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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Israelis calling for the release of the hostages held by Hamas terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: Flash90

Israel's Hostage Tragedy—and Dilemma

On 7 October 2023, thousands of Hamas terrorists slaughtered some 1,200 people across more than 20 communities in southern Israel. They seized 253 hostages and took them to Gaza.

As of early February, it is believed that 132 are still in captivity after a week-long truce in late November saw the release of 105 hostages. Four hostages were released prior to the November truce, and troops rescued one other. The bodies of eight hostages have also been recovered, and three others were mistakenly killed by the Israeli military.

However, a report was released in early February—the eve of the fourth month of the war

between Israel and the Gaza terror group—confirming that thirty-two of these hostages are no longer alive and that the IDF is also assessing 'unconfirmed intelligence' that at least twenty additional hostages may have also been killed.

This was a huge shock to a nation already grieving its lost ones and living in hope that the remaining hostages would be released.

While Israel grieves, Hamas is cynically using the Israeli hostages as human shields and as bargaining chips in its demand for a cease-fire.

The Israeli government has consistently stated since

7 October that the twin aims of the war are the release of the hostages and the elimination of Hamas. These are, of course, potentially conflicting aims.

The longer the war lasts, the more domestic pressure on the government to agree on a cease-fire at any price in order to ensure the release of the hostages. Moreover, after four months of war, Israel is under increasing international demands to reach an agreement with Hamas that would ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, in which less than the full number of hostages and deceased will be handed over, and the release of many Hamas terrorists from Israeli goals.

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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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Zero-Tolerance Policy Needed

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | [Christians for Israel](#)

It is becoming clear that there is a vast global network of interrelated entities, countries and other interests that supported the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 and are continuing to support terror against Israel. The United Nations system is also infiltrated by these interests. It is time to put an end to this. 'Terror' is defined as the use of violent or destructive acts (such as bombing) committed by groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands.

Hamas is, by definition, a terrorist organisation. As its 1988 Charter shows, it is an Islamist movement committed to the use of violence in order to "obliterate Israel" and "raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine". For Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other similar Islamist groups, the mere existence of the State of Israel is seen as an obstacle to the reign and rule of Allah.

Although the immediate goal is the rule of Islam and Sharia law in all of Palestine, the movement is a global one. For example, Article 2 of the Hamas Covenant reads: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine. Moslem Brotherhood Movement is a universal organisation which constitutes the largest Islamic movement in modern times. It is characterised by its deep understanding, accurate comprehension and complete embrace of all Islamic concepts of all aspects of life, culture, creed, politics, economics, education, society, justice and judgement, the spreading of Islam, education, art, information, science of the occult and conversion to Islam."

The use of violence and killing innocent people in order to achieve this goal is promoted by Iran, Qatar and Turkey, which are now the main sponsors and supporters of global Islamist terror.

Hamas is deeply embedded in UN institutions such as UNRWA, as explained by Jonathan Tobin in this edition.

The European Union (and its member states) is financing Hamas through the support of the PA, Palestinian organisations, UNRWA and other UN institutions connected to Hamas. Although Hamas is on various terror lists, sanctions are weak and poorly implemented and policed.

The legal proceedings against Israel in international institutions like the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) are, to a large extent, expressions of these political, ideological, religious and economic interests.

Western governments must insist that no concessions should be made to any person or entity that supports acts of terror. This should be a red line for all Western nations.

This also means they should reject the idea that acts of terror committed by Hamas operating from Gaza on a continual basis since 2006 (not to mention its fellow Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon) in order to obliterate Israel, should somehow be compared with the acts of Israel—a sovereign, democratic state—in defending its citizens. The tragic killing of innocent Palestinian civilians in the course of a legitimate war of self-defence cannot be compared morally with the intentional and indiscriminate slaughter of innocent

Jews simply because they are Jews.

To claim that Israel is committing genocide is beyond comprehension—and yet, South Africa has succeeded in capturing the world's attention and even obtaining a hearing at the ICJ in The Hague. Even though the Court on 26 January did not order the immediate cease-fire that South Africa asked for, South Africa, Hamas, Iran and their allies won a massive PR victory by virtue of the fact that the Court ruled that it is 'plausible' that Israel is committing genocide.

Thanks to social media, the idea that the Jews are guilty of genocide has now been planted in the hearts and minds of a new generation that has been brainwashed by woke Marxist ideologies and is largely ignorant of history.

In the meantime, the world looks on as Hamas continues to hold hostages and the bodies of deceased Israelis in blatant contravention of international law and morality.

Over the past months, the PA has shown that it shares Hamas' commitment to terror as a weapon. This means that a two-state solution governed by the Fatah-ruled Palestinian Authority (PA) should be off the table for the time being.

The culture of terror and violence is the curse of the Middle East and is extending to Western nations. The complete abandonment of terror should be a condition precedent (sine qua non) to the provision of ANY Western financial aid to UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority or any other entity that seeks to support the Palestinian people of advance Palestinian self-determination claims. A new system is needed.

Prayer Points

Israel

- "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." *Psalm 34:18*. Pray for all hostages still being held in Gaza today. Pray that they will be alive and quickly released or found. Pray also that despite the terrible conditions they are in, they may experience that God is with them.
- Pray for wisdom for the Israeli government and the leadership of the Israeli Defense Forces to constantly make the right decisions about the military operation in Gaza and the distribution of troops across the country. Pray for God's peace in the hearts of Israelis and give thanks for the unity that prevails among the people.
- Pray for the innocent people in Gaza who are stuck in the middle of the war and whose living situation is dangerous. Pray that aid will reach these people and pray that Hamas will stop using its own citizens as human shields.

Israel & the Nations

- Israel is constantly accused of violating international law and has even had to defend itself at the International Court of Justice in The Hague against

charges of genocide. Pray for Israel's legal protection.

- "My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." *Daniel 6:22a*. Great danger still threatens Israel on all its borders. Threats from Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, terrorists in Judea Samaria and the Houthis in the south by the Red Sea. Pray that God's angels will be all around Israel to protect it as an angel protected Daniel in the lion's den.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks to all Christians worldwide who support Israel by praying for Israel, donating money, or even volunteering in Israel. Pray that the group of Christians who stand with Israel will continue to grow and that the connection between Jews and Christians will become stronger.
- Give thanks for the work Koen Carlier and his team are doing in Ukraine among the Jewish community and Holocaust survivors. Conditions are tough because of the winter and the ongoing war, and there is much poverty. Pray that many people will be helped.

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

Fragile Consensus in Israel

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

On 7 October 2023, Hamas, aided by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and civilians, not only slaughtered more than 1,200 Israelis but also killed the hope that there would ever be a peaceful solution to the more than century-old conflict with the Palestinian Arabs. Other consequences are unique in the history of the State of Israel, as we will see.

When I read the first reports of events on 7 Oct. and saw that hundreds of rockets had been fired into Israel, my first reaction was: here we go again.

I watched in amazement as the stream of updates on my smartphone showed that Hamas was invading southern Israel, and my first thought was, how?? How could this happen??

As someone who has been writing for almost eight years about the so-called multi-front war that Iran was preparing for Israel and was aware of the IDF's preparations for such a war, those were my first thoughts.

Through all the documents and information I had received over the years about Iran and the IDF's operations in what in Israel was called MABAM (*Milchama bin haMilchamot*), the war between the wars, I had become convinced that the army was excellently prepared for this war.

Because the information provided in the first hours of that *Black Shabbat* was poor and often based on eyewitness accounts over the telephone, my question was left hanging in the air.

Many in Israel realised that action had to be taken. In my case, that meant setting up a war room from which I could send updates to the live blog on the Christians for Israel website.

For others, it meant collecting army equipment, a weapon and then rushing southward or booking a plane ticket on the first plane available to fly to Israel.

I think that after the initial shock, everyone understood that we were in a state of emergency and that action had to be taken. What happened in the days after the full extent of the genocide became clear can safely be called unique in the history of Israel.

The people of Israel spontaneously took over the country with thousands of volunteers, leaving everything behind and starting initiatives that would contribute to the survival of Israel and to the care of the victims who survived the massacre since that was the general feeling; Israel was engaged in a second War of Independence.

To a lesser extent, we saw something similar after the suicide bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya on *Seder* evening,



Israeli volunteers help out with the tomato harvest at a Moshav in the Sharon area. | Photo: Flash90

the first day of *Passover* at the end of March 2002. Thirty people were killed in that attack and 140 injured. It was the timing (the most important evening on the Jewish calendar) that caused many people to take action immediately.

Also then, thousands of IDF reservists came to their bases without *Tzaf Shmoneh* (mobilisation order). There was also a similar determination to put an end to the wave of suicide bombings, but now an even stronger reaction was noticeable. Expat Israelis returned to Israel to re-enlist in the IDF or to help with the hundreds of private initiatives that had been launched since the genocide took place.

Others left their jobs to help identify those murdered, and the same people who were behind the anti-government protest campaign in the months before 7 Oct. now began an international campaign to bring home the more than 240 abductees.

In social terms, a revolutionary change also took place. While the various groups in Israeli society were 7 Oct. diametrically opposed to each other, and some even used the word civil war at the time, now those divisions suddenly seemed to have disappeared and made way for brotherly unity.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews who had always refused to serve in the IDF now signed up in droves to receive emergency training in the use of weapons and wanted to join the two fronts that had already emerged.

Left-wing activists who were always found at pro-Palestinian demonstrations suddenly changed their minds and fought side by side with right-wing religious soldiers in combat units. A large number of these activists have now been cured of the peace illusions they always harboured and say there is no partner to talk to.

Politically, we saw that politicians who had fought each other day in and day out now formed a war cabinet together, and there was an overriding consensus that Israel was fighting for its survival and that Hamas had to be indefinitely defeated.

That consensus still exists, although there is now a difference of opinion about the two goals of the war with Hamas, and this is especially evident over the question of what to do with the 134 hostages held in Gaza.

For those involved in the international campaign to free the hostages, this issue is more important than a victory over Hamas, but the vast majority of the Israeli public insists on not stopping the war again and continuing fighting to the end, even if that means losing some of the hostages.

For the first time, it appears that Israel will not give in to foreign pressure to stop the war over the humanitarian problem in Gaza.

A new ceasefire is only beneficial for Hamas, which now has to fear the end of its rule in Gaza, although there is enormous internal pressure on the government of PM Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to another agreement because of the 134 hostages Hamas is holding.

Then there is Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has been waging a war of attrition against Israel since 8 October, and here, too, there is consensus that the situation as it existed before 7 Oct. can no longer be tolerated.

The nearly one hundred thousand evacuees who have been transferred from their homes along the border with Lebanon to hotels and holiday homes in northern Israel are united in their demand for an end to Hezbollah's presence along the border. Until that is the case, they will not return home.

Some of these evacuees told me they had been told by the government that there was no chance of returning home before *Passover* at the end of April. Many of these evacuees have now rented vacant houses or vacation homes and are trying to resume their daily routine in one way or another as compensation measures have been introduced to undo at least some of the financial damage suffered by these families.

Short News

Shelter's Improved



Israel's public shelters are in dire need of repair and contemporary communications equipment. The Israeli Ministry of Communications, therefore, releases a budget to improve the nearly 4,000 shelters in the border regions. | Photo: Flash90

Concerns about the Bnei Menashe

The Bnei Menashe (one of the lost tribes) reside in northeastern India. In early January, seven members of the Bnei Menashe were killed by a rocket attack. It is unclear who is responsible for the attack, and there is no reason to believe that the attack was specifically directed at the Jewish community. It is plausible that it has to do with the flaring ethno-religious conflict between the Hindus and the Kuki tribe, which is predominantly Christian and in which the Bnei Menashe are included. There are now calls in the Knesset in Israel to accelerate the return of the Bnei Menashe from India. About 5,500 Bnei Menashe remain in India.

Reward Offered

The US is offering \$10 million for information leading to the unravelling of the financial network of the terror group Hamas. There is also an award for any information on donors, financial institutions that facilitate the transactions and companies that provide technology for this purpose.

Israel Condemned Twice as Often



Last year, the United Nations General Assembly condemned Israel twice as often as all other countries combined. This is shown in a report by UN Watch. Israel was condemned 14 times, and there were seven decisions condemning other countries. Terrorist groups were not condemned at all. | Photo: Shutterstock

UNRWA Aims to Combat Israel's Existence

■ **By Jonathan S. Tobin**
Editor-in-chief | JNS

As a result of revelations that 12 employees of UNRWA—the UN refugee agency dedicated to assisting the Palestinians—took part in the Hamas pogroms in southern Israel on 7 October and that approximately 10% of UNRWA employees are either active members or have ties to Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, many of the governments that are the principal funders of UNRWA, including the United States, which is the largest donor giving \$422 million to it in 2023, have placed a stop on their funding of UNRWA and since expressed various levels of concern or outrage.

An Unaccountable UN Agency

If the past is any indication of the future, even those who have spoken out about this, like the United States, will eventually, even if quietly, resume full funding of UNRWA. The reason for this is that UNRWA has made itself indispensable to the business of caring for Palestinians in Gaza. It is, as it has been for the last 75 years, the primary conduit of assistance to a population that has been made dependent on the international community for all services, including employment. As such, it can and does present itself to the world as the embodiment of philanthropy, providing sustenance to an enormous number of people in need.

That is why any effort to investigate its activities and penalise it for its close ties to terrorists is always derailed by invoking its good works and the notion that if it were shut down, millions would starve.

The only theoretical hope for there to be peace between Israel and the Palestinians must start with the abolition of institutions that not only provide assistance and employment to terrorists but have as their purpose the perpetuation of a futile quest to destroy the one Jewish state on the planet. UNRWA must not merely be defunded. It must be abolished.

A World Full of Refugees

The very fact of its existence is a function of the way the international community has acted to prevent a resolution of the conflict.

When UNRWA was created by the United Nations in 1949, the plight of refugees was among the world's most pressing problems. Up to 60 million people were displaced in Europe during and immediately after the Second World War.

