian hope for two millennia, “*Yeshua* (Jesus) said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies” (*John 11:25*). A few minutes later Lazarus comes out of the tomb still wrapped in his grave clothes.

Hope in resurrection is not just a Christian belief. It has roots in what is, perhaps, the oldest book of the Old Testament—the *Book of Job*. In the midst of his suffering, righteous Job speaks the words that Handel’s great oratorio, ‘Messiah,’ has made famous, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.” (*Job 19:25,26*)

The ‘resurrection’ is more than a metaphor for Israel’s return; it is a promise of the restoration of ‘all things’ as certain as any of those which the ancient prophets of Israel declared.



We Draw our Strength from God's Word

■ Sondra Oster Baras International President of CFOIC Heartland

When I retired my position as Director of CFOIC Heartland last September, I looked forward to a whole new life. I was particularly excited about one project—something that had been my dream for years—to create a Bible School for women in my community. I have always loved to study and teach the Bible and have found many opportunities to do both over the years. I was particularly excited by my regular Zoom classes through CFOIC Heartland, where I have been teaching the Bible to Christians all over the world. But the time had come to invest more time in my own community, to teach and arrange for others to teach the women of my community. As I approached retirement, I realised that many of my friends were at the same stage of life. We were all going to have more time to do the things we loved most. Don't we all love studying the Bible?

I wrote a programme, solicited teachers and put a programme together. My goal was to create a community of women who teach and study together. No one would pay for the courses, and the teachers would not be paid. The teachers would teach, but they would also study with one another. We would all be involved in the Bible because we love it. I truly believed we would find community and camaraderie in one another because we would be sharing something of such value—exploring God's word together. The programme was scheduled to begin on 10 October 2023.

On 7 October, all hell broke loose. We were reeling, not knowing how to

respond. What should we do about the Bible school? Should we move forward? We couldn't pretend that nothing had happened. Starting a class on a book of the Bible did not seem quite right that week. On the other hand, what better way to find comfort in times of trouble than to seek God's word? So, we gathered all the women together in one of the local synagogues. My friend and fellow Bible teacher and I shared some words about a few of the Psalms that seemed to speak most directly to what we were experiencing. Then, we opened it up for discussion, led by one of the women, who is an experienced social worker.

A young woman who had only recently moved into the community began to share what was on her heart. She had tears in her eyes, and she was trembling. She kept asking—where is God? I am having trouble praying. What do I do? No one had any easy answers for her when experiencing trauma of this level. We hugged her, encouraged her, and assured her that even when God is hard to see and feel, He is there. Take your time, we told her. It is ok to feel as you are feeling. Something amazing happened that evening. The group of women, some of whom barely knew each other, had found community through the word of God. We prayed together, and expressed ourselves to one another as we tried to absorb what was happening around us. The following week, we began regular classes and have been studying ever since. I taught a series of stories in the *Talmud*, classic stories with timeless messages for us all. For the past several months, I have been teaching the *Book of Samuel*. Others have taught *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, *Esther* and *Ruth*. We had one series on couples in the Bible. A very popular course is the study of an 18th-



Studying the book of Ruth during weekly Bible classes in Karnei Shomron. | Photos: Sondra Oster Baras

century classic text that examines a life of faith and moral behaviour. Women come from all over the community, mostly retirement age, but some younger women as well. We pray at different synagogues and have studied under different traditions. But we have, indeed, created a new community of women who are studying the Bible together.

We have also invited guest lecturers to teach and share with us. One well-known Bible teacher whose son had been kidnapped and then murdered by terrorists in 2014 brought incredible words of wisdom and insight to us. She shared valuable Bible teachings as she attempted to give meaning to the terrible events we are experiencing, drawing from her own personal tragedy. This summer, we will be hosting a well-known rabbi whose son and nephew were killed during this horrible war.

I have a few friends who go once a week to a farm in the south of Israel and volunteer to help pick the produce. The war has brought huge damage to farmers all over the country and has particularly decimated the working force—the foreign workers have mostly fled Israel for safer ports, and the local workers have mostly been drafted. My friends find enormous satisfaction in helping these farmers. I envy them for their ability to provide such direct assistance for such an immediate need. But I am not one for farms. I think I would end up complaining the entire time, praying for the day to end.

I do believe that, in my own small way, I have found a way to help. The news is always so bad—I have many friends who can't bear to listen anymore. But I remain addicted—I need to know what is going on. But the picture painted each night is a grim one—the war seems to be dragging on with no end in sight. So many of the hostages have still not been released, and it is not clear how many of them are still alive. We have lost faith in our national leaders, and as we look around the world,



Sondra Oster Baras: "I love teaching the Bible"

we see that leaders of other countries are not measuring up in any way. It is so easy to despair, to lose hope.

And yet, I remain optimistic. I don't know how we are going to get there, but somehow we will. I am optimistic because I have faith. As I continue to teach and study the Bible, I am strengthened in that optimism, in my faith. God is in charge. We may not understand His ways, but we can rest assured He is running the show. As we study the Bible together, we increase our knowledge of God. I can truly say that more women are studying the Bible in my community today than they were one year ago. That is important. We are deriving strength from our study and from each other. We continue to pray for the safety of our soldiers, for the return of the hostages, and for the defeat of all our enemies, in God's time.

Sondra Oster Baras is the Founder and International President of CFOIC Heartland, representing the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria to Christians all over the world.

To support the urgent needs of the people of Judea and Samaria, during this terrible war, please use the form on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).

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OPEN NOW

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Please email info@c4israel.org.nz with your name(s), and contact details, with 'EXPRESSION OF INTEREST' in the subject line.

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Calendar Themes

Throughout this year, we will be elaborating on the themes of the C41 2024 Israel Calendar: Symbols of Israel and significant festivals.



August: Gazelle

The graceful Israeli gazelle with its distinctive horns and markings can be seen in the Negev region as well as in the Golan Heights. It is endangered and protected under Israeli law. Currently there are estimated to be about 6,000 in the wild, with most living inside Israel. Both males and females have horns, but the male's horns are larger and have rings around them. A mature male can weigh up to 30kg with females more in the range 16-25kg. Males can reach speeds of up to 80kmh, so Israelis tend to let them pass without interference. They are not tame. In Hebrew the word for this animal is Yael. Does that word ring a bell? Yes it's the first name of the Deputy Chief of Mission Yael Holan.

Tish'a B'Av: 13 August

Tish'a B'Av literally means the 9th day of the month of Av. It's a day of calamities for the Jewish people most notably the day both temples were destroyed, the date of the expulsion decree from the King of Spain and the day the spies brought a bad report. For religious Jews, it's a day of fasting and contemplation with anticipation of what bad thing might befall them. But that's not all. It is the culmination of a season of commemoration of bad events (3 weeks) starting with Yom Tammuz (17th day of the previous month—Tammuz), when Moses destroyed the tablets following the Golden Calf incident and the Romans penetrated Jerusalem's walls.



September: Falafel

Food defines culture. The falafel is a ball of chick peas and spices usually fried that is found across the Levant. What makes the falafel the national food of Israel is that it is symbolic of the region and eaten by all people groups. It says – we have returned to our ancient homeland and signifies that Israel is a Middle Eastern country, not a European one. Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews dominate. Falafel wins over lox and bagels.

Ruth: The Israel Supporter

■ Joanna Moss

Interestingly, the *Book of Ruth* is read by Jews on *Shavuot* or *Pentecost*. Yet it tells the story of Ruth the Moabitess, a gentile who is joined into the Jewish family/nation by choice and becomes part of David's ancestral line. Yet she is always called Ruth the Moabitess, proving that Gentiles don't become Jews. In this article we will explore the steps Ruth took to be grafted in to the House of Israel and why this is important in a time of rising antisemitism. Read *Ruth chapter 1* especially *verses 16-18*.

Moabites Were Despised

God chose the hated people for a reason. Even the hated can have a change of heart. For many Jews especially European-heritage Jews, we the Christians are the hated because of the Nazis, Pogroms, Inquisition, and Crusades etc. More Jews have died at the hands of 'Christians' than Moslems. Don't expect Jews to think we are different or real Christians who follow the Bible. Some Jews are genuinely puzzled by Christian support for Israel. We need to repent on behalf of our family lines and nations. Sincerity is important as is acknowledging the sins of the past.