That included those Jews who had survived the Holocaust seeking to go to Israel or the West, as well as millions of others who had been uprooted for one

reason or another. Among them were ethnic Germans who were thrown out of their homes throughout Eastern Europe, including traditionally German regions like East Prussia. As Europe adjusted to new borders largely imposed by the demands of the Soviet Union, many people were forcibly evicted and told to move to places where their ethnicity would be welcomed. Any who resisted were not supported by the international community. They were violently repressed, imprisoned and forgotten.

Nor was Europe the only region where there was a refugee crisis. When Britain abandoned its rule of India, the subcontinent was partitioned into two separate nations—largely Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The drawing of those lines on the map created 14 million people who found themselves on the wrong side of the new borders and became refugees. More than 1 million people died in the ethnic and religious violence there as massive populations scrambled to find new homes.

Arab and Jewish Refugees

Coming around the same time as the catastrophe caused by the partition of India was the refugee problem caused by Britain's leaving another of its former possessions: the Mandate for Palestine. The United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states: one for the Jews and one for the Arabs, with Jerusalem being an international enclave. While the Jews accepted the partition scheme, the Arabs did not. The leaders of the Palestinian Arabs—like the pro-Nazi Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini—declared war on the Jews. Neighboring Arab nations supported them and invaded the newborn State of Israel on its first day of existence in May 1948.

The Arab war to destroy Israel not only failed; the fighting led hundreds of thousands of Arabs in the former Mandate to flee. A small minority were forced out by Israelis during bitter fighting in some areas. But most of them left out of fear of what would happen to them if they fell under the rule of Jews (and with the expectation that they would take over all the land once the Jews were “thrown into the sea”).

During the same period, as approximately 700,000 Arabs became refugees, some 800,000 Jews either fled or were forced to flee their homes in the Arab and Muslim world, where they had lived for centuries.

The Jewish refugees were resettled in a massive philanthropic project funded by Jews around the world. Most of those



Caption: A Palestinian man outside the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza City protests cuts to aid on 20 June 2023. | Photo: Shutterstock.

refugees went to Israel, where they faced hardships in what was then a very poor and embattled country. Today, their descendants make up about half the Jewish population and have contributed enormously to its defence and flourishing as a modern state. Others found new homes in the United States and other parts of the world.

Unlike every other refugee population, the Palestinian Arabs were not resettled. They were kept in camps throughout the Middle East, with the largest concentration in Gaza, which was controlled by Egypt from 1949 to 1967. They were prevented from finding new homes in Arab and Muslim countries, where they spoke the language and shared a common culture. Nor were they enabled to go elsewhere to make new lives.

Instead, they were kept in place to wait for the day when they could “go home” to their former villages in what was now Israel. Their leaders and the rest of the Arab world opposed their resettlement, doing all they could to prevent it.

And the agency that enabled this policy to continue for generations was none other than UNRWA.

The United Nations created two refugee agencies. One, UNRWA, deals only with the Palestinians. The other, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (or UNHCR), has the responsibility for all of the other refugees in the world.

The UNHCR has its flaws, but its job is to help the refugees by giving them not just immediate aid in surviving being displaced by wars and other disasters but also assistance in resettling in places where it will be safe for them. Their goal is to ensure that their problems are resolved and that their children will make new lives rather than continue to live in camps.

By contrast, the UNRWA exists solely to ensure that Palestinian refugees are

never resettled. That's why almost all of the people who are called Palestinian refugees are the descendants of the people who fled the war the Arab world started in 1948. Several generations have been born in the camps, but contrary to the way other populations are treated, all are given the same status as those who were the original 1948 refugees.

A humane and rational policy would have led to their being absorbed into other populations. But that's not UNRWA's job. It operates the ultimate welfare state in which generations are kept dependent on charity. Worse than that, its programs and policies all encourage the Palestinians to go on believing that someday Israel will cease to exist, and then they can return to where their grandparents and great-grandparents lived three-quarters of a century ago. Though it pretends to be a humanitarian force, it encourages its charges to look forward to the day when Hamas's genocidal objective—the mass murder of Israel's 7 million Jews—will be achieved.

Therefore, it's little surprise that UNRWA is riddled with supporters of Hamas and that among its staff are people who take part in terrorist atrocities. And that much of the aid it receives from the world goes to help Hamas continue to function. UNRWA allows the very people its donors think are helping to be used as human shields in a cynical, hopeless war.

UNRWA needs to be abolished and replaced by a genuine agency that can give Palestinians new homes rather than keep them in misery, awaiting another Holocaust for the Jews that they've been led to believe will magically solve their problems.

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Hamas Leader: Replace Israel with ‘Palestine’

■ JNS

Hamas leader Khaled Mashal rejected the two-state solution in a recently aired interview, emphasising that the terrorist group’s goal of replacing Israel with a Palestinian state was more attainable after Hamas’s 7 October massacre.

Mashal made the comments during a three-part discussion with Kuwaiti podcaster Amar Taki posted in the second week of January. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) published a translated excerpt.

The Hamas leader, who was living in Qatar as of last year, said that “we have nothing to do with the two-state solution. We reject this notion because it means that you would get a promise for a [Palestinian] state, yet you are required to recognise the legitimacy of the other state, which is the Zionist entity.”

He continued: “This is unacceptable. We demand to be liberated, to get rid of the occupation, and to have our independence and our state. [Israel] is my enemy. It is not my concern.”

Mashal suggested that 7 Oct. was a pivotal moment for the movement to

replace Israel with a Palestinian state and remarked on the pro-Hamas demonstrations worldwide that took place after the massacre, in which hordes of heavily armed gunmen murdered 1,200 people, wounded thousands more and took 240 hostages back to Gaza.

“This is unacceptable. We demand to be liberated, to get rid of the occupation, and to have our independence and our state...”

“I believe that the dream and the hope for Palestine from the River to the Sea and from the north to the south has been renewed. This has also become a slogan chanted in the US and in Western capital cities, by the American and Western public,” he said.

“*Palestine is free from the River to the Sea*—that’s the slogan of the American students and the [students] in European capital cities.

“The Palestinian consensus—or almost a consensus—is that we will not give up on our right to Palestine in its entirety, from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea and from Rosh Hanikra to Eilat or the Gulf of Aqaba,” he continued.

7 Oct. “has turned the idea of liberating Palestine from the *River to the Sea* into a realistic idea that has already begun. It is not something [merely] to be expected or hoped for. It is part of the plan, part of the agenda, and we are standing on its threshold, Allah willing.”

Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, posted the MEMRI video of the interview to his account, urging those calling for a ceasefire to listen to Mashal’s words.

“A ceasefire ensures Hamas’ continued rule in Gaza, and this destroys any possibility for a solution to the conflict. Hamas is stating this loud and clear! So if you truly want a solution—you must first support the eradication of Hamas. Stop hiding behind empty words and slogans!”

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Short News

Three Million Tourists



After 7 October, tourism to Israel came to a halt, but in the first nine months of 2023, Israel welcomed some three million visitors. This left the record standing in 2019 when Israel welcomed 4.5 million tourists. But in comparison to 2022, when 2.7 million people visited the country, Israel did attract more visitors last year. That is according to statistics from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. Tourists visit the country for an average of eight days. Fifty per cent of them are Christian, and a quarter are Jewish. Just over half were visiting Israel for the first time. | Photo: Flash90

Fewer Antisemitic Reports

Even though the number of reports of antisemitism worldwide increased by five hundred per cent after 7 October, a study shows it doesn’t give the full picture. The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy found that a significant number of incidents go unreported or are misclassified. Significant reasons are authorities’ reluctance to recognise antisemitism and the fear of Jewish communities to exaggerate an incident.

Abraham Accords Hold Up



Even though countries that signed the Abraham Accords condemned actions by Israel at the beginning of the war on 7 Oct, the Abraham Accords seem to be holding up. The countries experience pressure from their Arab allies but also face attacks by Iran or its accomplices. Ultimately, however, these countries do not want Hamas to win, preferring Israel to defeat Hamas in order to limit Iran’s influence. While the current war may temporarily delay or put the relationship with Israel on hold, in the long run, the countries benefit from a good relationship with Israel, especially in the economic and security fields. | Photo: Flash90

Israel’s Multi-Front War with Iran

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

The two most dangerous fronts for Israel are Yemen and Lebanon.

In recent weeks, the situation on the front with Hezbollah has escalated, and Israel now appears to be heading for a major war with Iran’s most important proxy after diplomatic negotiations through US diplomat Amos Hochstein failed. The IDF now appears to be preparing for a major operation expected to begin within weeks.

According to the Israeli think tank INSS, Hezbollah has 200,000 rockets and advanced mortar shells at its disposal. Thousands of Hezbollah’s missiles are equipped with a GPS guidance system and can, therefore, reach their target accurately. It is estimated that in the event of a full-scale war, Hezbollah will fire 1,200 to 1,500 rockets per day at Israel.

Since Hezbollah has precise intelligence through espionage about Israel’s vital civil and military infrastructure, it is to be expected that Israel’s economy will come to a virtual standstill and that a very different situation will then exist

than is the case now.

At the moment, there is a business-as-usual situation in large parts of Israel, except for the border areas, but Hezbollah’s long-range missiles that can reach all of Israel could bring day-to-day life to a complete standstill.

The second most dangerous front is Yemen, where the Ansar Allah (Houthi) militia continuously attacks civilian shipping. Ansar Allah is helped by advisors from the IRGC and Hezbollah, who are stationed in Yemen, and the international coalition of naval vessels formed under US leadership appears to have made little impression on the Iranian proxy so far despite escalating attacks on the military infrastructure of the militia.

In the capital, Sana’a, there are huge mass demonstrations every week in which Israel and the US are cursed. The American army, together with England, has now carried out seven attacks on Ansar Allah bases in Yemen so far.

However, the militia appears determined to continue its attacks because this will lead to a complete halt to shipping traffic in the Red Sea, where sixteen per cent of

the world’s total maritime trade passes every day, so this front has the potential to develop into a global conflict.

Israel is, therefore, in a very difficult position that even dwarfs the situation that occurred in 1967 and 1973 during the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War.

The current multi-front war coincides with the loss of the ability to effectively monitor Iran’s nuclear programme, as the IAEA actually reported on 19 January.

Observers in Israel, myself included, fear that Iran will use the current chaos in the Middle East and the obsession with the war in Gaza to move toward a nuclear weapon. The Islamic Republic now has enough uranium, enriched to 60 per cent, which can be upgraded within a few weeks to the 91 per cent needed to produce a nuclear warhead.

This is, in short, the state of affairs in Israel and the Middle East, and it will be clear that the Jewish state will be in serious trouble if the war escalates further according to the ‘ring of fire’ plan for the destruction of Israel that Iran drew up years ago.

“Is it Ok to Eat?” Child Hostages Ask

■ Etgar Lefkovits

JNS.org

It is unclear how long the children will take to recover from their trauma, whether it will be months or even years.

“Is it OK to eat? Can we look out the window? Is it alright to leave the room?” These were among the questions that scores of traumatised Israeli children held hostage for more than 50 days by Hamas in Gaza asked doctors and social workers during their first days of freedom and recuperation.

Slowly, the children began to regain their trust. A half-smile; an immediately-granted after midnight request for schnitzel and mashed potatoes. After some days, they were released from the hospital as doctors worked to help these child hostages return home. Yet their journey is only just beginning.

‘Shadows of Children’ Return Home

They have been called ‘shadows of children.’ Thin and emaciated, pallid and fearful, and all of a sudden grown up, some orphaned, others with a parent still left behind in captivity in Gaza.

For over 50 days, many were kept in tiny underground rooms in tunnels with no windows or daylight, recounted Dr Dana Singer-Harel, a paediatrician at Schneider Children’s Hospital in Petach Tikvah, who was part of a team of doctors and social workers who tended to the child hostages after their release from Gaza.

They suffered from meagre food, no sanitary conditions, and the fear of the unknown. Some didn’t know how much time had passed or where they were. The lucky ones had their mothers or siblings with them. Some heard of family

members killed on the Hebrew news radio that their captors were listening to.

Most of the children lost between 10% to 15% of their body weight, the paediatrician said. Some of the children were not allowed to shower even once in their 54-day captivity, while others showered just once with a bucket of water.

“This wasn’t something you can prepare for by reading a medical textbook,” Singer-Harel said in an interview. “It was a case-by-case basis. There was no good way to prepare for this.”

“In my wildest dreams, these were stories that I never thought I would hear,” added Ifat Ezer-Cohen, a hospital social worker.

And those were the lucky ones. Two children, including the youngest hostage, baby Kfir Bibas, and his 4-year-old brother Ariel remain unaccounted for, their fate unknown since they were not released with the rest of the 30-some children freed during the periodic releases held in November.

Most of the children released from captivity were brought to Schneider Children’s Hospital, where they spent between two nights to a week. Besides being emaciated and fearful, many had stomach flu, diarrhoea and lice but were otherwise physically in stable condition, Singer-Harel said. Because of the emotional trauma that they underwent, many of the children had regressive responses and became more child-like, such as wetting their pants after previously being toilet trained, she said.

Those who had their mothers with them fared the best. “It was amazing to see how much better those children who had their mothers with them fared both physically and mentally compared to



Doron Katz Asher and her two young daughters Raz, 4, and Aviv, 2, are reunited with husband and father Yoni, on 25 November 2023. (Schneider Children’s Hospital)

those who were alone,” Singer-Harel said.

The social worker recounted how some of the mothers made up stories so that their children would not be fearful, telling them they were in a safe place because there was a war going on at home. As such, the children called their captors ‘the guards with the beard’ or ‘the guards with the gun,’ she said. “The mothers’ main motivation was to protect their children,” said Ezer-Cohen.

“Every choice they made—whether it what they said or how much they ate—was related to how to save their children.”

Recovery

After the children were released from the hospital and back with their friends and relatives, if not at home, which in some cases was damaged or destroyed, it remains unclear how long it will take these children to

recover from their trauma, whether it will be months or even years.

“The mental rehabilitation will take time,” said Singer-Harel. “It is hard to say how long it will be,” said Ezer-Cohen. “This is a journey that they need to recover from.”

Originally published at www.jns.org. Republished with permission.