Marriage Isn't Enough

Ruth had already married a Jewish husband and had been living in the diaspora for many years. Passive action is not enough. As the story shows, Ruth had to make declarations and take concrete steps. They involved the head, heart and feet and maybe arms to be useful!!

Expect Discouragement

Naomi entreats her daughters-in-law to go back to their 'own people'. Many people will ask you, why you are supporting Israel or the Jews, because you aren't Jewish. Why are you getting involved with a dispute that doesn't affect us in NZ? Mind your own business. Do you have an answer to this?

Be in for the Long Haul

Both daughters-in-law pledged to go with Naomi and both left Moab to return to Bethlehem. But only one made it to the Promised Land. One turned back. The journey taken by the women was hardly easy or safe. It took courage. If you want to pledge your allegiance to the Jews/Israel you need to be willing to stick with it despite persecution. Ruth made a commitment until death. Do you want to be a Ruth or an Orpah?

Step 1: Decision

In making a decision to stand for the Jews/Israel there is always a choice. This is not a decision to be taken lightly. It has eternal consequences. God is watching.

Jesus said, "Let your Yes be Yes and Your No be No." (*Matthew 5:37*) Recognise that this is just the beginning step and once you make a decision for Israel, you need to do something about it.

Step 2: Declaration

Study the declaration that Ruth made. Note that it is a very comprehensive declaration.

Whatever declaration you choose to make, God will hold you to it, so don't make a declaration rashly. Think about it. It's better to take time and make the declaration that reflects your level of faith. You can always upgrade it later. Pray about it. Does it please God? Formulate it in your own words. God is looking for sincerity, not words. Ruth said:

- Where the Jews go I will go.
- Where they live I will live.
- The Jews shall be considered my people.
- The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is my God.
- Where the Jews die I will die.
- Let only death separate me from the Jewish people.

Step 3: Your Commitment

Take out pen and paper and jot down any thoughts you might have had reading the passage and meditating on Ruth's declaration. What is God showing you about your life, your understanding of the Bible and the level of your commitment? Maybe God is saying that your commitment to the cause is half-hearted and He wants to strengthen it. Some of you need to ask God to bring Jews into your life. Don't think living in provincial NZ means there are no Jews. Far from it, they live all over NZ.

Ruth put her lot in with the Jewish people until death. Are you willing to stand with the Jews in public? Are you willing to defend the Jews/Israel? Maybe you need to prepare some sample answers to questions, so that you are prepared. You might like to work on this as a group exercise.

• Hosting and Treating Jews like Family

Think about Corrie ten Bon. Are you willing to take Jews into your home, if necessary? Are you willing to invite them over if they are being ostracised? Ask yourself—What do you really think about the Jews? Are they just some people over there and not real people suffering real persecution? Do you know what is going on in NZ? Have you taken the time to find out?

• Focus on Which God You're Worshipping

Ben Shapiro, a well-known Jewish commentator noted that many Christians worship gentle Jesus meek



Painting of Ruth. | Photo: Shutterstock

and mild, who is so loving and forgiving and not a judgmental God. Not the God of the Old Testament. It's time for all Christians to ask themselves: "am I worshipping the God of the Bible: The real God, not the god of my convenience?"

• Being Prepared to Suffer for the Cause

Are you willing to suffer defending them? We know there is going to be martyrdom in the End Times because the Bible tells us so. It's happening now amongst the persecuted church. Don't think you will be exempt. It's better to be prepared than to face something you are not prepared for.

• Hanging in for the Long Run

Orpah may well have had good intentions, but she lacked stick-ability. Maybe she was drifting in her faith. Maybe she hadn't thought about it deeply. Do you want God to call you an Orpah? Think about it? Consider, maybe it's better not to start than to fall away, but what are the consequences?

Step 4: Take Action

Having made your declaration, what is God asking you to do? It will be different for each person. Being passive is not an option. For some it will mean being actively involved in advocacy, prayer, hosting and rallies. There are still many areas of NZ where the believers are asleep and haven't taken a stand for Israel. Others will be writing letters or inviting Jews and Christians over.

Finally Ruth shows by her actions what the Bible calls being 'Grafted In' and receiving nourishment from the roots (*Romans 11: 17*). Are you getting some?



Settling the Land—Part 2

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

Isaiah 35:1-2 “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.”

Part 1 showed the depth of attachment and tenacity demonstrated by the Jewish people in clinging to the Land through numerous empires, slaughters, expulsions and deprivations since Roman times.

The Bible prophesies their scattering from the Land and their return, the Land becoming barren and then restored. Part 2 considers the 19th and early 20th century: the beginning of the return and the restoration after a wide scattering and a long drought. Contention about this period overshadows earlier history; thus, Relandi’s massive *Palestina* (1714), drawing from various sources, provides a comprehensive survey of settlements and the first accurate topographical maps of the region, yet is labelled ‘fabrication’ because it contradicts the mainstream narrative. We must penetrate such shenanigans to grasp the history of the Land.

1800 to 1880

The Land was in desolation and the Ottoman Empire’s grip weakened during the early part of the 19th century. After the 16th century highpoint under Suleiman, many villages and towns became deserted. Jazzar Pasha (*‘The butcher,’* died 1804) ignored instructions to reduce crippling taxation. An 1825 uprising in Jerusalem, driven by new taxes, was put down by cannon fire. The rebellion of Egyptian ruler Mehmet Ali brought his occupying army to the region in the 1830s and left behind Egyptian soldiers who settled.

In 1838, British Foreign Minister Palmerston established a British consul in Jerusalem with specific instructions to “afford protection to the Jews generally.” The consul reported that “the Jew in Jerusalem is not estimated in value much above a dog.” In 1841, Solomon Alexander—a former rabbi— was appointed the first Anglican bishop of Jerusalem. Other religious denominations followed, and Jerusalem benefited from their schools, hospitals, and workhouses. This provoked European Jews to fund new facilities themselves.

With easier travel conditions, such as steamship services, visitor numbers increased. They found desolation. The British consul reported in 1857, “The country is in a considerable degree empty of inhabitants and therefore its greatest need is that of a body of population.” Later, he noted continued depopulation and lawless land expropriations, as well as frequent cases of violent robbery and other abuses of Jews in Jerusalem. Herbert Melville described “a caked, depopulated hell,” Mark Twain as “a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land.”

Baedeker published the region’s first travel guide in 1876 but visitors’ descriptions continued in similar vein. Writers noted the decrepit and crowded Jewish Quarter, with a population of thousands, the largest group in Jerusalem. Despite poverty and abuse, still they clung on, still they came to Zion.

Immigration

In 1881, the reformist Czar Alexander II was assassinated, producing a right-wing reaction in the Russian Empire. Laws became fiercely antisemitic, and pogroms began. Many Jews fled, with some making the arduous journey to the Land.

Eliezer Ben Yehuda emigrated from Russia to Palestine in 1881, devoting his life to reviving Hebrew as the

language of his people. In 1882, Russian Rabbi Leon Pinkser set up *‘Lovers of Zion’* to promote Jewish emigration to Palestine. The American Jewish poet Emma Lazarus advocated a return to the Land. Her famous lines (1883) inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”, speak of her vision for Zion. In 1895, Theodor Herzl, having discovered that even integrated European Jews were subject to hate, published *The Jewish State* and set up the Zionist Congress.

After centuries of stagnation and depopulation, a turnaround in the Land from the 1880s to the end of the British Mandate, Palestine’s economy and population growth significantly outpaced surrounding areas. At times, economic growth was the highest in the world; productivity per agricultural worker reached double that of neighbouring countries by the 1930s. What drove this?

In one telling, the high Arab population growth was solely a flourishing of the indigenous people, whilst the Jews were new immigrants who stole Palestinian land and wealth. Such claims are statistically improbable and cannot account for Palestine’s economic transformation. Health and physical security improved throughout the Middle East without equivalent surges in population. The only viable explanation for the exceptional Arab population growth in Palestine is high immigration. However, this is denounced as the “infamous immigration thesis” by guardians of the mainstream narrative of an ancient Palestinian people.

We understand Jewish immigration; why would Arabs come? Worldwide, populations have shifted towards areas of greater opportunity. Palestine’s economic growth and rising wages inevitably attracted Arab immigration from surrounding areas—largely uncounted due to porous borders and bureaucratic indifference. Joan Peters’ *From Time Immemorial* is criticised for inaccuracies but nonetheless provides diverse evidence from disparate sources (1,000+ footnotes!) of extensive Arab immigration throughout the period. Other research corroborates Peters: for example, Ottoman registers show that for Arabs, half of those born outside their current place of residence came from outside Palestine.

Economic Growth

In a moribund economy, new capital or freeing up of land will produce rapid economic growth when matched by available labour. What was the trigger for Palestine? Modernisation of Ottoman laws in the mid-1800s gave non-Muslims better status and facilitated private purchase of land. An effendi class of land owners and large estates emerged, whilst communal land ownership diminished and landless families increased. These legal changes, plus other measures, also pressured the nomadic Bedouin to settle—reducing their devastating raids and expanding lands safe to settle.

These changes, along with improvements in transport infrastructure, occurred across the Ottoman Empire. The distinctive of Palestine was the Jews. From the 1880s, Jewish organisations purchased land extensively to attract immigration and establish the new *Yishuv* (new settlements.) For the Arab effendi, here were fresh buyers—particularly for their plentiful wastelands or where ownership was disputed. Their Jewish clients braved poor official records, vague property boundaries, and dubious legal procedures. Some settlements required armed defence; others lived in peace. The diaries of the Jewish Agency’s Arthur Ruppin chronicle new farming methods and imported technology utilised for drilling



Grape picking at Rishon LeZion. | Photo: Simon Smelt’s postcard



(Left) Emma Lazarus. (Right) Jews of Jerusalem. | Photos: Simon Smelt

and irrigation. Alongside struggling with hard soils, land disputes and displacement of Arab labour, he describes hiring of Arab labour and the greening of barren land.

Some Arab labour was displaced by Jewish immigrants, but economic development had a much stronger effect. The Arab population increased far more in urban areas with Jewish development than in Arab towns; new Arab villages predominantly emerged in areas of new Jewish settlement. Thus, Petah Tikvah (founded in 1878) and Rishon LeTzion (1882) quickly gathered Arab families around a Jewish nucleus. Nonetheless, contemporary accounts illustrate significant tensions between some Arab and Jewish communities.

The evidence identifies Jewish immigration as the key driver of both economic growth and Arab immigration. Jewish capital investment vastly exceeded Arab investment. By contrast, the effendi drew rents from, rather than invested in, their land. Along with labour and capital, the Jews brought technology, organisation, and enthusiasm. They created wealth and jobs and reclaimed wasteland. Take the Galilee: here, the once fertile Hula Valley had deteriorated into malaria-infested swampland after the Romans depopulated it during the Jewish rebellions. Only after the Jewish purchase in 1934 did recovery begin with sediment removal and drainage. Today, the Hula is a rich farmland and haven for millions of migrating birds.

Jewish immigration does not remotely fit a Marxist ‘colonisation’ model. Jews fleeing hostile regimes were scarcely their colonial agents. They did not seize land but purchased it, even though it was often barren and even at the risk of it being seized from them. Neither plantation supervisors nor rent collectors, they worked that land themselves. Any surplus was reinvested. They came to join the old *Yishuv* of existing Jewish settlements, restore Eretz Israel, and build a new life together based on Jewish culture and religion.

Part 3 of this study proceeds to the mid-20th century.



Story of Jews in Muslim Lands—West—Part 3

Joanna Moss

In the last article, we looked at the Jewish experience in the South and saw how the British presence provided many opportunities for education and advancement for the Jewish community. When they left, things changed dramatically. In this article, the focus is on the Jewish communities in North Africa, primarily in the 19th–21st centuries, called the *Magrebi* countries because *Magreb* means sunset hence west in Arabic. Specifically, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya; where other colonial forces were at play.

Much of North Africa was under Ottoman rule prior to European colonisation. These nations had ancient Jewish communities, some from Roman times, that were augmented by *Sephardic* refugees coming from Spain and Portugal from 1492 onwards, mainly 13th–16th century, and laterally merchants and traders from Europe. Prior to WW2, there were 400,000 Jews in the *Maghreb*. Today, few remain. Numerically, the Moroccan Jews at 275,000 represent the largest group by far. Algerian Jews peaked at 160,000 (1962), whilst Tunisian and Libyan Jews peaked at 100,000 and 40,000 (1945), respectively. Sometimes, Jews were free to leave, and at other times, they were forbidden, and clandestine operations prevailed. Access to Israel was also restricted under the Mandate conditions. Colonial exit and independence brought change. Most departures were traumatic, with few possessions permitted. Sadly, few *Magrebi* Jews were able to return to their homelands for a visit, adding to the displacement's impact.

Algeria (Part of France)

Under Ottoman rule, Algerian Jews were classed as second-class citizens and lived in a community defined by their ethnicity rather than their religion. On the whole, they had good relations with the Arab community. Once the French arrived in 1830, the Jews were offered an opportunity for equality and access to European culture. Numerically, in the 1850s, they represented 20% of Algiers, the capital, making them a significant group. France annexed Algeria in 1834 and stayed 132 years. Over time, the Jews became somewhat absorbed by the new European community, which was comprised not just of French but also Spanish, Italian, and Maltese immigrants. Jews were found in all sectors of society, from trade to civil service, land ownership, and professions and business. Many were not rich. Over time, the Jews spoke French, received a French Jewish education and lived a *Francophile* existence without ever going to France.

1870 Crémieux Decree (French Citizenship)

A Jewish Minister in the French government offered French citizenship to Jews living in Algeria in 1870. At first, the uptake was small, but it offered some protection. Algerian Jews experienced antisemitism from their European neighbours, but the advantages of French life outweighed the disadvantages, and it ebbed and flowed. During WW2, Algeria became part of Vichy France, and the Jews were stripped of their citizenship and faced a range of discriminatory measures. Sadly, the local Europeans were quick to enforce these edicts. Algeria was liberated by the Americans, and once back in full French control post-war, their French citizenship was reinstated, only to have their allegiance questioned during the Algerian Civil War 1954–62. Once stripped of their property, employment and Algerian citizenship, most 160,000 Jews opted to go to France with practically nothing despite having a Zionist education. They became part of the '*Pied Noirs*' (Algerian refugees).



They established their own Jewish communities in Paris and Marseille, and elsewhere in Southern France and Alsace. All the Algerian synagogues were converted to mosques, erasing their history. Nothing remains of the Jewish community. Today, the Jewish descendants of the *Pied Noirs* are fleeing once again.

Tunisia (French Protectorate)

Tunisia is the smallest of the five North African countries, so it stands to reason that the Tunisian community in Israel should also be small, about 11,000. Tunisian Jews have migrated to France as well as to the US in much greater numbers than went to Israel. When Tunisia became independent in 1956, there was a forced exit of Jews as part of the Arabisation process. Tunisia was invaded by the Nazis (Nov 1942–May 43), who created 32 labour camps where many Jews were worked to death or starved.

Two features mark Tunisian Jews apart from a distinctive dialogue: (1) the annual pilgrimage back to Djerba Island that has continued for years, despite Tunisia's non-recognition of Israel and (2) the *Feast of Jethro*, an ancient Jewish feast.

Morocco (French & Spanish Protectorate)

Morocco boasted the largest Jewish community peaking at 275,000+. After independence in 1956, most of the 225,000 Jews left, going to France and Canada, where they could continue to speak French, and to Israel, where 90% went. Some new arrivals from France are Moroccan Jews. Historically, Morocco had a sultan as head of state, and the Jews lived in porous, walled villages (*mellahs*) under the sultan's protection. Jews occupied important roles in Moroccan society.