Emilia Alony, 5, is reunited with her grandmother after she was held hostage in Gaza, 25 November 2023. (Schneider Children’s Hospital)

Bibas Family Marks Kfir’s First Birthday

■ Amelia Botbol

JNS.org

“It’s my birthday and no one will celebrate with me,” Yossi Schneider read out from a letter as family members and representatives of the Hostage and Missing Families Forum marked Kfir Bibas’s first birthday in Nir Oz. “It’s my birthday and I am not with my family. It’s my birthday and I don’t get presents. It’s my birthday and I hope that you remember me,” continued Schneider, Shiri Bibas’s cousin.

On 7 October, Shiri, her husband Yarden and their two children, Ariel, 4, and Kfir, then nine months old, were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists in Nir Oz, less than a mile from the Gaza border. Seventy-eight residents of the

kibbutz were kidnapped and another 39 were killed.

For a baby to celebrate his first birthday in captivity has never happened before,” Jimmy Miller, also Shiri’s cousin, told JNS. “These children do not belong in captivity,” he continued. “They are not Hamas’s enemies. They did not do anything to anyone. They are being used as human shields and bargaining chips. The entire world must put pressure on Hamas using all existing means for their release.”

Shortened version of article that was first published on JNS.org, published with permission.



Kfir Bibas was just nine months old when he was ripped from his home and kidnapped by Hamas terrorists. | Photo: Hostages and Missing Families Forum

Experiencing the Holocaust a Second Time

■ Anat Schneider

Israel Today

“Never in my life would I have thought that I would experience the Holocaust again,” Tzili Wenkert (82) told us. Her grandson Omer Wenkert was kidnapped to the Gaza Strip by Hamas terrorists on Black Shabbat, and Omer’s girlfriend was brutally murdered. Since then, Grandma Tzili has been advocating for her grandson. Anat Schneider had the opportunity to talk to her.

Tzili is a beautiful lady; you can tell that she is courageous and optimistic. The name Tzili refers to the pleasant and gentle sound that comes from the bearer of the name. With great love and endless blessings but almost overwhelmed by pain, she speaks of her kidnapped grandson: “Omer must be released. He suffers from chronic colitis and needs his medication every day. What will happen to him if he no longer takes his daily medication? Where is my Omer now? He is twenty-two, my eldest grandson, a cheerful, polite, good boy. Always friendly to everyone.”

Tzili tells me about Omer and describes his nature. He must be very hardworking and ambitious: “Imagine: He was already running a restaurant with forty employees. It is his dream to develop further as a restaurateur. But for me, Omer will always be a child.”

“What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel.”

You can tell Tzili experienced the Holocaust herself as a child. And that all the emotions from that terrible time come rushing back. What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel. “They showed me a video; I can’t get it out of my mind. There lies Omer, my child, wearing only his underwear, his hands tied behind his back, on a pickup truck with terrorists all around him. Then he lifts his head and looks into the camera for a moment. I see the fear in his eyes; I can really feel it. Help, God!”

Taken Hostage

She immediately understood that her grandson was held hostage in the Gaza Strip. For her, what she saw with her own eyes was a true holocaust, actually even worse than the one she survived in Europe. “I wouldn’t have thought it possible that I would experience a Holocaust again at my age.” Tzili was born in Romania in 1941. When her family was taken to the ghetto, she was six weeks old. At three-and-a-half years old, she barely survived. She can

remember how German planes bombed the ghetto. Her mother stood at the door of the barracks and hugged her.

What’s worse is that this massacre, this second holocaust, happened at home, in the Land of Israel.

After the Holocaust, the area in which they lived fell to the Soviet Union. It was incredibly difficult to get an exit permit. It only happened after her marriage. In 1965, she, her husband and their families emigrated to Israel.

A Spark of Hope

Since Omer was abducted, Tzili has been unable to get through the night without medication. The hardest thing is fear. What will happen? The uncertainty is terrible. During the day, she tries to instill hope in the entire family. She doesn’t even try to hide her pain, but it can’t be compared to the pain of her parents. Tzili is determined to spread optimism, fragile as it might be, but optimism nonetheless, a spark of hope. Under no circumstances does she want to give up. The media knows Tzili and is happy to let her take the microphone. She speaks to the world at every opportunity. But above all, Tzili prays in silence, alone before God. She begs Him to ensure that Omer and all the other hostages are released. “Only God can help,” Tzili told me, and she says it very firmly.

Did she take any encouragement from Israeli and world leaders? I don’t get that impression. “Even though the US President was here and spoke nicely, I don’t see any real progress. Weeks have passed—bad weeks. We feel like we’re in hell, and Omer is stuck in hell. But we are not hearing any progress from the government regarding the hostages.” She speaks of full confidence in Israel’s army and hopes that it will be successful in freeing the hostages. But she doesn’t expect anything from the government in Jerusalem.

“We have seen the behaviour of our politicians in recent years. What I see with my eyes does not make us God’s chosen people,” she tells me sadly. “A chosen people is a people who stick together, who live in unity as it was in the Warsaw Ghetto. Everyone was together and helped each other. This is the only way we can defeat evil.”

Prayers

“Some of the readers of *Israel Today* met Tzili at one of our Zoom meetings. When she talked about Omer, you, who



Tzili Wenkert, a Holocaust survivor and the grandmother of Omer Wenkert, who is held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: Flash90



Omer Wenkert in a picture from Hamas

were there, could empathise. I asked her if she wanted to ask you something or tell you something. This was new for them: There are Christians who love the people of Israel, whose hearts are with the Jewish people. She said, “Please pray for my Omer and his family, and pray for all the hostages in Gaza. Only God can help us. We are one big family, made in the image of God.”

Tzili had friends in Romania, Christians, with whom she studied together after the Second World War. She told me about their close, friendly relationship. Tzili also told me how she called her son, Saul, on 7 October, which will go down in history as *Black Shabbat*. At the time, no one knew that Omer had been kidnapped. She wanted to ask how Omer was doing because she knew he was at the Nova music festival with his girlfriend. She promised her son that she would pray immediately. And she has

been doing this non-stop ever since. She can’t do anything more for Omer and his family now.

Pray

As we say goodbye, Tzili shows me a photo of her grandson. I see a beautiful, smiling child full of joy and life. Tzili says quietly: “I look at this picture all the time; I talk to Omer every day.” I tell Tzili: “Close your eyes and use all your senses. It’s really important. God is with us. Surely you feel the warmth of Omer’s body, smell him, feel yourself press a kiss on his cheek and hear his laugh as if he were there.”

Tzili urges me to ask you to pray for her grandson and the other hostages. “Prayers have power,” she insists. I promise Tzili to pass on her request to you all. Indeed, let’s not stop praying for Omer and all those still in captivity.

First published in *Israel Today*, republished with permission.

PROVIDING HELP IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

Since 7 October, Israelis have had their lives upended—families torn apart, homes destroyed, their sense of security obliterated—with dire psychological, emotional, and financial consequences. As Christians for Israel we want to bring comfort amidst the despair through our emergency fund.

Israel remains in crisis, and families are grappling with unimaginable loss. Many have friends and family serving in the army, and the people of Israel find themselves in a state of tremendous distress. However, amidst the challenges, there is resilience. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to let the people in Israel know that they are not alone and that there are Christians around the world standing in solidarity with them. By visiting and supporting various initiatives aimed at helping the people of Israel, we can bring a ray of hope to those in need.

Danielle Mor of The Jewish Agency expressed gratitude, saying, “Christians for Israel has supported

victims of terror, lone soldiers, shelters for new *olim* (immigrants), food parcels and medicine for poor elderly and Holocaust survivors, and lifesaving equipment for communities in Israel, and renovating shelters. What an impact you have made in Israel, in its harshest hour.”

As the war persists, Christians for Israel remains committed to supporting projects in Israel where it is needed most. Among the initiatives we are actively supporting are:

- **Jewish Agency:** Victims of Terror Fund, safeguarding elderly and new immigrants.
- **ZAKA:** The Israeli organisation that helps identify victims of disasters.
- **Jaffa Institute and Shalva Jerusalem:** Providing shelter to refugees from southern Israel.
- **Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC):** Extending assistance to families affected by the conflict.

- **Jerusalem Foundation:** Offering help to the elderly who cannot or dare not go out into the streets.

- **ADI:** Providing extra help for multiple disabled children.

- **Bead Chaim:** Offering additional support for pregnant women who are alone.

- **Hineni humanitarian restaurant:** Providing meals to those in need.

- **Food aid for poor families and elderly:** Ensuring that essential sustenance reaches those who need it most.

Friends from the First Home in the Homeland integration project emphasise the value of your support during these trying times: “When it seems like the entire world is against us, you offer us your hand, your light and your warmth! So, ‘thanks’ is the least thing we can tell you. There are no words to express how we appreciate your support and friendship.”



Assisting evacuees through the Victims of Terror Fund.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel



Activities for children evacuated from Ibim Absorption Center.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel



Children from southern Israel in their temporary kindergarten in Jerusalem's center. | Photo: Jerusalem Foundation



Roger van Oordt (C4I Netherlands) gives welcome packages to teenagers from Kibbutz Karmia at their temporary residence. | Photo: Shalva



Food packages for the elderly.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel

Will You Help?

Your help and support are vital to many in Israel. We provide not only the much-needed resources, but also show our solidarity and love. Extend your hand of support today and stand with Israel in its time of need.

Please use the coupon at the back of this newspaper to donate.

Together we can make a difference.



CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand
and
South Pacific Edition
February 2024

We Stand with Israel

■ Bryce Turner

New Zealand Executive Director | Christians for Israel NZ

Welcome to our first edition of *Israel and Christians Today* for 2024. As we look forward to 2024, there seems to be an air of tension. Not just because of the ongoing—but hopefully soon concluding—war that our brothers and sisters in the Middle East are fighting right now, but because of the worldwide focus and misrepresentation of what is actually going on in Israel and Gaza.

I shared in the December edition some of the frustration I have been personally struggling with, having had the privilege of spending a month on the ground in Israel in November/December and then coming back to New Zealand to see the media, social media, and even church foyer discussion absolutely saturated with misinformation (at best). At worst, blatant antisemitism has come out from the shadows, now unashamed to brazenly march in the streets of our country, hiding under cries of ‘genocide’ and ‘occupation’. We look forward to bringing you news in our next edition, of the Indigenous Coalition for Israel embassy in Jerusalem that has just opened. A number of prominent Maori New Zealanders have been involved in this milestone project. Aside from the irrefutable fact of Jewish indigeneity in the Holy Land, our own indigenous population has seen sharp division, however. On the one hand, there are a huge number of Maori who recognise the struggles of Israelis and the ongoing hatred they experience that culminated in the 7 October attacks. As with any population, there are a large number who are completely indifferent to the whole situation. But there is also a small but very vocal—and mostly radical—group of Maori who have fallen for the fairytales, somehow twisting the narrative of thousands of years of history to somehow come out in support of the Palestinian—the Hamas—cause. Add to this the scores of other New Zealanders who have simply seen pictures, heard rabid screams at protests (i.e. Chloe S. et al.), and without stopping to check any facts have thrown their passion and fury behind the wrong side.

I never thought I would see the day when Members of the New Zealand Parliament were sworn in wearing Palestinian *keffiyeh*—a symbol that has come to be

associated with murder, rape and violence, not just in Israel but all around the world. As the Greens and the Maori Party, in particular, have continued to escalate their vitriol, now almost foaming at the mouth, we see protests not only supporting the ‘Palestinians’ but calling for the extermination of Jews and the annihilation of Israel. Ironically, parroting the very genocide promised publicly by both the PLO and Hamas’ charters. It is an interesting exercise to research how much of the terrorism around the entire world is committed by Islamic extremists, much—most —somehow justified by aligning with the ‘Palestinian struggle’.

Do I sound frustrated? The part that frustrates me the most? As I have been privileged to share in meetings all around the upper North Island (so far, I’m coming further south soon!), despite living in an era when more information is so easily accessible to us than ever before in history, we are stupid. Believing the first images that come up on our screens, we fall for the oldest tricks in the book. Tell a sad, emotive story— especially with lots of pain and suffering—and you win popular opinion. The only faster way to gain favour is to hand out money—we’ll tackle that one another day! So, those who tell the saddest, most emotive story, especially when that group overlaps with those who have the largest advertising budget, the most resources, and the most ‘spare time’, win public support. Every time.

How else do we rationalise that within three days of the 7 October attacks, public opinion was already shifting to blame Israel, then to deny the attacks even happened, then to even try to accuse Israel of genocide?

This edition includes commentary from our experts in international law, but suffice to say there were some very clear findings from the South African attempt to nail Israel at the ICJ. Firstly, despite a long history of trying to condemn Israel, the ICJ could not find a legal basis to issue the provisional ceasefire demanded by SA. Instead, they reminded Israel to follow the rules— which they do—and to submit reports to support this. Secondly, the ICJ demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages and access to the International Society of the Red Cross. For which we are still waiting.

The medications specially arranged for Gazan civilians

on the condition that the hostages received it also? Not a word.

Ceasefire? Like the one that Hamas broke, that was already in place on 7 Oct.? Or the several previous ones they also broke? Ignorant calls for a ceasefire play on the desire of all of us—for this war to end, for the deaths to cease—but completely ignore the reasons for the war, the responsibility Israel has to protect its citizens from the promised repeat of 7 Oct., and the conditions in Gaza directly imposed by Hamas who have effectively stolen the billions of dollars poured into the Gaza Strip that should have made it a resort paradise. Hamas’ ridiculous demands only further illustrate that they really aren’t interested in any peaceful arrangement. It was Hamas that broke the last pause agreement.

Cries for the supposed tens of thousands of children killed—numbers supplied only by Hamas and unverified by anyone, and in spite of the exhaustive measures taken by the IDF to remove civilians before attacking Hamas positions—are admirable, albeit misdirected. Increasing evidence is being provided— there is much more to come—of UNRWA’s direct responsibility for inciting, promoting, even funding and resourcing the deeply indoctrinated hatred we see oozing from every crack in the PA-controlled territories and Gaza. The UN, Int. Red Cross, etc, have categorically failed Israeli citizens and Gazans, and to date, not one single country has turned up to the table with any better ideas to resolve the crisis.

Not one single Gazan would have been killed by Israeli forces if they hadn’t attacked on 7 October.

We must continue to pray—harder—for the peace of Jerusalem. But this peace can no longer be expected to come at the expense of Israelis. If the world cannot be part of the solution, then they need to get out of the way.

I shared previously my fear that the innocent people of Israel would be forgotten, left to rebuild alone.

Not on my watch! See our promotion inside as we prepare to stand with our Australian cousins on a Solidarity Tour of Israel. Please join us. Or sponsor your pastor!

God is working in Israel right now. Of that, I have no doubt.

\$10 from every calendar sold will go towards the Israel Emergency Special Appeal

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Christian Antisemitism

■ Joanna Moss

Let's talk about the elephant in the room. Sadly, Christian antisemitism in New Zealand has mushroomed since the war began in October 2023. It's never been this bad before in our lifetimes. What are we to make of it? Things changed on 7 October. The plumb line came down. Now it's a question of which side are you on? Are you siding with what God says about Israel and the Jews or not?

Christians tend to fall into one of three categories: Pro and anti-Jews/Israel groups and the neutral or undecided. Spiritually being neutral is really anti. Undecided may apply to young Christians who need some basic instruction on the way God operates in the Bible. Ignorance and arrogance are killers (*Romans 11*). Some Christians report that their churches have remained silent over the whole issue as if the war wasn't taking place. It's just business as usual. Many find this position incredulous. Other churches that did pray for Israel no longer do so out of fear of offending or dividing the congregation. God hates cowards—if my servant shrinks back... Remember, he promised to spit the Laodicean church out of his mouth for being lukewarm. So, how do we respond to this situation? First, we need to recognise that Christian antisemitism exists, and it's a big issue. No denial or sweeping it under the carpet. It's important and has grave spiritual consequences for the people involved. Secondly, we need to recognise that it's a spirit and not a matter of knowledge. But being a spirit doesn't absolve you of responsibility for your thoughts and actions. It just means you need to clean out your temple, not just educate yourself. Plenty of people know a great deal about the Holocaust, but they never apply the principles to themselves. Next, we must start looking at how it manifests within and deal with our attitudes. Remember, God judges on the curve regarding our knowledge, and we can't plead ignorance this time. We have both access to scripture and knowledge of the Holocaust and the events leading up to it. Historically, few Christians in the past stood for the Jews, but we know that judgment follows even if we lightly esteem the Jews/Israel. The Hebrew word that sets the standard in *Genesis 12.2* is not equal on both sides; it's 'curse' if you even lightly esteem the Jews. So ask yourself the question—do you want to poke your finger in the apple of God's eye? Do you want a curse or a blessing? It's your choice. Are you willing to accept God's choice of Israel/Jews as election and all that follows, knowing that Israel is unfaithful and unholy as we are too?

Reflection

Familiarise yourself with the test—the 3 D's of antisemitism: *Demonisation*, *De-legitimation* and *Double Standards* (see page 4). Spend a bit of time in reflection with pen and paper, noting down everything that comes to mind. This isn't a one-off process. It might be feelings, impressions, and attitudes in yourself, your family or others. It could even include hatred or blaming of the media, teachers, Germans, Poles or others, including Gazans, for what they did to the Jews and guest workers. Remember, "Vengeance is mine", says the Lord (*Romans 12:19*)

Ask yourself the question: Do I have any hatred in my heart for the Jews or others? Have I ever demonised, challenged the legitimacy of Israel or applied a double standard? Don't rush this process. You might have stood by whilst others engaged in antisemitism, and you did not speak up. Note this incident down. Don't think that being a Christian, you won't experience

antisemitism personally from other Christians, colleagues, neighbours and even family. This may apply more often to those with Jewish blood or a strong affiliation with Israel. Note it can be vicious. This is just more proof that it's a spirit, not a rational thing.

Repentance Strategy

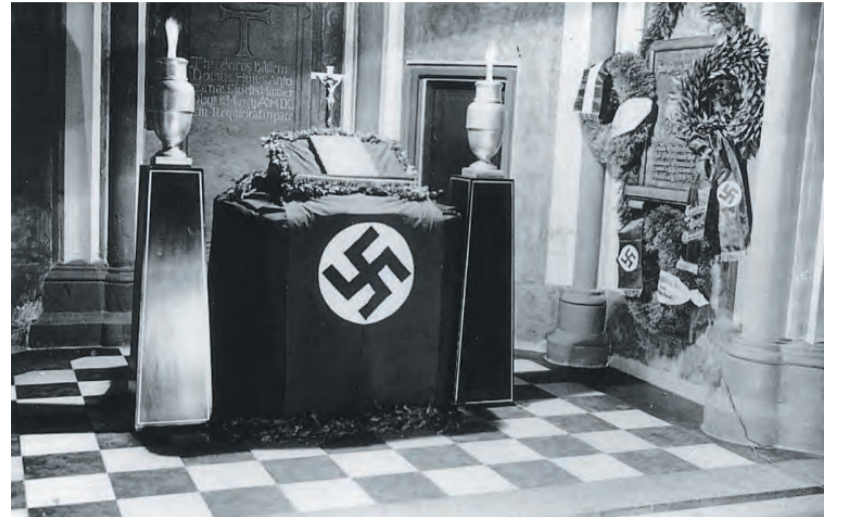
We will use the basic two principles of repentance (accountability) and taking sins to the Cross. First, apply it in the general sense and then use specific examples, both for yourself and your family. This is not a formula; it's about doing serious business with God. You must be sincere. Be led by the Holy Spirit. Also, be open that you may not have any memories of these incidents, but a memory may come back or a prompting from the Holy Spirit.

Once you have prepared yourself spiritually to come before God including having clean hands and a pure heart. Cover yourself, your dwelling, your family and the session with the Blood and ask God to shut the eyes of the watchers and ears of the hearers.

1. Begin with a general repentance of antisemitism.
2. Stand in the gap on behalf of your family.
3. Ask the Lord to bring to mind if there are any specific incidents of antisemitism.
4. Ask the Lord regarding incidents in your family line. Some you may have witnessed and others not.
5. Forgive yourself for any incidents and wrong attitudes.
6. Ask God to wash and cleanse you of all unrighteousness and ask for the Holy Spirit to fill you up again. This is a very important step. Pray a sealing prayer.
7. You may wish to take communion afterwards, especially if serious repentance occurred.

Examples

1. Father, I come to you in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I repent of having any antisemitism or indifference towards the Jews, Israelis or the state of Israel. I renounce any attitudes or wrong thinking that displeases you in this area. I ask you now to bring to remembrance any attitude or incident that needs repentance.
2. I stand in the gap on behalf of my family and family line and ask forgiveness for my family's antisemitism. If there are particular family members who you know/knew are/were antisemitic, name them and ask for forgiveness on their behalf. You may need to forgive them yourself, too.
3. Father, I call to mind the situation when... describe the situation and repent of any wrongdoing. If specific words were used in relation to antisemitism, you need to deal with them exactly, i.e. you need to unsay the exact words. Words have power, and words have life beyond when they were spoken or written. This is how the words and their effects are broken. I renounce...; I repent of those words; I break their power and cut them off in my inheritance.
4. Do as above for any incident the Holy Spirit brings up from people in your family line.
Father, I stand in the gap on behalf of... Who said antisemitic things such as... knowingly or unknowingly. I seek forgiveness for their sins.
5. It's important to forgive yourself so that no residue



Many altars were defiled and crosses removed e.g. Antoniter church, 1935

remains. We have all said rash or unwise things. Antisemitic words may have come out of your mouth, and you did not know why, how, or where they came from.

6. Father God, I thank you that you have brought to mind these antisemitic thoughts, words and actions and made a way to deal with them by the death and resurrection of your Son. I ask that you bring to mind any other matters at the appropriate time so that I can take accountability for my own sins and those in my family line. I thank you for all that you are doing in me and ask that you wash and cleanse me by the blood of the Lamb and that the Holy Spirit comes and fills me up again. I seal this session with the blood of the Lamb and ask that there be no retribution or retaliation.

Oath with a Difference

In a surprise move, five prominent members of the Green Party chose to wear a large, black and white Palestinian solidarity *keffiyeh* whilst taking their parliamentary oath on Tuesday, 5 December. They were Marama Davidson (Co-Leader), Golriz Ghaharaman, Chloe Swarbrick (Auckland Central), Julie Anne Genter (Rongotai) and Ricardo March. Often, Maori or Pacific Island cultural dress is worn to reflect cultural heritage, but this was the first time a political statement was made as part of the oath and by so many MPs.

Anything you place around your neck is a yoking; think necklaces and scarves. So, the MPs yoked with the Palestinian cause and sealed it with their oath. Note that they promised to serve NZ, and yet their yoking suggests dual loyalty. Time will tell.

Later, they posed for a gallery picture with those bearing the scarf taking front and centre, suggesting that the cause is important for the party's top brass. Interestingly, Tamartha Paul, new Wellington Central MP; who

championed the *Ramallah* cause as a Wellington City councillor, chose not to do so. In the photo, new Auckland area List MP Steve Abel chose to wear a *kiffiyeh*, but folded up (see Steve Abel back right hand corner).



Imputing the Crime of Cain to Abel

■ Andrew Tucker

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

Late December 2023, South Africa brought proceedings in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under the Genocide Convention, claiming that Israel is a racist apartheid entity that is trying to eliminate the Palestinians (and has been doing so ever since 1948) and the only way to deal with this is to order Israel to bring an immediate and complete end to the conflict in Gaza.

Israel argues it is Hamas, not Israel, that has a genocidal intention and that Israel is a legitimate state based on the rule of law, fighting a justified war against Hamas, not the Palestinian people. While the number of deaths and extent of destruction in Gaza is high, this is an unhappy but inevitable consequence of the war that Hamas started and Israel never wanted.

On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decided that it is 'plausible' that Israel is committing genocide of the Palestinian people. The Court acknowledged that on 7 October, "Hamas and other armed groups present in the Gaza Strip carried out an attack in Israel, killing more than 1,200 persons, injuring thousands and abducting some 240 people, many of whom continue to be held hostage", and at the end of its judgment demanded the release of the hostages. But the Court at no point made any reference to Hamas' ongoing use of force against Israel and its genocidal campaign to eliminate the Jewish people.

The Israeli-nominated judge ad hoc Aharon Barak was highly critical of the Court's approach, accusing the Court of "imputing the crime of Cain to Abel".

Constructive Ambiguity

The Court's 25-page judgment is a prime example of "constructive ambiguity"—a technique (usually ascribed to Henry Kissinger) employed to disguise an inability to resolve a contentious issue on which the parties remain far apart and to do so in a manner that enables each to claim to obtain some concession on it.

The Court expressed strong criticism of Israel's use of force in Gaza and of the statements made by a number of Israeli leaders that appeared to promote large-scale destruction and killing of Palestinians in Gaza in response to the attacks of 7 October. But it said it cannot (and should not) at this stage decide that Israel is committing genocide. Accordingly, the Court did not grant the extreme measure of a ceasefire that South Africa had demanded.

Nevertheless, it ordered Israel to "make sure it does not commit genocide". Israel, of course, considers that it has no intention to destroy the Palestinian people and thus is not committing genocide.

Dodging the difficult question of whether genocide is being committed, the Court called on Israel to "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". This is basically an obligation Israel already has under international humanitarian law.

The ICJ expressed its "deep concern" about the situation of the hostages and "calls for their immediate and unconditional release". But while these are nice words, they are totally ineffective as Hamas is not a party to these proceedings.

Judge Aharon Barak

In his powerful dissenting opinion, Israeli Judge ad hoc Aharon Barak stated that this is, in effect, "to impute the crime of Cain to Abel". This is a reference to *Genesis 4*, where Cain murders his brother Abel in jealousy.

Barak was one of only two of the seventeen judges who opposed the majority's decision. (The other was Ugandan judge Julia Sebutinde, who opined that South Africa's claims are groundless and the case should be dismissed).

Barak emphasised that the Genocide Convention was established on the ashes of the Holocaust. It created a new international crime—the "crime of crimes", the most horrendous crime in existence. The Jewish people know better than any other people what genocide is, and the State of Israel was established to ensure that genocide never happens again.

Genocide is the killing members of a group with the intention of destroying that group. At the heart of the concept is to destroy (eliminate) the group as such. Absent such intention there may be widespread destruction constituting a violation of international humanitarian law or criminal law, but there can be no genocide.

Barak explained that he himself experienced the full force of Nazi attempt at genocide. He was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, and miraculously survived the Nazi onslaught. Only 5% of the Jews of Lithuania survived.

Evidence of Genocide?

According to Barak, the Court's decision that it is "plausible" that Israel intends to destroy not just Hamas but the



Public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case South Africa v. Israel, 11-12 January 2024, at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the seat of the Court. | Photo: International Court of Justice

Palestinians as such is most problematic. The Court based this conclusion on the combination of massive number of casualties and extent of destruction, the fact that Israel was aware that its campaign would cause a humanitarian crisis, and a number of select statements by Israeli leaders shortly after 7 October.

But that takes the statements of Israeli leaders out of context, places huge reliance on dubious information provided by Hamas, and flies in the face of all the evidence provided by Israel that Israel is trying in every possible way to minimise civilian casualties. It ignores the fact that this is a highly complex and difficult urban war, in which Hamas has a deliberate strategy of embedding its combatants in civilian places like schools, mosques and hospitals.

Inexplicably, the Court virtually ignored that huge amount of evidence that Israel had provided to the Court of its efforts to minimise civilian casualties, and of Hamas' strategy of maximising civilian casualties.

By stating that it is "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide, the Court is allowing international law to be politicised. South Africa clearly used the Genocide Convention to advance the Palestinians' political cause, and to support the campaign of Hamas.

It is no secret that the ANC has close ties with Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Evidence has even emerged that Iran was involved and maybe even financed this case in The Hague.

The Court also relied heavily on evidence provided by UNRWA, the Palestinian refugee organisation. However, UNRWA is far from neutral in this matter. In recent days, a lot of evidence is emerging that UNRWA is heavily infiltrated by Hamas. According to the Wall Street Journal, 10 per cent of

UNRWA's 12,000 employees are affiliated with Hamas.