Moroccan Jews comprised mountain Jews from the Atlas Mountains, rural Jews, and urban Jews in seaside communities, each with a different flavour. Religious scholarship and religious life have played a large role in Moroccan Jewry, including the famous *Maimonides (Rambam)* who lived there for a while. When Israel was reborn, Moroccan Jews, with their knowledge of scripture, realised the significance and wanted to make *Aliyah* to be part of what God was doing. The Jewish Agency also played an integral part as the Moroccan government required a USD\$50 per Jew departure fee. Culturally, Moroccan Jews draw much from their *Andalusian* roots from *Sephardic* traditions. This is particularly true in music traditions, both religious and secular. They spoke their own Moroccan Arabic, which they passed on to their children in Israel. Characterised by 'Leather and Spices', they were craftsmen and traders prior to the colonial era. Once the French arrived,

aspirational Jews were quick to embrace French culture and send their children to French curriculum Jewish schools like their Algerian counterparts. Morocco became a protectorate in 1912. The Spanish occupied northern and southern areas with 15,000 Jews.

Jews suffered after the Nazi invasion, with many being interned and worked to death. However, the king prohibited Jews from being sent to extermination camps. Independence brought uprisings and hard times, encouraging emigration. In 1961, Jews were allowed to leave. *Operation Yachin* (1961–64) brought 80,000 Jews to Israel.

Moroccan Jews arrived in Israel in phases over two decades. Due to their large numbers, they were sent to peripheral towns. *Ashkenazi* Jews, who had established Israel, looked down on them and their culture. Today, they are found in all sectors of society, living lively lives, preparing spicy Arabic foods, including *Shakshouka* and celebrating *Mamouna*. Thankfully, Morocco is open to Israeli tourists.

Libya (Italian Colony)

Libya was conquered by the Italians in 1911, making it different from the other countries. About 21,000 Jews made up about 4% of the population, predominately residing in Tripoli and some in Benghazi. Libyan Jews lived amongst the Europeans and Arabs rather than in a designated area. Generally, they were well-treated until the Fascists came to power in Italy in 1922 and brought harsh discriminatory measures to Libya. Passports had to be stamped Jewish, and Jews lost employment and education. Intermarriage was forbidden. By 1941, Jews still made up 25% of Tripoli's population.

During WW2, Libya's control changed hands many times. The Jews favoured the British but faced added discrimination from Germans and Italians for their collaboration with the Allies. Mussolini wanted the Jews killed and arranged for them to be shipped to local concentration camps (*Tripolitania*) or camps in Algeria/Tunisia or those in Europe.

Post-1943 liberation, a 3-day pogrom in 1945 sealed the Jews's fate. Another occurred in 1948. Afterwards, 31,000 Jews made *Aliyah* (90% 1949–51). In 1961, Libyans were required to prove Libyan citizenship, something the Jews were denied. Another pogrom happened post-Six-Day War, and Jews were urged to leave. Thankfully, an Italian airlift brought 6,000 of the remaining 7,000 Jews to Rome. In 1969, Qaddafi prohibited emigration, and by 2004, no Jews remained. Today, Libyan Jews play an important role in construction in Israel. In Or Yehudah stands the Heritage Centre of Libyan Jewry.

Believing Without Israel

From Tiny Israel to a Universal World Religion—Part 12

■ 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.

Another argument is often made suggesting that Israel's specific position changed dramatically with the coming of Jesus. When God called Abram, He made a covenant with Abram and his descendants. The Jewish people were chosen by God as a witness to the world that God would always be faithful to them as God and that they were to worship Him as their God in return. Prior to the coming of Jesus, only this small nation was God's people on earth. All other nations were gentile peoples who worshipped other gods and were outside God's covenant. A few, such as Ruth and Hagar, were added to God's people. But it was God's intention from the beginning that this situation would not remain that way. God's plan has always been to eventually include the whole world in His salvation. God had already promised Abram: "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (*Genesis 12:3*). In many parts of the Old Testament, we can read that God eventually wants to include the entire population of the world in His salvation. Thus, Isaiah says: "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Then on that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples. And his resting place will be glorious" (*Isaiah 11:9-10*). The root of Isaiah, the Son of David, Jesus Christ, will be the saviour not only for Israel, but for the whole world. Isaiah prophesied centuries before the coming of Jesus that the Gentile nations will ask for Him. Later, in the New Testament, we read that after His

resurrection, Jesus sends His disciples out into the world to proclaim the Gospel in the well-known 'missionary command': "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (*Matthew 28:19*).

Billions of Christians Involved

The offer of salvation is no longer exclusively reserved for the Jewish people but extends to the ends of the earth. Paul puts it this way: the dividing wall that separated God's people from the Gentiles has fallen away. So, Israel would no longer be exclusively God's people, but God's people, after now two thousand years of Christianity, have expanded enormously to a crowd of billions of believers worldwide: "Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (*Ephesians 2:12-14*).

We as Gentiles were far away from the citizenship of Israel, but through faith in Jesus Christ we have come close, and the dividing wall has been broken down. The perception in enlargement—or fulfillment theology is that Israel no longer has its unique position but has widened into a large global community of believers. The boundaries have shifted. In this enlargement theology, the church has not 'replaced' Israel, but Israel, as the people of God, has now been widened into a countless crowd.

From the Beginning

Is this mindset correct? It is indeed true that from the beginning God's plan was not only to limit His salvation to His



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chosen people Israel, but to extend it to the whole world. Both the Old and New Testaments bear ample witness to this. Israel has always realised this too. The Jews know that they are called to be signposts to God, as an example to all nations. So, with the coming of the New Testament and of Jesus, nothing has suddenly changed dramatically. The entire Old Testament bears witness to the blessing that will flow from Israel to all the generations of the earth. So there is no sudden and unexpected shift from Israel to the whole world in God's scenario. All this was God's plan from the beginning. The long-awaited coming of Jesus as Messiah is the start of this new phase in God's plan of salvation.

Israel Was and Will Be Israel

The misconception here is that Israel's position and role has expired now that God's salvation has gone out to the whole world. However, the fact that the dividing wall has been broken down with the Gentile nations who may come to know Jesus does not diminish Israel's distinctiveness, position and significance as God's covenant people. Enlargement theology teaches that Israel

is actually merging into a larger whole of billions of Christ-confessing believers, thus losing its unique identity as God's covenant people and the apple of God's eye. Israel dissolving like a sugar cube and disappearing into a big mug of tea. No, Israel remains as Israel along with all God's promises to Israel. Most of these have not yet been fulfilled, but will all be fulfilled in the end times. There is indeed an impressive enlargement when it comes to the nations obtaining salvation, but this is not at the expense of Israel. One does not exclude the other. Or, to put it in a more complicated way, particularism (Israel) does not disappear with the coming of universalism (world). According to the text from *Ephesians 2*, although we have come close to the citizenship of Israel through the blood of Christ, it is not a merger. Israel retains its special position in God's plan of salvation, a position that will soon be very special. When Jesus comes back, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, He will sit on the throne of His father David and rule over the house of Jacob, and peace will extend to the ends of the earth.

The Lord's Prayer

By Kees de Vreugd

In this series, we explore how the Lord's Prayer is embedded in contemporary Jewish faith.

"Lord, teach us to pray," one of the disciples asks Jesus at one point (*Luke 11:1*). That was a question appropriate for a Jewish student at the time. The disciple referred to was John, who taught his disciples about prayer. Teachers mentioned in the *Talmud* (Jewish oral tradition) also taught their pupils how to pray. An example is Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos (late 1st century), who taught a short prayer: "Do Your will in heaven above, and give peace of mind to those who fear You below, and do what is good in Your sight, blessed are You, God, who hearest prayer."

Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6 and Luke 11*). It is the perfect prayer, which has

understandably and rightly held a central place in the Church through the centuries. It appeared in one of the oldest Christian writings besides the New Testament, the *Didachè* (=teaching of the apostles, late 1st century).

Even though the Lord's Prayer is the central Christian prayer, it is essentially Jewish through and through. In the coming article series, we will dwell on this in particular. Both in structure and theme, it is closely related to other Jewish prayers. The three-part structure of praise, supplication and concluding praise can also be found, for example, in the so-called Eighteen Benedictions, the prayer that Jews pray daily, often simply called *Tefillah*, prayer, without further addition.