Perhaps more importantly, South Africa's selective and politicised weaponisation of the Genocide Convention against Israel is diverting the attention of the world from the fact the genocidal campaign launched by Iran, and implemented through its proxies including Hamas (Gaza and West Bank) and Hezbollah (in Lebanon), to eliminate the Jewish people in Palestine.

Hamas is a proxy of Iran, and shares Iran's intent to eliminate the Jewish people in Palestine. As its 1988 Charter shows, it is an Islamist movement committed to the use of violence in order to "obliterate Israel" and "raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine". For Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other similar Islamist groups, the mere existence of the State of Israel is seen as an obstacle to the reign and rule of Allah.

Consequences of the Decision

The "constructive ambiguity" approach avoids making a clear decision based on the merits of the case. Ad hoc Judge Barak shows that the evidence presented to the Court simply did not provide a basis for concluding that it is plausible that Israel is committing genocide. The Court simply should have recognised this and dismissed South Africa's claims.

By giving credibility to South Africa's politically driven claims, the Court is allowing the law to be politicised.

All of this degrades the authority of the Court, and the integrity of the legal system. And it undermines the rights of sovereign states to defend their citizens against terror.



From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



Although we are in early February, it is an exceptionally mild Friday afternoon in Tel Aviv. Soon, the magic of the *Sabbath* will embrace this city and, indeed, this entire land. However,

today, as in every *Sabbath* since 7 October, the special spirit of this day is marred by the sounds of war which was imposed on Israel by the vicious terrorist organisation Hamas and its cohorts around the Middle East.

Ours is the most justified of battles. We went to war not to conquer land but to defeat an aggressor who invaded our territory. Is it necessary to remind anyone of the cruelty of the onslaught by Hamas? Do we have to reiterate the reports of the murderous abuse of men, women, and children by the terrorists? Over 100 days have passed, and still more than 130 Israeli hostages are languishing in the dungeons of Hamas. Just a few days ago, here in Israel and in many countries around the globe, people of goodwill made sure that no one forgot the redheaded baby Kfir Bibas, whose first birthday was this past week and has been held by Hamas for a quarter of his life. As I write these lines, no one knows his fate or that of the other hostages. And yet, Israel has taken measures to permit humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

Nevertheless, once again, malice knows no boundaries. Mobilised by the messengers of evil, Israel has been subjected to a tsunami of unfathomable attacks. Although no country is above and beyond criticism, my country faces a constant barrage of unfounded allegations based on either sheer ignorance, anti-Israeli position, or pure antisemitism. What other explanation is there for the despicable slogan "*From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free*"? Those who yell this slogan either have no clue what they are yelling about or, let's be frank, they are antisemites who deny our right to exist as a nation. I am certain all of you are aware of the calls for boycotts and the recent charge by South Africa at The Hague accusing Israel of perpetrating genocide.

Let there be no mistake. Throughout our history as a people, we have overcome many challenges. Israel will weather this storm as well. We are determined to ensure that the aggression which we suffered is defeated. Furthermore, the people of Israel stand united in their commitment to rebuild our communities along the Gaza envelope and the Upper Galilee. With your continued support, we shall overcome.



The 3D's: Tests for Antisemitism

Since 7 October, antisemitism has exploded across the world, and New Zealand is no exception. But what exactly is antisemitism, and how do you know if you have it? Many people think of antisemitism as hatred of Jews. But it goes much further than that because since the State of Israel was formed, a new possible avenue opened up.

Many people were grappling with the definition and application of antisemitism and thus required a workable test. Clearly, lengthy academic definitions won't cut it in the marketplace, and a simple yet thorough test is required, one that everyone can apply.

Sensing this void, Natan Sharansky, politician, famous Russian Refusenik and previous head of the Jewish Agency, developed a simple but effective three-fold test for antisemitism known as *The 3 D's*. They are *Double Standard*, *De-Legitimation* and *Demonisation*. Now, let's see how this works out in practice.

Applying the Test

When talking about the Jews or Israel, do you apply a **double-standard**? Do you expect Jews to be more moral than others simply because they are Jews? Do you expect Israel to be more moral, or in their behaviour, do you require them to be better than their neighbours simply because they are a democracy? Well, that could be considered antisemitism. Think about it. Whilst Jewish cartoons using established tropes are obviously

antisemitic and were evident during John Key's reign, what about other cartoons? When is the line crossed? Sometimes, we have to sit down and ask the hard question: would I apply the same standard to another people group or nation? If the answer is yes, then you can have confidence you aren't being even a tad antisemitic.

Next up is **de-legitimation**. Clearly, a chant of "*From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free*" screams de-legitimation. Israel does have a legal right to exist. It's not stolen land. How can you be sure you are standing on the facts and legal definitions of Israel's existence? Many people think that the Partition Plan (Res 181) on 29 November 1947 gave rise to Israel's establishment. But that's not so in law. Think about it. A nation must declare its existence, not being voted on by others. There must be free will, and it must be legal. After the mandate ended, there was a void. Israel declared itself a nation, and then other nations, including NZ, recognised it. It is a legitimate nation without question.

But what about suggestions around the legitimacy of the West Bank, a.k.a. Judea and Samaria? Clearly, Israel must have had a legal right to enter into the Oslo Accords (land for peace deals). Poland is a classic example of a country with incredible border changes over the years. Does anyone question the current borders? NO. Note that territories



captured after an initial assault on the victorious side are considered legitimate gains under international law. Israel was attacked, and thus, the gains were legitimate. Interestingly, Jordan occupied this area and East Jerusalem informally after the War of Independence for 19 years, and no one batted an eyelid over it. Prior to that, Jerusalem was a united city. Even today, there are many disputed borders, e.g. Cyprus, but by the media coverage, you wouldn't know it.

Demonisation is fairly self-evident. Note this excludes genuine criticism. Since 7 October, there have been many instances of Jewish demonisation on social media and elsewhere. The issue becomes what to do about it. Calling all keyboard warriors, it's time to wake up and get real. The Jews and Israel need your support.

Golriz Falls on Her Sword

After years of chanting "*From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free*" and fronting the Palestinian cause in the Gaza war protests, Golriz Ghaharaman is the one not free. On 10 January, Kiwis were stunned to learn that Green Party MP Golriz Ghaharaman was suspected of shoplifting from Scotties, an Auckland boutique selling designer wear. She was stood down from her portfolios. The sums involved were not small either. It seemed hard to fathom, given her salary package is in the order of \$200,000, putting her in the top 1% of taxpayers. The story played out mid-January during a lull in the news period, gaining extra traction and global attention. As more details emerged, it became clear that this was not a one-off occurrence. Suddenly, it became two incidents at Scotties, then a third one dating back months earlier when Parliament was not sitting. The Wellington incident at upmarket Cre8iveworx emerged as CCTV footage from October 2023 was reviewed, creating

a bigger picture.

Green Party leadership were left struggling as Golriz was overseas and not making any statements. Once suggestive Scotties CCTV footage emerged in the media, her downfall was inevitable. Golriz's 16 January resignation became more of a victim statement than an apology. She blamed her 'unexplained' actions on mental health, the stress of the job and undiagnosed trauma. There appeared to be no concern for the retailers doing it tough after the lockdown and facing increasing retail crime. Following her resignation, Police were seen at her Grey Lynn home, and Golriz Ghaharaman was formally charged with three counts of shoplifting.

Perhaps Christians should consider her actions in light of the biblical blessings and curses principle and see God's grace and mercy in action. Other factors were that she was an MP (leader), a lawyer who ought to know the law and that her



justice role gave her words and actions greater authority and power, meaning there was greater accountability. Was the shoplifting really 'unexplained' or a weakness for designer gear that left an open doorway? She was graciously given time to repent of her anti-Israel stance. Only time will tell if Golriz Ghaharaman will have a change of heart. If she is found guilty, it will make it more difficult for her to resume her legal career or, for that matter, any other career. Will the Green Party employ her? Now, our attention will focus on the other Green Party MPs.



Almost Fifty Years to the Day

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

On 6 October 1973 a massive attack, which threatened the existence to the modern State of Israel, was launched by Egypt and Syria. Almost 50 years to the day, on 7 October 2023, another major incursion from Gaza over the southern frontier of Israel took place. Social media news of the attack in real time was videoed around the world. The first notification to my *WhatsApp* group began trickling through at 4:35pm with massive rocket alerts going off all over southern and central Israel. At 5:17pm came the first news of injuries from the rocket fire—a 70-year-old woman. Rockets kept coming but nothing prepared us for what we were about to see on our screens. At 5:40pm we watched live as armed terrorists infiltrated the Israeli town of Sderot, next to the Gaza border. Terrorists with high powered rifles were wandering at will through the streets in pickup trucks and firing at will. The news would get worse and by the following morning the sheer enormity of the slaughter was becoming more evident.

Israel lost in a few hours 1200 people to the Hamas attack which had been well planned and well-hidden for many months. Just as in the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, Israelis this time were also taken by complete surprise. Between two and three thousand terrorists had crossed the border on foot, in vehicles, by paragliders and some by speedboats. It was an invasion by land, sea, and air. News of what happened and then the subsequent response of the Israelis has continued to dominate news headlines since. The world was immediately shocked by the carnage—both the brutality and the enormity of it. Governments from western nations immediately began issuing full condemnations of Hamas and support for Israel's right to self-defence, which in this case meant the right of the Israelis to hit hard back at Hamas within Gaza. It was heartwarming to hear strong support for Israel in this way first from opposition leader Christopher Luxon one week before the election, and then by Prime Minister Chris Hipkins after a very poor statement from Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta.

The entire disaster was compounded by the fact that the terrorists had gone back into Gaza with some 240 hostages. The vile treatment and brutality dished out to Israelis in the south before they were murdered has shown the terror organisation to be more brutal,

heartless, and merciless than the Nazis who wrote the book on brutality to the Jews. It has been said that even the Nazis knew they were doing wrong and therefore tried to conceal their crimes, whereas Hamas terrorists videoed their crimes and posted them to social media for the whole world to see their depravity. On 6 October Israel was a divided nation. On 7 October they united to become as one to achieve three things:

1. Get the hostages back.
2. Destroy Hamas.
3. Institute a better government in Gaza.

Israel had been brought to the precipice of civil war with its judicial reforms and the centre right government led by PM Benjamin Netanyahu. Overnight the nation had become one in its resolve to achieve the aforesaid goals. My prayer had been for some time the same as Jeremiah's—"Give them singleness of heart and action" (*Jeremiah 32:39*). Now they have it.

It only took a few days after the massacre in southern Israel for the voice of Palestinian protesters to be heard calling "From the river to the sea Palestine will be free". Those of us in New Zealand involved in public advocacy for Israel have been busy since that fateful day. From the initial wave of sympathy and support for Israel there is now a premature call for a ceasefire being heard by the Pro-Palestinian lobby and echoed by naïve governments around the world. This plays into the hands of the terrorists who have been under so much pressure that they are willing to trade Israel's hostages for their criminals in Israeli jails. The Islamic community in New Zealand has come under criticism and rightly so. Sean Plunket on the *Platform* reprimanded the Muslim community for not coming out in sympathy for what the Jewish community has suffered through all this. They should have issued a clear condemnation of the terror activities of Hamas, but they didn't. They did not reciprocate the grace shown them by the Jewish community immediately after the Christchurch Mosque attacks of March 2019. The NZ Council of Imams sent out a very inflammatory statement inciting their people to rise in defence of the Palestinians of Gaza. They charged that at the Al Ahli hospital early in this war that an Israeli rocket had killed 1500 people 'on the spot'. A complete lie. The Federation of Islamic Associations in New Zealand (FIANZ) called for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador among other things.

This current war has resulted in a Coalition of Ministers Supporting Israel



Israel supporters at one of three public rallies in Hastings in support of Israel. | Photo: Nigel Woodley

(COMS-Israel) being formed. This is an email group which can respond to this sort of anti-Israel incitement. So far, we have 48 Church ministers from different backgrounds— Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and others who want to unite in our Pro-Israel message. We were able to put out the following Press Statement in response to the FIANZ call.

Press Statement

The Coalition of Ministers Supporting Israel in New Zealand does not support the call for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador from New Zealand.

We think the call by the Federation of Islamic Associations in New Zealand (FIANZ) is based on an incomplete understanding.

Contrary to the FIANZ Press Release of 14 November <https://fianz.com/2023/11/14/urgent-need-for-new-zealands-humanitarian-voice/> we would like these factors remembered in what is a complex international problem:

1. Israel is not trying to commit 'acts of deliberate and wanton genocide'. Israel has the unenviable task of ridding the Gaza Strip of a terror organisation. No western nation would tolerate the constant bombardment of rockets, more than 10,000 so far since 7 October. Civilian deaths are unfortunate but could have been avoided by Hamas not attacking Israel in the first place, and then by Hamas releasing all hostages held. Instead they show their lack of concern toward their own people by pursuing their declared goal of annihilating the Jewish State.
2. Israel does not use 'genocidal attacks' and is not involved in the 'wholesale bombing of innocent civilians'. The IDF targets what they believe are Hamas facilities and terrorist rocket launch positions or terrorist personnel. It

recognises civilian casualties will occur if the people have not evacuated as warned. Civilian casualties are due to the disregard of a terrorist government toward the people they are supposed to be leading. Hamas deliberately hides behind civilian institutions and infrastructure and therefore must bear the responsibility for the unfortunate 'collateral damage'.

3. A premature ceasefire would empower Hamas to regroup and recover, which would defeat the purpose of Israel's operation in the Gaza Strip.
4. It would be unwise for NZ to boycott the smart technology that Israeli innovation has brought to us. New Zealand should certainly not halt its use in our country.
5. Israel is taking what they believe is 'decisive action' to confront a jihadist terror group which is seeking the destruction of both the Jewish State and the concept of Western civilization.
6. Because of this the New Zealand Government should refrain from making any decision based on an incomplete description of events as portrayed by our media.
7. We fully support aid to care for those trapped in the horror of war on both sides, as this will not end when the guns are silent.

The Coalition of Ministers Supporting Israel calls for the continuation of both the Israeli ambassador and embassy in Wellington.

It also calls for our leaders to assist in encouraging a negotiated settlement to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, as opposed to any unilateral decisions made at the United Nations.

The Press release was picked up and published by Scoop Media.



Calendar Themes

Throughout this year, we will be elaborating on the themes of the C4 2024 Israel Calendar: National Symbols of Israel.



February: Red Anemone

The red Anemone flower is Israel's national flower, but only since 2013. In Hebrew, it's called the *Kalanit*. A favourite in NZ gardens from early years, the red anemone cuts a splash of colour in spring, and its sturdy stem is resilient enough for most equinox gales. Distinctively, in Israel, anemones flower twice—in spring and autumn!

Today, the red anemone is a spring cultural icon. Located primarily in the Elah Valley or the Eshkol region near Gaza in January-February, a journey to search for the red anemone fields is highly prized. The nearby Darom Adom Festival celebrates the flower and is part of the spring tourism calendar.

Purim: 23-25 March

Purim falls late this year due to the extra month of Adar that was added in February to keep the Hebrew calendar on track with the sun. *Purim*, set in ancient Persia, is a reminder that for much of Israel's history, Jews have lived in the diaspora. They often faced peril. *Purim* is a celebration of God's deliverance in the face of enormous odds.

March: Blue Butterfly



Israel's national blue butterfly has distinctive white tips and, like the red anemone, was only recently selected as the nation's official butterfly. Look closely at the calendar image, and you will see the black-brown border on the wings. These markings signify that it is a male butterfly. Alas, the female butterfly is far less distinctive, with a brown top and a few blue and orange spots. Interestingly, the common blue butterfly is found throughout Israel throughout the year, making it both a worthy and distinctive icon. It's not the only blue and white butterfly in Israel.

Gaza-Israel Misunderstandings

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel Assoc. Inc

This article corrects some key misunderstandings about the Gaza-Israel conflict.

It's great to see that Christians are rallying to the 'Call to Pray' for Israel. However, we are concerned that there are some errors and omissions in the way Christians often understand the background of the conflict. Without correction and inclusion of these facts, Christians are likely to unjustly conclude that Israel is the antagonist in this conflict. For example, here is an explanatory paragraph from a well-known NZ Christian website:

Gaza is a small strip of land, about 41 km long and 6 to 12 km wide and has a population of about 2 million. Hamas has controlled Gaza since 2006. When Hamas came to power, the Israeli government imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the area, turning the densely populated area into what some have described as 'an open-air prison,' as the area is often described. Only people who get a permit from the Israeli government are allowed to travel out of Gaza. Together with the much bigger West Bank, Gaza forms the state of Palestine.

The page also included some prayer points:

- *Pray for peace and an end to all violence and injustice in Israel and Palestine.*
- *Pray that the church will be a beacon of hope for the people through their testimony in words and actions.*
- *Pray that the Lord will comfort those who lost loved ones.*
- *Pray also that the international community will work towards lasting peace in the Holy Land.*

Justice and injustice are themes mentioned on this page, and unless facts are portrayed with sufficient detail and accuracy, then justice will be unobtainable.

We'd like to suggest some corrections to the above section:

1. **"Hamas has controlled Gaza since 2006."** True, however, the Gazan people elected Hamas into power. Omitting this suggests that Gazan civilians cannot be held accountable for Hamas' actions. Yet, the concept of collective responsibility and accountability is not foreign to the *Torah*. Hamas has used this control to use Gazan civilians as human shields to deter Israel from attacking Hamas.
2. **"When Hamas came to power, the Israeli government imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the area."** This

sentence omits several facts that would bring a balance that would likely influence readers' views on Gaza-Israel relations:

a. Hamas' written goals and rhetoric signalled that they would continue their policy of destroying the State of Israel by armed force. Hamas is a racist Islamist organisation connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, backed by Iran along with other proxies, Hezbollah and the Houthis and funded principally by Qatar and Iran. These radical Islamist groups share an ideology which calls for the annihilation of Israel, the murder of Jews and other infidels, and the establishment of a caliphate. Both Israel and Egypt moved to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

"Justice and injustice are themes mentioned on this page, and unless facts are portrayed with sufficient detail and accuracy, then justice will be unobtainable."

b. Immediately after Israel withdrew from Gaza, Hamas and other militant groups began a wave of attacks on Israel, signalling to Israel that trading land for peace would not end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

c. It was not just the Israeli government that imposed a blockade on Gaza; the Egyptian government, a Muslim government, also imposed a blockade. This blockade continues to be in place today.

d. The Palestinian Authority has also supported the blockade.

e. Since 7 October, Hamas has said that there will be many more such attacks to come.

3. **"...turning the densely populated area into what some have described as 'an open-air prison', as the area is often described."** Without the contextual facts mentioned above, this statement implies that Israel is imposing some sort of collective punishment against the people of Gaza. In fact, Israel and Egypt have imposed a blockade against Gaza because its elected officials have chosen a policy of armed conflict to prosecute a war against Israel, with the only result being the total destruction of one side or the other. Israel's blockade is an act of self-defence. 7 October shows that they were right to treat the risk seriously.

4. **"Together with the much bigger West Bank, Gaza forms the state of Palestine."** In fact, New Zealand does not recognise the state of Palestine. Fifty-five other countries do not recognise it as a state either, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea and most of Western

Europe. There are four accepted criteria for statehood: A settled population, a defined territory, a government and the ability to enter into relations with other states. The West Bank and the Gaza Arabs lack many of these criteria.

We would also suggest the following inclusions:

1. **Hamas broke a ceasefire and took its people into a war.** The 7 October attacks were on a scale that provoked Israel to act decisively to secure the safety of its populace. When a government commits an act of war, it must also accept that it puts its civilian population in harm's way. In contrast, Hamas, as Gaza's governing body, does not accept that it has a responsibility to protect Gaza's civilians.

2. We suggest prayer points should also include:

- *That the Gazans and Hamas will accept that the State of Israel has a right to exist.*
- *That the Jews are an 'indigenous' people (Tangata Whenua) of the region and that God would dispel the lie that Jewish immigration is 'colonisation'.*
- *That God's love should abound so that peaceful co-existence may be possible.*
- *That when confronted with evil, there are times when violence, though unwanted, is necessary to overcome evil. On these occasions, war, and its awful price, is necessary. Freedom is never free. May those who fight evil be bold and courageous.*
- *Forgiveness is a word that is rarely used when discussing the Arab-Israeli Conflict: That a spirit of forgiveness is released in the region.*
- *That corruption among the Palestinian Leaders would be quelled so that foreign aid may be applied to building a peaceful civil society instead of waging war or enriching Palestinian officials.*
- *That God will raise up a moderate leadership who prioritises the welfare and well-being of Gazan civilians over destroying Israel.*
- *Christians should be cautious about what they see and hear through media about the conflict as there is growing evidence that misinformation and disinformation are intentionally being distributed.*

The Māori View on Palestine

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

The opening of week of Parliament saw passionate statements from both sides of the house on the government motion on the Israel Gaza conflict.

Labour MP Willie Jackson not only made clear his position on the question, but went further, claiming ownership of the Māori view on Palestine. Barely concealing his contempt, Jackson dismissed the views of hundreds of Māori who had rallied at Parliament in support of Israel. Many of “the Destiny lot”, as he called them, are in fact men and women who have turned away from abuse and dysfunction, to pursue wholesome and clean lives, living as caring parents and good citizens. They have chosen to stand with Israel for reasons of faith and alignment with values of civilisation and freedom. Thousands of Māori support Israel for the same reasons. Indeed, some *Iwi* have long histories of such support. In recent years, one *Ngapuhi kaumatua* organised several *hui* for Israeli ambassadors, attended by a large number of supporters. The Māori queen Dame Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu had great affection for Israel and hosted Israeli ambassadors. Further, many of the Māori prophetic movements that arose in the 19th century and early 20th centuries, including *Ringatū*, *Iharaia*, *Pai Marire*, the *Parihaka* movement, and *Ratana*, were inspired by the biblical Israelites and even emulated many of their religious practices. The bones of some of our *tāne* lie in Israel, where they fought and died to help free the land from Ottoman oppression.

Yet, according to Jackson, the true Māori response was “not what you see outside”. He insists that “Māori are very much in support of the Palestinian people, always have been, always will be.” In one sense I need not dispute that. Every Israel

supporter I know, Māori or otherwise, cares about the plight of the Palestinians. However, most recognise that the greatest problem in their lives is not Israel, but their own corrupt, genocidal leadership.

What Jackson really espouses appears not to be support for Palestinians but rather hatred of Israel. By naming Yassir Arafat and Fidel Castro as ‘heroes’ of Māori, we learn more about Jackson and his ilk than the issue at hand. Arafat was a mass murderer and arch-terrorist, responsible for hundreds of bombings, hijackings, assassinations and other attacks, including the 1972 Munich murder of 11 Israeli Olympic athletes, the 1973 murder of the American ambassador to Sudan, and the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship (resulting in the murder of wheelchair-bound Jew Leon Klinghoffer). Even after he won the Nobel Peace prize (a strange choice indeed), he continued to incite, direct and fund terrorism. He launched the second intifada in which hundreds of Israelis, both Jews and Arabs, were murdered in suicide bombings, ultimately leading to the erection of the infamous security fence.

As for Jackson’s other ‘hero’, how many of his followers know that Fidel Castro established a one-party state, commonly understood to be a vicious totalitarian regime? Under Castro, hundreds of supporters of the Batista government were executed, political opponents were imprisoned and the independent media suppressed. Thousands of Cubans fled into exile. When Jackson lionizes these ‘heroes’ and then warns of Māori “going to war”, over new government policies, is this what he has in mind?

Jackson’s ‘heroes’ fit neatly with the propaganda of the Arab-Soviet alliance of the Cold War era. Indeed, the Soviets were master propagandists and developed a highly successful programme of ‘politically weaponised anti-Zionism’.



| Photo: Israel Institute of NZ

Research Fellow, Izabella Tabarovsky writes,

“Many of the core tropes that animate the anti-Zionist left today are carbon copies of ideas that the KGB and the Department of Propaganda’s ideologues developed, weaponised, and popularised with particular intensity in the wake of the Six-Day War. It was most likely this latter stage of Soviet anti-Zionism that forged in popular consciousness on the far left false links between Zionism and Nazism, fascism, racism, genocide, settler-colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and apartheid.

The Soviet propaganda and disinformation campaign was exported globally and found a warm reception in the Middle East and in Aotearoa New Zealand. “It built and weaponised narratives based on made-up or twisted facts. It distorted history. It employed classic propaganda tools such as deception, guilt by association, and repetition to inculcate the key messages. It shamelessly played on people’s sentiments...” (*Hazan 2017: 230-93*).

This is an apt description of the dominant narrative of the Israel-Hamas conflict. It matters not that Israel completely left Gaza in 2005—our Labour, Green and Māori Party MPs remain strident in their references to ‘occupation’. And who speaks of the offer made to Arafat in 2000: around 97 percent of the West Bank, all of Gaza and a capital in East Jerusalem? Arafat responded to the offer with a campaign of bus bombings.

Hamas’s Western apologists, like Jackson, Golriz Grahman, Marama Davidson and Debbie Ngarewa Packer, seem unwilling to acknowledge that 75 years of Palestinian rejectionism has been the primary obstacle to a peaceful resolution. Palestinian leaders simply won’t agree to living in peace with a

Jewish state. Why? They want the whole of the land, from the “river to the sea”. There is no room for living Jews, much less Jewish self-determination in indigenous ancestral lands. Yes Jews are the indigenous people of the land, with more than 3,000 years of continuous presence. It was in the regions of Judea (both Jew and Judea derive from Judah, one of the twelve sons of Israel) and Samaria that the unique indigenous features of the Jewish people arose; culture, language and religious practices.

Māori Party leader Debbie Ngarewa Packer also waxed lyrical in her propagation of Hamas propaganda. The lies, which included all the buzzwords —“genocide”, “ethnic cleansing”, even the false allegation that Israel is “using white phosphorous”, were breathtaking in their audacity.

It mattered not that Hamas broke a ceasefire, started a war that it knew would provoke a massive response. Hamas could have peace tomorrow if it cared about its people more than it hated Jews, if it laid down its weapons, renounced violence and released all hostages. Rather, it prefers to pursue its genocidal agenda to annihilate all Jews. As for Willie Jackson, perhaps he should show some respect and empathy for his Jewish *tupuna* in view of the millennia of persecution that has been the universal experience of the Jewish people.

Jackson, Ngarewa-Packer and Davidson certainly do not own the Māori view on Palestine—there is no monolithic Māori view on any subject, nor should there be. But they demean Māori by standing on the side of barbarism and depravity and by continuing to mislead their constituency.

Expressions of Interest
OPEN NOW

Journey to Israel 2024-25

Either November 2024 or March 2025

If you would like to join our **2024 or 2025 tour** (tbc), please contact us with an **‘Expressions of Interest’**. Please email info@c4israel.org.nz with your name(s), and contact details, with **‘EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST’** in the subject line.

We will advertise our 2024 or 2025 tour when details are confirmed.

CHRISTIANS FOR
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The Death of a Brave Soldier

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President of CFOIC
Heartland

Everything changed on 7 October. As news started to trickle in regarding the Hamas attack and massacre on that terrible day, we stood awe-struck, horrified. But as a nation well-accustomed to tragedy and war, we instantly mobilised. The IDF drafted 350,000 reserve soldiers, and civilians everywhere enlisted in the effort to help wherever needed—to donate basic supplies to our drafted soldiers, to cook mounds of food for the soldiers who had been drafted before the army could organise food, to pick peppers in the fields that had been abandoned by residents of the bombed south and evacuated to safer places. Volunteers helped young mothers whose husbands had been suddenly drafted, leaving them alone to cope with their small children, jobs and households. Everyone was there to lend a hand.

Across the oceans, thousands of young Israelis were vacationing when war broke out. Some were young men who had recently completed their compulsory military service, travelling the world before settling down to study or work. One of those Israelis was my nephew, Amichai Oster. He had finished his regular army service in November 2022 and shortly after set out for Southeast Asia. He trekked in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, enjoying the beautiful scenery and meeting new people everywhere he went. Some months into his trip, he met a friend of a friend of mine, a Jewish man from the US. They got to talking, and the American was so impressed with Amichai, with his faith, his wonderful kindness and his devotion to his people, his land and to God. I received this message via my friend to convey to the family: “Amichai is a walking Sanctification of God’s name.” We were all so proud of Amichai.