It is notable, however, that Luke does not have the concluding praise, nor does it appear in the most ancient manuscripts of Matthew. But the *Didachè*, which is very close to Matthew, does have it. This may show that it was already common in the first century to add it.

The *Didachè* also prescribes praying the Lord's Prayer three times a day. This of course corresponds to Jewish prayer practice then and now, which in turn is based on the service in the temple. Three times a day the regular sacrifices were offered in the temple, during which prayers were always said. We might also understand Paul's call to "pray without ceasing" (*1 Thess. 5:17*) in this light: persevere in daily prayers.

Recommended Viewing

Screams Before Silence by Karin Horen

On 19 June, the film *Screams Before Silence* was screened as part of the international day of *International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence*. The 60-minute documentary, directed by Anat Stalinsky, with cinematographer Sasha Gavrikov and led by Sheryl Sandberg, is raw and moving in levels that are truly hard to describe.

The film takes the audience on an emotional roller coaster journey and dives into the tragic events of the Hamas massacre, with a particular focus on the acts of sexual assault committed by Hamas at the Nova Festival, other locations in the South of Israel and in captivity.

The film portrays the pain and brutality inflicted on victims of 7 October, includes personal touching and painful testimonials shared by victims, eyewitnesses, medical forensic experts and first responders, and provides a deep insight into the horrific experiences while also serving as a powerful testament to their courage and resilience.

This film gives a voice to those who endured unimaginable suffering, those who cannot speak and those who survived and can bravely tell their stories. Many victims of the massacre are still silent due to trauma. Many are still held in captivity, being tortured every day.

The survivors' stories are heart-wrenching and deeply personal. Their storytelling is courageous, shedding light on the immense trauma they faced. The film highlights the incredible strength and resilience of these individuals. In one particularly triggering scene, Amit Sousanna, a female hostage who was released from the hands of Hamas, talks about how she was chained, held at gunpoint, punched, and forced to commit sexual acts on her Hamas captor, who went by the name Muhammed.

The main purpose of *Screams Before Silence* is to raise awareness about the atrocities committed and to ensure that the truth and voices of the victims are heard. The film aims to emphasise the use of sexual violence during conflicts and the lasting impact it has on survivors and the community.

Screams Before Silence leaves viewers with a profound sense of the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of standing in solidarity with those who have suffered, passing on their stories and making sure no one is forgotten. This film is a powerful reminder of the strength of survivors and the crucial need for justice and healing after enduring such horror.

It challenges viewers to confront the harsh realities of the sexual violence of 7 October. "It could have been me, it could have been anyone...."

To view the film, go to www.screamsbeforesilence.com

God Has Not Rejected His People

■ Johannes Gerloff
Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

There is only one way to salvation. In this regard, there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews. Only those "who call on the name of the Lord will be saved." This is the basic statement of *Romans 10:1-13*.

In the second part of *chapter 10*, Paul showed how God cared for His people: He sent messengers who told Israel: "Your God reigns!" But even though the Jewish people had already heard, they did not come to a saving faith. Therefore, God calls a 'non-people', 'a foolish nation' from among the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy.

But in spite of all these efforts, the Jewish people reject its Messiah to this very day. Just as Isaiah had predicted. In light of all God's efforts for His people, Isaiah dares to say;

"I was found by those who did not look for me; I became visible to those who never asked for me." To Israel, however, he says, "All day long I have stretched out my hands to a [chosen and prepared] people that are disobedient and contradicts." (*Romans 10:20-21*)

The contrast could not be greater and could not have been formulated any more dramatically. On the one hand, there is a people "that did not call upon My name." It was not even able to call upon My name, and therefore—in view of *Romans 10:13*—had no chance of being saved. The Gentiles showed no interest whatsoever in the living God (*Romans 9:30*). But of all people, God allows Himself to be found by these 'non-people'. He introduces Himself to them: "Here I am!" (*Isaiah 65:1*).

On the other hand, there is the chosen nation of Israel. The Hebrew expression, *am*, or the Greek *laos* (nation, people), underlines the special relationship of these people to God. The expressions *goy* in Hebrew and *ethnos* in Greek describe Gentiles without any relationship with God and stand in sharp contrast to *am*, or *laos*.¹

For centuries, the Creator had revealed Himself to His people (*am/laos*), established a personal relationship with them and entrusted His word to them. Unceasingly, God stretched His hand out to Israel, pleaded with them, and invited them to come into His arms. But the chosen people were rebellious and pursued "a way that is not good, following their own thoughts". Persistently, they turned their back on God and did not want to listen (*Isaiah 65:2-3*). The faithfulness of God's love



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stands in stark contrast to the disloyalty of the people of Israel.

Therefore, the question must be asked: Has God, then, really rejected His people? (*Romans 11:1a*)

Is it 'over' for God's chosen people (*laos*)? The logical answer would be: "Yes, of course!" According to the context of *chapter 11*, the Apostle refers not only to a chosen remnant of the Jewish people but to 'the whole of Israel'. The question of rejection has to do not only with the 'messianic Jews' who believe in *Yeshua* but with all those who know that they are Jewish—whether they like it or not.

We can only understand Paul's train of thought if we can accept this tension.

God did everything to redeem Israel. But the people rejected their Messiah and, for the most part, continue to do so to this day. So logically, there is no way around the conclusion that God has rejected His people!

But in the original Greek, the Apostle Paul worded his question in a way that anticipates a negative answer. With a very strong emphasis, he answers his own question with:

"Impossible! Never!" (*Romans 11:1b*)

He proves it with three convincing arguments, which we will explore in coming issues of *Israel & Christians Today*.

¹Compare, for example, *Luke 2:30-32; Acts 4:25, 27; 26:17; Romans 15:10, 11*, where the words 'am/laos and goy/ethnos stand in contrast to each other.

The Bible Speaks

Isaiah 60:1-5

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come."



The prophet Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Messiah. While darkness covers the earth, light rises over Israel. There is emotion, not only because of the breaking forth of God's Kingdom, but also because the Jewish people see that people from the nations are bringing the children of Israel home, and foreigners are helping to rebuild the villages and cities (*verse 10*). Gentiles are helping in the fields and vineyards, all honouring the God of Israel. Pictured is a sunrise over fields in southern Israel, near Beer Sheva. | Photo: Flashgo

Middle East at War? Jerusalem, the Burdensome Stone

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

We have been exploring the topic of today's Middle East war and how it compares with end-time prophecy. One of the prophetic signs Jesus predicted in the days before His second coming was "wars and rumours of wars" (*Matthew 24:6*). Tragic as it may be, on the positive side, it is part of the birth pangs of the coming kingdom.

One of the key prophets regarding the last days and Armageddon is Zechariah. He gives impressive prophecies on both the first and second coming of Christ. In this article, we want to focus on *Zechariah 12*:

"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." *Zechariah 12:2-3*

When Zechariah prophesied these words twenty-five hundred years ago, Jerusalem was a humble walled village at the fringe of the Persian Empire.

In 1867, Mark Twain, the American novelist, visited Ottoman Palestine. His visit inspired the runaway bestselling travel book *Innocents Abroad*. His description of Jerusalem was anything but flattering:

"Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel, is gone ..."

If you told Twain that one day in the future, this 'pauper village' would modernise, grow and become the epicentre of international controversy and conflict, he would have laughed you out of the room! Yet, this is precisely what the prophetic word declared: "Jerusalem will increase in stature and size and become a global obsession."

Cup of Trembling: *Zechariah 12:2*

Here is God's declaration regarding the nations and Jerusalem. He will make the Holy City a 'cup of trembling.' The Hebrew word for 'trembling' is *ra'al*, which means to 'shake, reel, quiver, and/or tremble.' This is more than mere intoxication. It is as if those who drink from the cup will become senseless, lose



Fallen stones from Jerusalem in AD 70. | Photo: Adobe Stock Images

control, and become dangerously unhinged.

Who is going to drink from this poisonous cup? The text says, "all the people round about." This could mean the immediate Arab neighbours of Israel (*Psalms 83*). Then there is the Gog and Magog invasion of *Ezekiel 38-39*. To answer the question of who is drinking from this cup, remember they will be besieging Judah and Jerusalem when the cup is offered. So, in theory, the invaders could be near or far, neighbours or regional nations. They will wage a massive invasion and get stunned with senselessness.

The Burdensome Stone: *Zechariah 12:3*

At the Western Wall Tunnel in Jerusalem there is an amazing sight: a larger-than-life single-cut stone called the 'Western stone.' It is 13.6 metres (45 feet) in length, 3 metres (10 feet) in height, and approximately 3.5 metres (11 feet) in width. The estimated weight is 570 short tons! How would you lift such a stone into its place? We would be scratching our heads today, let alone two millennia ago in the days of Herod the King.²

Jerusalem is like that large, immovable stone. Now we come to the heart of the whole matter; God declares that "in that day"—the day that the nations besiege Judah and Jerusalem—He will make Jerusalem an even *ma'amasah*, meaning a heavy, un-moveable, and burdensome stone. Humanly speaking, it is an unsolvable problem. Not only will the stone not budge, but those who try to make it do so will be injured. In this verse, it says that those who burden themselves with this stone "shall be cut into pieces." This is despite the fact that "all the people of the earth be gathered

together against it." The nations are coming to Jerusalem—first for war (*12:3*), then for peace (*14:16*).

This is an incredible picture. As we learned earlier, there is nothing about Jerusalem that should make it the object of global attention and armed conflict, at least in the natural. It is neither large, strategic, nor well endowed with natural resources. It does not make sense (and a sip from the cup of trembling will lead to madness).

Jerusalem has key powerful stakeholders beyond just the Israelis and Palestinians, including the US, UN, EU, the Vatican, the Arab and Muslim world, Russia, and others. It is the subject of no less than sixty United Nations resolutions. It is a hot topic in any Middle East peace conference. It continues to evoke emotions and strong rhetoric on all sides. The push for a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine has embedded in it a two-Jerusalem solution as well. Will the holy city be partitioned again, like it was from 1948 to 1967? The world community is demanding this outcome more than ever. If they don't get what they want by peaceful means, will armed conflict be next? Watch and pray (*Mark 13:33, 35, 37*).

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." *Psalms 102:16*.

The growth and modernisation of Jerusalem, plus the international controversy and conflict over its ownership, were prophesied long ago. They are a milepost along the road telling us that the footsteps of Messiah are at the door.

Parts of this article are drawn from the book The Burdensome Stone: Jerusalem in the Last Days by K. Majdali, Melbourne: Teach All Nations, 2019.

¹Mark Twain (*Samuel Clemens*), *Innocents Abroad*, Project Gutenberg eBook 2006, (first published 1869).
²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Wall_Tunnel

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

A Miracle of Biblical Proportions

On 7 July, we celebrated the beginning of the Hebrew month of *Tammuz*. Indeed, there are some significant negative episodes in Jewish history that occurred in this month such as Moses destroying the Tablets of Stone when he saw the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf. However, there is also an unprecedented miracle that took place on the 3rd day of *Tammuz*—the sun standing still in *Joshua 10*.

Joshua realised that Canaanite kings of the south would escape under cover of darkness. Wishing to seek more daylight hours to deliver a punishing blow to their enemies, Joshua called upon the sun and the moon to stand motionless. Within early rabbinic thought, the celestial bodies standing still was a real event and underscored the notion that God is able to bend nature to His will. The debate among the sages was the length of the miracle of the sun standing still:

R. Joshua ben Levi says: for 24 hours...

R. Eliezer says: for 36 hours...

R. Shmuel bar Nachmani says: for 48 hours. (*Avodah Zara 25a*).

From a faith perspective, the question remains as to how Joshua can make such an audacious request from God to the extent of changing the laws of nature to help with a military issue.

On the fourth day of creation, the Bible repeats the notion that the lights are to rule the day and night twice (*1:16, 18*). Believing in the idea that every word in the Bible is there for a reason and redundancies are opportunities to excavate revelation from the sacred text, the Midrash provides the following commentary:

It refers to the righteous, who exert control over the body that was created to illuminate during the day and the body that was created to illuminate at night (*Genesis Rabbah 6:9*).

God embedded in the DNA of creation that believers are entitled to ask God to change the laws of nature so that humanity can recognise His presence in the world. It is well known that the Canaanite religion served the celestial bodies of heaven. As Joshua is conquering the Land of Israel to have nation settle it, he has an opportunity to show that the God of Israel is the Master of nature.

It is important to reflect during this month how wonderful our God truly is that He was willing to take the most reliable natural encounter of our daily lives—the typical length of a day—and pause it in order to come to the aid of His people. Although it was a one-time event, the precedent in sacred history was birthed into the world. This should give us comfort that not only can God do anything, but He also gives us the license to request from Him what seems to be the impossible so that His glory can become known in the world.

From Jerusalem Peace on Earth

■ Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel International

Hatred towards Israel is ultimately hatred towards the God of Israel, towards His Messiah, His Anointed One, Jesus, the Christ. It is an unreasonable hate with intense blindness caused by the powers of darkness.

What powers are behind the pro-Palestine protestors who want to violently shut down universities, masked unrecognisably with black balaclavas and garbed with the Palestinian 'keffiyeh', the 'Arafat scarf'? Are some professional paid agitators? Many have come as 'refugees' from the Middle East and seeded as aggressive Hamas agitators. They are inspired by a demonic, unbridled Jew-hatred with the aim of wiping Israel from the map of the Middle East and establishing an Islamic State of Palestine in its place, with Jerusalem, the third holy city of Islam after Mecca and Medina, as its capital. Between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, Jerusalem and the mosques stand on the Temple Mount as its glorious religious centres. "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free" is their politico-religious slogan.

Miracle

It is a good thing to keep an eye on the bigger picture and to look at the developments in the Middle East from a Biblical perspective. The creation of the new independent State of Israel is God's miracle, a greater miracle than the Exodus from Egypt and fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. "So then, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when people will NO LONGER say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' BUT they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where He had banished them.' Then they will live in THEIR OWN LAND." (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

Worldwide

Israel's history as a nation starts with the Exodus from Egypt. In those days, 603,555 men aged twenty years and above, not counting the Levites, according to the

Book of Numbers 1:46, took off to go to the Promised Land of Israel. So, together with the women and children some one and a half to two million people. But the worldwide return of the Jewish people to Israel in our days is already running into the millions, not only from one country (Egypt) but from all countries worldwide. The prophet Jeremiah says that this miracle will overshadow the Exodus from Egypt. God is faithful to His covenants and promises to Israel and the Jewish people. His plans will not fail. He is starting to move the history of the world forward now towards His goal: the coming of the Messiah of Israel and of His Kingdom of peace and righteousness from Jerusalem all over the world.

Blossom

So why have the Jewish people been returning to the Promised Land in our days for decades?

"In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill ALL THE WORLD with fruit." (Isaiah 27:6). The Most High has created Israel as a nation separate from all other nations. He has called, chosen, educated and made eternal covenants with Israel and the Jewish people in order to bless all nations of the world through them. Israel is an instrument in His hand to bless the world (Genesis 12:2-3). The Jewish people are returning to the Promised Land to take root, grow, blossom and produce fruit, to bless and serve the nations on the way to world peace from Jerusalem across the world. Salvation was, is and shall be from the Jews (John 4:22).

Rebuild

Israel will never again be driven out from their Promised Land. *Amos 9:14-15*: "...and I will bring My people Israel back from exile. '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.' Regardless of whatever Israel's enemies will plan and undertake to prevent this glorious future from happening.



Jewish youth sing and dance near the Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem, longing for peace. | Photo: Flashgo

Isaiah 11:11-12 says: "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again THE SECOND TIME to recover the remnant of His people who are left. From Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." The first time the Lord raised His hand to bring the Jewish people back to the Promised Land was during the Babylonian Captivity, between 600 and 500 BC. The second time is now, bringing them back from the Roman Captivity that lasted for almost 1900 years. There will not be a third time that the Lord will raise His hand. Israel is there to stay, waiting for Messiah to come and bring peace and righteousness all over the world from Jerusalem.