Amichai returned home for a few weeks in June and then took off again for more travels, this time to North America. Beginning in Florida, where he bought an old police cruiser, he drove the length and breadth of the US, then headed north into the Canadian Rockies. He was on his way to California, in Salt Lake City, when the war broke out. He didn’t think twice. He made his way to California but not to sight-see. He got on the first plane available, together with hundreds of other Israeli young men and women coming home to fight. Amichai joined his reserve unit for the first time since he had only recently completed his regular army service.

The young men there were all new to him, but within days, he became a vital member of the team. He was a valuable fighter, an expert in the MAG gun, and he was admired by all for his military prowess. But more than that—he was loved. With his guitar strung along his back, whenever there was a break, he pulled out his instrument, and everyone sang. He led Sabbath prayers for anyone interested, and they all joined in—the singing moved them all.

Ever since the ground incursion began some months ago, we have woken up nearly every morning to the list of soldiers who have lost their lives in battle the day before. The IDF spokesperson’s announcement always begins the same way: it is now permitted to announce the death of... Each day, we scan that list for names we know. And nearly every day, we feel a connection to someone.

Israel is a small country, and there are virtually no degrees of separation between us. When we see the name of a fallen soldier, we learn of his army unit and where he lived in Israel. Ultimately, we know someone with the same family name—are they related? We know someone from the same town—are they neighbours? And sometimes we actually know the young man who has fallen or know his family well. I have friends who have lost grandchildren. I have friends who have lost neighbours and friends. I have neighbours who have lost children and husbands. With two sons and a son-in-law and several nephews called up on active duty, including one son fighting in Gaza, we always know that there but for the grace of God.

On 1 January, New Year’s Day, the angel of death knocked on my family’s door. My nephew Amichai was killed in action in Gaza as terrorists detonated an explosive device from a hidden shaft. Amichai was the only soldier killed that day, but eleven of his fellow soldiers were wounded. We are a large and cohesive family—my sisters, my brother, and I all live in the same town of Karnei Shomron, in Samaria and we raised our many children together. Amichai is my brother’s son. We are all grieving, each in our own way, but we cannot imagine the depth of the grief and sorrow that my brother and his immediate family are feeling right now. It is incomprehensible.

Amichai was buried the following day in the Karnei Shomron military cemetery, located in the beautiful Kana River Valley (*Joshua 17*), where Amichai so loved to hike. Thousands came to the funeral and, throughout the week of mourning, flooded my brother’s house with visits, often bearing food parcels.



Amichai Oster, killed in action 1 January 2024



A couple we did not know came from the US. They had just landed in Israel to visit with family, heard about Amichai’s death and felt compelled to make a condolence call. It turns out they had met Amichai on his travels and remembered his kind face and gracious manner. Soldiers, including Amichai’s wounded friends, came to share their experiences with the family, some arriving in wheelchairs and on crutches. Major supermarket chains and banks sent boxes of food and drink as a small token of their appreciation for Amichai’s heroism and for the heroism of all our soldiers.

A number of political leaders visited as well, including Benny Gantz, a former chief of staff of the IDF and currently a senior member of the small war cabinet. A number of soldiers were present during his visit, and they echoed to him the message that had been repeated all that week by mourners and visitors alike—the war must continue. We must defeat Hamas. The deaths of these great heroes must not have been in vain. We must remove this terrible threat to Israel and to the world from our midst.

Please join me in prayer for my brother and sister-in-law and their children, that God may give them comfort in their time of grief. Please join me in prayer for my nation that we may continue to find the strength we need to keep going during these difficult hours. Please join

me in prayer for the safety and security of the nation of Israel.

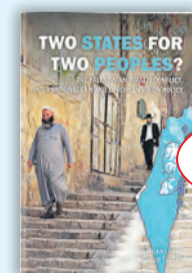
Sondra Oster Baras is the Founder and International President of CFOIC Heartland, representing the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria to Christians all over the world. To support the urgent needs of the people of Judea and Samaria during this terrible war, please use the form on the back page and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

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NZ Stands with Israel

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

As I took my seat for our Sunday morning Church service on 26 November, I quickly flicked a text message for Destiny Church leader Apostle Brian Tamaki. It regarded information of a 'Rally for Palestine—When the House Sits', We Stand planned for Thursday, 7 December, at Parliament. That evening, in a Zoom call, Brian and I were both united in our resolve to challenge this with a counter-rally standing for Israel. As pastor of the Flaxmere Christian Fellowship in Hastings, an independent Pentecostal church, I could provide a company-sized detachment of troops. But Brian, with his Destiny Church movement, could provide an entire battalion. We both set out to mobilise our troops and prepare for the biggest rally for Israel that either of us had led since the 7 October onslaught. We had both led three different rallies up to this point, three in Auckland and three in Hastings. Now, we prepared for what was the most important of them all.

"The events of 7 October 2023, brought out the worst memories of the Holocaust..."

I said to the Apostle, "Your Church is a supermarket chain, but mine is only the corner dairy", and with that, I offered myself as a servant to the man who had a more powerful team and profile than I, and we got along fine. Brian was mobilising his battalion from around the country with Destiny churches and pastors personally sacrificing time and money to be part of our 'NZ Stands with Israel' rally, and I was doing the same with my own company in Flaxmere. The rally was set for 11:00am to pre-empt the 'Rally for Palestine', which had been planned for 12 noon. With news of the proposed rally for Israel, which included a huge, planned *haka* by the Destiny team, the Palestinian lobby pulled out and left the platform to us. After an alteration in time to accommodate Parliamentary permission to use a sound system, the 'NZ Stands with Israel' rally was reset for 1:00pm.

There, on Parliament grounds, two months to the day since Hamas's barbaric attack, I stood with the biggest crowd I had ever seen standing with Israel since becoming involved in public advocacy for Israel in 2014. Despite news reports watering down the numbers to 3-400 people, with my experience in dealing with these sorts of gatherings, I estimated there were at least between 6-700 people. Media photos of the event

confirmed it. With two busloads of supporters travelling down from Hastings, one from Destiny in Hastings and another one from my own church, we joined the swelling numbers on Parliament's lawn on the forecourt. By 1:00pm, we were ready to go.

Pastor Heker Robertson of Destiny Wellington opened and led us through the proceedings. Following the national anthems of both New Zealand and Israel, I was given the honour to be the first speaker. Brian and I had not compared notes, but we had prepared the same message, and it hinged on two main requirements:

1. There should be no ceasefire in the current conflict until all the Israeli hostages in captivity in Gaza are released.
2. Israel has the right to wage war against Hamas until the first point is achieved and until Hamas has no more ability to govern in Gaza.

Both of us were strong on these points, a message that was picked up by the media and relayed to those sitting in the House that afternoon. Brian Tamaki also

presented a petition to MP Simon Court of the Act Party, which called on the government to declare the entirety of Hamas and Hezbollah as terror organisations and for any MPs who support them to be expelled from Parliament. Currently, NZ Foreign Affairs plays a balancing act in declaring just the military wing of Hamas as a terrorist organisation but not doing the same for their political wing. In my discourse, I stated that it doesn't matter which wing it is because they are two wings of the same bird, and it is a terrorist bird! Brian also presented to Mr Court a declaration signed by both of us. The declaration stated five things:

1. We declared any calls for a ceasefire as premature until Hamas was removed.
2. We declared that NZ has zero tolerance for Hamas, Hezbollah and any of their allies or sympathisers.
3. We declared that NZ has zero tolerance for antisemitism.
4. We declared that NZ has zero tolerance for race-based hatred.
5. We declared that the NZ Government fly the Israeli flag from Parliament and from the Auckland harbour bridge, in deference to the Green Party 'flying' the colours showing Palestinian support at their swearing into Parliament on 5 December.



Parliament rally 7 December 2023. | Photo: Brian Tamaki



Pastor Derek Tait from Destiny Christchurch. | Photo: Nema Te Nahu

After MP Simon Court was presented the petition and the signed declaration, he spoke:

"The events of 7 October 2023, brought out the worst memories of the Holocaust. The majority of Jewish people in New Zealand see that event not just as an attack on Israel but as an attack on Jewish people worldwide. They fear that this attack is a threat to their very existence as Jewish people. There is a sense that if Israel does not survive, then the Jewish people will not survive. If a Western liberal democracy like Israel could be destroyed by the forces of hate that we've seen Hamas show, then what hope is there for a little country like New Zealand? And that's one reason why I think it's important that we stand with Israel today".

Both Brian's team and I found it hard to secure an MP who was willing to come out to address us that day, but in the end, both Simon Court and Laura Trask from Act came out to show respect for our cause. Apostle Brian Tamaki is a controversial figure in New Zealand, mainly because of the vilification he unjustly receives from the media, the same media that often misreport and vilify the State of Israel. Having liaised with Brian previously regarding his

ManUP programme and more hands-on with him in this important rally of support for Israel, I would like to commend Brian as a man of sincerity, integrity, and humility. It was an honour to work with him on this vital stand for Israel at our nation's seat of power. I would do it all again. I would think that whatever negative perceptions of Brian that some people may have had must now change as he and his 'battalion' have stuck their necks out for Israel at a time when silence has fallen upon many.

In summary, I can say that the timing was strategic planned by someone greater than us:

1. At 1:00pm that day, we stood and declared our stance for Israel,
2. At 2:00pm, the House sat and spent a substantive time debating that for which we had stood before them.
3. The original rally that sparked our one was nowhere to be seen and had left the platform open to us.
4. The event was published and broadcast widely by the media, and our message was conveyed clearly to Parliamentarians and to the Nation.

What got me involved in this sort of advocacy ten years ago was a word that summarises what we did on 7 December: "For the Protection of Zion, I speak up!"




CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL NEW ZEALAND

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL AUSTRALIA

ANZAC SOLIDARITY MISSION to Israel

3-11 APRIL 2024
(9 days-8 nights)

Escorted by Bryce Turner, Christians for Israel New Zealand,
and Ian Worby, Christians for Israel Australia




Bryce Ian

Israel Needs Our Help

Following our expedition in Nov/Dec, we learned a lot about the situation on the ground in Israel. Tourism stopped immediately, leaving many without income. Travelling around Israel we became acutely aware of just how isolated, how lonely most Israelis are feeling, as much of the world has turned its back on Israel, preferring instead the twisted narrative being pushed by the opposition, one that makes the criminal attackers somehow the victims.

Israelis are fighting for their survival, with over a hundred thousand Israelis—Jewish, Arab, Druze, Bedouin etc—unable to return to their homes. In many cases this is because their homes are severely damaged or destroyed.

Never before in history has it been so important that we stand with Israel. But not just with token words, by being prepared to actually stand.

Israel is Fighting Back

In 1917, Australian and New Zealand soldiers won an incredible victory against the Ottoman Empire—who controlled the entire Middle East and had done so for 400 years. In spite of staggering odds, the 'Egyptian Expeditionary Force' attacked and captured Beersheba, the first victory in the 'Southern Palestine Offensive' that ultimately saw the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, the period of the British Mandate, and ultimately the restoration of the Israel.

Within days the New Zealand and Australian forces were in battle again, this time separately, and the enormous bravery and sacrifice of our countrymen is honoured in Israel to this day.

As Israel once again faces an extremist Islamic threat, there are those who would ignore that sacrifice and just hand the land over.

We Will Stand with Israel

In Nov/Dec last year I went there. With two colleagues, we travelled to a war zone, to help. We mostly worked in a soup kitchen in Jerusalem—far away from the war. We cleaned and repaired all sorts of equipment, we met all kinds of people who were struggling and desperate for the food and the encouragement that we were able to help bring. We visited survivors, people who had lost friends and family, 'ordinary Israelis', all deeply affected by the events of 7 Oct. and the subsequent war. We filmed interviews and helped share their stories with our people back home. But the greatest impact we made was the one I badly underestimated as we hurriedly prepared to travel: the joy we were able to bring by just being there. Meeting Israelis who would ask where we were from, only to stand in shock—or burst into tears—to hear that we had come a long way just to let them know we cared, was incredibly powerful.

ANZAC Solidarity Tour

This is not a study tour, nor a souvenir shopping trip (although there will be opportunity!)—this tour is about now. We will fly to Israel once again united in the spirit of ANZAC, to stand in the land our forefathers fought so gallantly for. We will visit a few special places, and we will meet all kinds of Israelis and learn how Hamas horrendous actions have changed peoples' lives. We will take the opportunity to serve our Israeli brothers and sisters, and we will stand together with them. WE will let them know they are not alone.

There are opportunities for those who wish to extend their stay, I will most likely be continuing on for a while after the tour. Please feel free to contact us if you are interested. Whilst obviously we will not be taking any ridiculous risks, I cannot completely promise that this trip will be uneventful. But I can promise you that it will be an adventure, and you will see God at work in His land.

Each activity on this ANZAC Solidarity tour will play a crucial role in comforting and supporting Israel. You will be volunteering side by side with Israelis and our C4I friends in regions bordering Gaza, Jerusalem, the Galilee and the Golan Heights in the north of Israel. Highlights include:

- Volunteer at *Kibbutzim* and farms, help cook meals for soldiers and volunteer at an army base
- Walk across the fields of the Nova Music Festival
- Tour the city of Sderot and visit one of our C4I projects
- Visit Keren Hayesod (Jewish Agency) and get updates on how C4I donations are making a difference
- Visit Magen David Adom (Ambulance HQ), see the situation room and hear paramedics stories of what happened on 7 October. There will also be an opportunity to donate blood
- Special *Shabbat* dinner at Hineni Soup Kitchen
- Visit the Mount of Olives, Western Wall, Garden Tomb for prayer worship and communion in Jerusalem.
- Visit Hippos, an ancient city of light overlooking galilee
- Guest speakers & briefings; plus much more

Itinerary subject to change

Prices Include:

- 8 nights accommodation* based on 3-Star hotels
- Breakfasts and dinners
- Entrance fees, touring and transport to all activities
- 9 days with experienced licensed tour guide
- Whisperer headsets

Prices Exclude:

- Airfares and departure taxes. Contact Olive Tree Travel to book your return flights.
- Travel insurance (*required*)
- Tips and gratuities for drivers, guides and hotels (*allow about \$US 12 a day*)
- Lunches (*allow US\$15 a day*)
- Special *Shabbat* dinner at Hineni Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem (*allow US\$30 ea*)

There may be opportunities to stay on and volunteer longer after the tour, please contact us for information.