Remove Defamation

Today, the Jewish people are still hated and cursed by many people. Jew hatred explodes worldwide. Israel's enemies dance in the streets of the major cities in the world when Israel is attacked by Hamas and Hezbollah, who are massively inspired by the Islamic leaders of Iran for their murderous attacks.

Then, no more. The Most High will remove His people's disgrace from the entire earth (*Isaiah 25:7-8*). Then, the blindness of the nations will also be removed, as there is a shroud that covers the United Nations. That will happen in Jerusalem from Mount Zion and the Temple Mount. All of a sudden, they will see how special the Jewish people and Israel are. God's people, God's Land and God's city where His holy Name will dwell. The blindness of Israel regarding its Messiah will be removed as well (*Zechariah 12:10-14*). Finally, Peace on earth!

True Peace

"Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many people. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (*Isaiah 2:3-4*). Peace on earth! Fulfilment of what the angels were singing (*Luke 2:14*) when Jesus the Jew was born in Bethlehem!

Attacks on Northern Israel by Hezbollah (from Lebanon) 7 October 2023 – 7 June 2024



3,200+

rockets and mortars fired at Israel



700+

anti-tank missiles fired at Israel



25+

Israelis murdered



200+

Israelis wounded



60,000+

Israelis evacuated

Learning From the History of Portugal's Jews

■ **Ashley Perry**
JNS (Jewish News Syndicate)

After 7 October, the revival of Jewish life in the country is a lesson in resistance and rebirth.

At the beginning of the 16th century, my family fled the Iberian Peninsula, which had been their home, according to family tradition, for the better part of two millennia, having been exiled directly from the Land of Israel.

They appear to have left soon after the Lisbon Massacre of 1506, an antisemitic pogrom that killed thousands of Jews. This was only 14 years after my family entered Portugal from Spain after the Spanish Jews were expelled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's infamous edict and 12 years since they tried to leave Portugal only to be forced to stay by royal decree.

After the Lisbon atrocities, King Manuel of Portugal issued a temporary edict allowing Jews to leave the kingdom. My family took this brief opportunity, fleeing over the Pyrenees mountains that separate Iberia from the rest of Europe.

The Jewish Community of Porto has shown us that we can and should learn from history in order to overcome tragedy and destruction. Its story is quintessentially Jewish.

They were among the lucky ones because massacres of forcibly converted Portuguese Jews, who were now called 'New Christians', kept occurring over the decades and centuries that followed.

Manuel Peres, my 15th great-grandfather, eventually found himself in France, then Hamburg and Amsterdam, and finally London over three centuries ago.

Nevertheless, it was the Lisbon massacre of 1506 that was emblazoned on our collective memory. The antisemitic excesses of that time have been unfortunately re-enacted in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and now Israel.

Just as on 7 Oct., back in 1506, Jewish children were butchered and burned alive, with the heads of men, women and children decapitated and stolen as prizes. Just as on the *Black Shabbat* and *Simchat Torah*, the frenzy was marked by the slaughterers' delight and religious fervor.

As Gabriel Senderowicz, the president of the Jewish Community of Porto in Portugal and a member of the board of



A Portuguese Inquisition auto-da-fé in Lisbon. Photo: Wikimedia Commons Images

the European Jewish Association, said: "To know the 1506 massacre in Lisbon is to know the 7 October 2023 massacre in Israel and the historic genocides of Jews all over Europe. The only change has been in the weapons."

That is why, to ensure that the Jewish people and others understand that 7 Oct. was just the latest of many

hope that these stories of courage and heroism inspire us all.

The Jewish Community of Porto is the story of a Jewish community that fought against oppression and discrimination to rise again from the ashes. It is the story of all Jews, wherever they may be. It is a story of resilience and resistance. Porto's Jews have shown that it is possible to rise again, even against seemingly impossible odds.

Those of us in Israel, especially those devoid of hope and optimism due to the scenes from that devastating day of 7 Oct., the rise in antisemitism, and the international campaign of hate and delegitimation against us, could do worse than to look to Porto for inspiration.

The Jewish Community of Porto has shown us that we can and should learn from history in order to overcome tragedy and destruction. Its story is quintessentially Jewish.

I know that my ancestors, who loved the Iberian Peninsula and lived through the heights of the period of peaceful coexistence called the *Convivencia* and then the lows of the Inquisition and Expulsion but persisted despite the threats and dangers they faced, would be proud to see what has become of a city with such a strong Jewish past.

It is from Porto that we learn from our past for the sake of the present and our collective Jewish future.

Ashley Perry is an adviser to the Middle East Forum's Israel office. He served as an adviser to Israel's foreign minister and deputy prime minister from 2009 to 2015. He is president of Reconnectar, an organisation dedicated to linking the more than 200 million descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews to Israel and Jewish life. Originally from the United Kingdom, he moved to Israel in 2001. Republished with permission.

Short News

Treatment Refused



A voluntary doctor in Gaza relates in an interview that the hospital care is manipulated by Hamas. Hamas restricts access to Gazans, medical help is rationed, and hospital space is reserved for Hamas' own militants. The Kurdish doctor Baxtiyar Baram says that even now, Hamas still strongly controls the hospitals. Baram also says that he saw Hamas exploiting public locations to conceal terror operations. | Photo: Flash90

Harbour of Eilat Closed

The harbour of Eilat is still closed. It has been closed since November 2023 because of the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. The closure is a major financial loss to the city of Eilat. The harbour's chairman, Gideon Golber, says that the Houthis "try to suffocate" his city and its economy. He added: "When the conflict in the North, between Israel and Hezbollah, escalates further, and thus limits the harbours in the Mediterranean Sea, this could become a national threat."

WHO Amendment Adopted



Somewhat unexpectedly, an Israeli amendment presented to a recent meeting of the World Health Organisation was adopted. The amendment calls for the release of all hostages by Hamas and other terrorists and disapproves of the militarisation of hospitals by armed Gazan groups. The amendment was submitted with a resolution that has been put to vote every year since 1968 by the WHO and then adopted. The resolution criticises Israel about the health care situation in the areas under Palestinian control. After the amendment was adopted, the Arab Group tried to prevent the now altered resolution, but the altered resolution obtained a large majority of 102 – 6. | Photo: WHO Antoine Tardy

The Downfall of the Cherry Tomato

■ Tal Hartuv

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

What does it really mean to be a light to the nations? That is a question Jewish people have grappled with ever since we received the commandments at Sinai. Stuck in the middle between two pagan empires, making trade and war impossible unless passing through the Land of Israel, the Lord God at the very least had geography in mind. Israel was perfectly placed to display our unique and holy ethical code which God wanted us to share because he loved the nations so much.

Jewish history has been rocky. A destroyed Temple, a diaspora, forced conversions, expulsions, the Holocaust and the war waged against the state of Israel ever since its founding in 1948.

But through it all, the question of commission has never left us. Some Jews in history have been uncomfortable with the question mentioned above, preferring instead to try to fit in. A case in point is a small group of Jews in Hitler's Germany who convinced themselves that they were Germans before they were Jewish. The same can be said of some Jews in the diaspora today, especially in the United States, who until the events following 7 October, had felt safe as Jews and integrated into American culture in their own unique way.

Our children belong to, and are the continuation of our 3000 years of history.

Israel too, it can be argued, has tried to show the world how much we are just like everyone else because we like to help everyone else. With the advocacy movement championing the likes of leading technology and inventions that have benefitted the world, (including the famous cherry tomato), the response of many who use that technology has not been one of gratitude but bullying, being cancelled, being beaten up, excluded from public events, educational institutions and having our synagogues firebombed in the West.

All of this is done under the pretence of the so-called genocide in Gaza, but many of these Jewish victims of antisemitism have no tangible association with Israel; at a stretch they may have relatives there.

The awkward truth is, and one that Jewish people must no longer deny, is that no matter what a Jew does to fit in, or be liked, or prove we are like everyone else, he or she is always and only, viewed as a Jew. The reality is, the people of Israel were never elected to fit in, but

appointed by God, to stand out. That's what it means to be a light.

A recent case in point is the Eurovision song contest. Most self-respecting Europeans rightly couldn't care less about a pagan festival that passes for music, but for Israel, this fringe and flamboyant whatever-it-is, where men and women spend more effort making a point of their myriad of gender rather than performing even a semi-decent song, this contest is important.

Not for the music, but because it weirdly serves as a gauge for measuring public attitudes towards the Jewish people and the Jewish State. Some may find this understandably self-obsessed, but not if you're Jewish, or Israeli, and with antisemitism devouring western society, right up to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, it is a must-see.

For the uninitiated, let me explain: Because of the dual voting system, namely, a panel of judges from each country followed by the public casting their ballot by phone, this reveals the attitudes of the establishment and the reality of what an average European really thinks.

The vote was never about the music. A couple of years ago when Ukraine won, they performed a song so bereft of any musical skill that a deaf person could probably have written a better song. It didn't matter. This was Europe's chance to tell Putin what they thought of him, and a little vote in contest to be forgotten in a couple of days, was seen, pathetically so, as a blistering show of support for an unjust invasion by Mother Russia.

Now it was Israel's Turn

The official jury banished the 20-year-old Israeli singer, Eden Golan, into exile, who stood on stage looking very much like the woman that God had created her to be. Unlike other entries which included a real-live devil worshipper, a man called 'Nemo' wearing a tutu and a bunch of British skinheads simulating gay sex in a men's bathroom.

The voting public however rebelled in overwhelmingly casting their votes in favour of the Jewish singer.

There is a lot to be learned by this bizarre contest. Firstly, the tirade of anti-Israel sentiment in the main stream media which brainwashes people into how cruel and evil Israel is, does not represent the view of many Europeans—who it must be said, are troublingly silent. In historic speak, it was the silent majority during the Holocaust, who arguably did no wrong, yet as the ashes of the six million emerged from the ground, proves that they did not do anything right.

I often speak to the army and cadets at



Eden Golan at the Eurovision Song Contest 2024 final dress rehearsal. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

pre-military academies, giving them little pep talks of not just what to expect physically and mentally when you are under extreme stress, but also about the important things in life; namely, it's not what you do in life, but who you are in what you do. Life is unpredictable and it's good to keep short accounts. If you have an argument, then kiss and make up. If you love someone, tell them what it is about them that you love. If you're at an event and someone is sitting in the corner on their own, go up to them and start a conversation. These are just examples of a basic moral code, not to think of ourselves to highly and to be attentive to others, all of which is in our Holy Torah.

For Remembrance Day this year, I was invited to speak to army cadets on a base near Gaza. The invitation was from 18-year-old Rotem whom I did not know, but had texted me the week before asking me to speak to his group. I meet hundreds of people every year through these talks so I was not surprised to hear that he had met me before, but I was taken aback at the circumstances: He first met me in the forest when he was five, back in 2010. He was with his brother and his parents having a picnic. Kicking a ball around the park, he looked up and suddenly saw me staggering gagged and bound and bleeding to death. It was his father who gave me first aid and saved my life. Rotem, was shoved in the car by his mother. But he'd seen me covered in blood and had been traumatised ever since. Rotem wanted closure. Meeting me, he believed, would help him get through those grisly memories of that day which had stayed with him ever since.

Those 30 recruits, young men and women, are just a few of the thousands who have had to shelve their college education, not think of getting a job just yet or plan for the popular post-army

trip to some exotic country. Even finding the love of their life is on hold until the war is over.

I looked long and hard into their eyes. Last week some were delivering pizza, now they are learning how to shoot an M16. These are good kids, like all kids they have their fears, but they also have a purpose and a healthy identity, a sense of belonging to an ancient and wonderful nation and unlike most kids, they are selfless, willing to sacrifice, risk their lives, and sometimes pay the ultimate terrible price.

In them I saw the embodiment of 'normal', which is an unpopular message in a woke world. It was the same normal demonstrated in the likes of our singer Eden Golan. Our children are not restless and ignorant, or obsessed with self. They are not bent on redefining gender and pushing that agenda. Our children know that it is the protection of both nation and family, which is at the core to the survival of the people of Israel. They don't need to feel part of a manipulated global uprising to feel that they belong. Our children belong to, and are the continuation of our 3000 years of history. They are satisfied with their lot.

Rotem, his cadets, and Eden Golan, reminded me that it is this generation who are a light to the nations: and it is not the invention of the cherry tomato. As the older generation of Israelis, we must do everything to protect their commission by nourishing, loving, encouraging them, and correcting them when necessary, so they will go on shining in a world where many would rather see them gone.

Tal Hartuv grew up in the United Kingdom, but made Aliyah to Israel where she worked as a tour guide, among other things. In 2010 she survived a horrific attack in which her friend, Christine Luken, was killed. Today she is mainly active as speaker and writer.

Heart-wrenching Choices

**BRING
THE JEWS
HOME**



Right before departure from Ukraine with Olga, fourth from the left. | Photo: C4I Ukraine

■ Koen Carlier Aliyah Fieldworker Ukraine

Since the start of this year, during the distribution of thousands of food parcels in dozens of large and smaller cities, we have once again reminded people of the importance of getting their (Aliyah) documents in order.

This was not our idea but the idea of the Israeli consul. During a meeting, he mentioned numerous examples of families whose documents had been burnt or lost under the rubble during bombing or drone attacks. In Zaporozhya (eastern Ukraine and close to Europe's largest nuclear power plant), we recently distributed 689 food parcels and provided people with additional information about our possibilities to help them get their documents ready. This turned out to be very timely afterwards—given the heavy fighting in the area. There is also a family leaving Krivvy Rih for Israel soon. A day before

we met them, their apartment building was bombed.

"Go to Israel"

People who leave often face difficult choices, for instance, Olga from Kharkiv. At the beginning of the war, she fled to safer places in Ukraine with her 14-year-old son Hleb. Her 78-year-old mother did not want to join her and was left behind. For years, Olga worked through Hesed to provide home care for Jewish elderly and Holocaust survivors. Eventually, Hleb left for Israel with 150 Jewish youngsters from across Ukraine as part of a study programme. Olga returned to Kharkiv hoping to convince her mother to also leave and build a new life in Israel. Olga's mother, however, stuck to her position, telling her daughter, "It's war in Ukraine, it's war in Israel, but your son needs you more than I do here. Go to Israel." And so it happened.

We are grateful that we were in a position to help Olga. First, with transport to the consulate and then with transport to Kishenov in Moldova, from where Olga flew to Israel. Israel expects to welcome around 20,000 new immigrants this year, mainly from Russia, Ukraine, France and the United States. *"Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.'" Jeremiah 31:10*



Saying goodbye to loved ones. | Photo: C4I Ukraine



C4I's Nataliya gives information about making Aliyah at a local synagogue close to the Russian border | Photo: C4I Ukraine

It costs \$300 to help one person make Aliyah from Ukraine.
**Will you help?
Every amount helps!**

Retreat for Christians in Bethlehem

The past few months have been intense for Rev Khoury's congregation in Bethlehem. The attack on 7 October by Hamas and the war that followed in Gaza left an impact. Tensions are tangible and rising. Anyone who speaks out for Israel in the Palestinian territories should beware. This also applies to the congregation of Rev Khoury.

Every year, Naim and Elvira Khoury organise a weekend away for church members. Away from the everyday life and consciously making time to relax, meet and encourage each other, and open the Bible together. This year in particular, Naim and Elvira find that this is important for congregation members.

Being a Christian in a city like Bethlehem, in the midst of a Muslim population, is not easy. It means being constantly on edge because of possible danger or violence. That is exactly why a time of meeting and faith-building is so immensely valuable.

Not everyone can afford the cost of \$265 per person for this retreat. Christians for Israel has supported this initiative of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem for many years, and hopefully we can help raise the necessary funds.

Will you help us again?



First Baptist Church Bethlehem. | Photo: Naim and Elvira Khoury