LAND ONLY PRICE

NZD \$3550

per person twin share or double bed room
Single supplement: NZD \$1275

**Tour subject to minimum numbers and conditions.



For full itinerary details, enquiries and bookings please contact:

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Visiting Israel During the War

■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

Our friends thought my wife and I had gone crazy. Visiting Israel barely a month after the war broke out was bad enough, but travelling with our three young kids in tow seemed completely insane. As we boarded our flights to the Middle East, all we knew deep down in our hearts was that God had spoken, and we, as a family, trusted His leadership.

Planning Our Trip

In August 2023, we planned and booked our first trip to Israel as a family, planning to leave Australia in early November. Our flight options were to fly directly to Tel Aviv, Israel or to land in Jordan and cross the border by land. We were strongly recommended to avoid the option of going via Jordan as the border crossing is hard for kids; however, as we prayed, we specifically and clearly felt it necessary to take the Jordan route.

We were greatly privileged to stand with Israel through our visit to the land, and we know that the support of Christians like us speaks volumes to Jewish hearts...

And what would we do while in Israel? Our plan was to begin to arrange our own itinerary of places and people to visit as soon as the *Feast of Tabernacles* was over. Our only decision in the meantime was to base ourselves in Jerusalem for the duration of our three-week trip so our kids had a settled base.

The last day of *Tabernacles*, the day we were to begin to plan the rest of our itinerary, was 7 October, the fateful day of the Hamas terror attack. The erupting war meant that many flights to Israel were cancelled, but due to our flights being to Jordan, they were still going ahead. Staying in Jerusalem for the duration of our trip now made a lot of sense, as the Holy City was a safe place of refuge for people fleeing the war. We realised that God had known what was about to happen on 7 Oct, and He had already arranged our trip accordingly!

A Baby Blessing Israel

On 6 November, we left Australia, heading to Jordan with our three kids and a mountain of luggage. The border crossing from there to Israel was just as bad as we had been told, an arduous three-hour ordeal with pesky flies intensely bothering our kids. It was a relief when we finally boarded the taxi to Jerusalem.

What happened next brought tears to my eyes. Strapped securely into her car seat, our 22-month-old girl Olive began to sing in the cutest voice possible: “The Lord bless you.... And keep you”. She sang her way through *The Blessing* over and over as our taxi made the climb up to the hills of Jerusalem. “This is why we are here”, I thought to myself, “To bless God’s people as a family”.

The God Who Restores Families

Hamas’ horrific terror attacks had stolen away over 200 hostages from their homes and families. In response, Israel called up 360,000 reservists, many of them leaving behind their own families to join the military. In this way, almost every family in Israel has been impacted, with empty seats left at Israeli dinner tables throughout the country for weeks on end. Mothers have often been the ones left to manage at home, trying to keep their kids calm in a highly tense environment. Children throughout the

land have been regressing in their behaviour as they miss their dads and are generally unsettled by what is happening around them.

This context brought new meaning to us visiting Israel as a family. As we engaged in conversations with local Israelis, we told them, “Hamas has been seeking to break apart families. We have come as a family, praying that God will restore and make families whole”.

An Answered Prayer at the Western Wall

Our twins David and Hannah celebrated their fourth birthday at the beginning of our stay in Israel, and for their birthday, we took them for their first visit to the Old City in Jerusalem. Young David was very excited to see the Tower of David, proudly proclaiming, “This is my city!”

As we were leaving the Western Wall, something special caught the eyes of our twins. Plastered along the walls of the exit were a large number of posters of missing people taken hostage in Gaza, and our twins began to inquisitively ask questions. Our twins’ attention was especially drawn to the picture of a beautiful 3-year-old hostage called Yahel Shoham. Moved by her plight, we prayed right there and then for her release, with the twins repeating a simple prayer after me.



Enoch and his wife Sarah with Hannah, David and baby Olive in Jerusalem

Throughout the remainder of our stay in Israel, our little Hannah kept asking about young Yahel. Yahel’s story had obviously made an impact on Hannah, who kept describing to me in vivid detail the specifics of the photo we had seen of Yahel—even including details I hadn’t noticed!

On our last full day in the Land of Israel, we got the news we had been waiting and praying for: 3-year-old Yahel had been released along with her mother and sister! What a miracle! Hannah was beaming with joy that morning as she awoke to the news. God had heard our prayer!

Encountering Heroes of Faith

Many people have told us that we were brave to travel to Israel during this war, but our courage felt insignificant compared to that of the Israelis who live in such a difficult environment. During our time in Israel, we were inspired by the courage of many Christians from overseas who now live in Israel. Some live with their families in Jewish communities in what the world calls the ‘West Bank’ (Biblically known as Judea and Samaria). There, they find themselves surrounded by 2.5 million mostly hostile Arabs, and despite the danger, they and their families have chosen to live and serve the Jewish people in these communities. We met other Christians who are now sending their children to join the Israeli Defence Forces. These Christians could have easily chosen a much more comfortable life in Europe or America but have instead displayed great faith and courage to cast their lot with Israel.

Their willingness to stand with the Jewish people reminded me of the Ten Boom family. When World War 2 broke out, and Nazi persecution of Jews was unleashed in their homeland of

Holland, the Ten Boom family bravely cared for and protected Jews who came to them. Warned of the danger of their work, the 85-year-old patriarch of the house, Casper Ten Boom, replied, “I would consider it an honour to lay down my life for God’s chosen people”. It wasn’t long after that Casper and his family were arrested for their work, and Casper died shortly after his arrest.

This is the Time

We are living in some of the darkest days for Israel and the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Not only was the terror attack on 7 Oct. the worst single mass killing event of Jews since World War 2, but the ensuing war has enflamed worldwide anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment to arguably its highest levels since the dark days of the Nazis. In Australia, for instance, we have seen a massive 738% increase in anti-Semitic incidents since the war broke out.

This is truly the time for Christians who know their Bible to stand with Israel and the Jewish people. For some of us, this may mean travelling to Israel on one of the many Christian solidarity missions currently being organised (for information, contact groups such as Christians for Israel, Keshet Journeys and Ezra Adventures). For others, it simply means taking a stand at home, informing people about Israel, praying for her at this time and encouraging any Jewish friends and contacts you may personally know.

We were greatly privileged to stand with Israel through our visit to the land, and we know that the support of Christians like us speaks volumes to Jewish hearts at this time. Please consider prayerfully how you, too, can stand with God’s people during these dark days.



Experiencing God's Blessing—Part 5

■ Keith Buxton

Former National Director |
Bridges for Peace Australia

This is my fifth and last article sharing some thoughts from the Torah portion, or parsha, named Ekev—Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25—in which we read how Moses encourages the Israelites who are about to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land to put their trust wholeheartedly in God, and to discover how He will abundantly bless them if they faithfully listen to and obey Him.

We see for example in *Deuteronomy 8:8-10* the Lord's desire to pour out blessing upon His people, including the promise of rich agricultural blessing in the land: "A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and [date] honey"—the well-known seven species.

We have however been discovering that their experience of these many promised blessings is dependent upon a number of important conditions—that he shall receive blessing from the Lord who (1) holds fast to the Word of God, (2) displays true humility, and (3) demonstrates obedience to our Lord.

Throughout the Scriptures our good God whose heart is always to bless His people is revealed as a God of incredible patience, compassion, love, faithfulness, mercy, forgiveness and grace. Hear echoes of *Micah 6:8* as you hear now the words of the Lord to His people in *Deuteronomy 10:12-15*:

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

"Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day."

This is the loving God who, as Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks reminds us, calls His people to listen. We read the opening words of this *Torah* portion: "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers."

Rabbi Sacks goes on to say: "These words with which our *parsha* begins contain the verb *sh-m-a*. It occurred in last week's *parsha* in the most famous line of the whole of Judaism, *Shema*

Yisrael.

"One of the most striking facts about the *Torah* is that, although it contains 613 commands, it does not contain a word that means 'to obey.' The verb used by the *Torah* in place of 'to obey' is *sh-m-a*."

We should at this point note that *sh-m-a* conveys a variety of meanings, including to hear, to listen, to heed, to pay attention to, to understand, and to be willing to obey.

"This [says Rabbi Sacks] is of the highest possible significance. It means that blind obedience is not a virtue in Judaism. God wants us to understand the laws He has commanded us. He wants us to reflect on why this law, not that. He wants us to listen, to reflect, to seek to understand, to internalise and to respond. He wants us to become a listening people.

"If we want God to listen to us we have to be prepared to listen to Him. And if we learn to listen to Him, then we eventually learn to listen to our fellow humans: the silent cry of the lonely, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the people in existential pain."

What does this mean, then, for Israel on the brink of entering the Promised Land? What does it mean for you and me? It means this. The God who loves us and cares about us, the God who watches over us and seeks only His best for us, calls us to so listen to and internalise His commandments and His ways that we desire to—and choose to—love our neighbour and the stranger among us, and engage in acts of kindness and compassion, helping to build a society based on love.

The apostle John gave expression to this truth in *1 John 3:17-18*: "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 puts it this way: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks puts it, "God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others." That is the kind of obedience that pleases God. And my prayer for all those reading this is that we may have an uncompromising desire to please God in all things.



The Seven Species—two grains and five fruits—listed in *Deuteronomy 8:8* as special agricultural products of the Promised Land. | Photo: www.gardenindelight.com

The reality that we have been seeking to understand is that we can only truly reflect the character of our God, and please Him, and experience His abundant blessings, if we hold fast to the Word of God, display true humility, and demonstrate obedience to our Lord.

Our *Torah* portion is named *Ekev*, a word from the first verse *Deuteronomy 7:12*, for the Israelites are told that "because (*ekev*)" or "if" they listen to, keep and do God's commandments, the Lord will bless and care for them. God desires that we keep His words constantly in our minds and in our hearts, as we read in *Deuteronomy 11:18-21*:

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

"And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth."

My wife and I moved over eight years ago into a new home on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Queensland. One of the things that we did the day we moved was to affix a *mezuzah* (pictured right) on the right doorpost of the front door, as a reminder of God's presence with us, and of all that He requires of us.

The *mezuzah* contains biblical expressions of our love and respect for God and His commandments, as found in this *Deuteronomy 11* passage and the

important and foundational *Shema Yisrael* verses in *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

May we all be reminded—one way or another—that God knows what is best for us. He has communicated His heart and His instructions for godly living in His Word. May we live daily in humble dependence upon Him, and in loving obedience to Him bless others with the kindness and compassion that He shows to us.

Keith Buxton is an ordained pastor. He currently serves on the Christians for Israel (C4I) Australia management committee and is a liaison with C4I Oceania Island affiliates.



International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 7 October and the Death of Delusion

■ Perry Trotter

Founder | Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation
| New Zealand

Once again, UN International Holocaust Remembrance Day has come and gone. As has been done since 2005, when the UN designated 27 January for this purpose, Jewish people and their supporters (both real and imagined) have gathered around the world to mark the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. Once again, attendees have listened attentively to speeches from dignitaries that range from the most worthy, authentic and heartfelt, to politically correct, universalised platitudes that, by denying the Jewish particularity of this pivotal event, honour neither those who perished nor those still living.

Every crisis has a way of cutting through confusion with urgent clarity. The events of 7 October may have forever changed Holocaust memorialisation and thinking around antisemitism. The full implications of Hamas barbarism are yet to be fully realised, but the damage done to many dearly held delusions is already apparent.

7 October has branded all such readings of *Never Again* as delusional.

The UN designation of an official memorial day has always held a harsh dissonance for many of those who understand antisemitism and the UN. A body which, in practical terms, has been a notable purveyor of global antisemitism would hardly seem an appropriate organisation to host a Holocaust memorial event. But post 7 Oct., what was merely a dissonance might now be better characterised as a siren scream. Recent revelations that UN staff (more specifically, employees of UNRWA—a body that until very recently NZ continued to fund) took part in the events of 7 Oct. will be shocking only to those who have not followed the UN and its appalling record of anti-Israel resolutions. The delusion that the UN, by designating an annual commemoration, was signalling an intention to act unequivocally against antisemitism has been well and truly shattered. Unsurprisingly, certain Jewish thinkers object to the UN's continuing association with what is, for them, a sacred commemoration.

Never Again?

Never Again means different things to different people. For many, it speaks of Jewish self-reliance and the strength and preparedness of the IDF to prevent another Jewish genocide. For others, it may be shorthand for the conviction that the civilised West would not again stand by and allow the Jewish people to be subject to systematic annihilation. A minority may have expressed a belief that the intention of the Holocaust, the eradication of Jews and all things Jewish *everywhere*, died along with the few Nazi leaders brought to justice on Nuremberg gallows.

7 October has branded all such readings of *Never Again* as delusional.

For reasons yet to be fully revealed, IDF security systems failed on a cataclysmic scale. Israel's



Candles in honour of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust light up the Old City Walls in Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

overconfidence in its military apparatus and its leaders has taken a severe blow.

Also rendered delusional was any notion that the civilised West really learned anything from the Holocaust and that it would not again stand by and allow the Jewish people to be subject to existential threats. Notwithstanding initial strong statements and actions of support from major Western nations, Israel's legitimate determination to destroy Hamas is now encountering increasingly strong opposition from the same quarters. Leftists and Islamists flood the streets of those same nations, chanting with impunity. *"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"* (shamefully, several of NZ's own Members of Parliament can be counted among the chanters). If there were ever a plausible appeal to ignorance as to the necessary implication of such a call, 7 Oct. rendered it utterly obsolete. It is a call to genocide, and 7 Oct. provided a chilling demonstration of the phrase's practical application.

The Nazis, with their death factories and disciplined devotion to Jewish destruction, came to symbolise and personify ultimate evil. Nothing worse could be imagined until now. Hamas's depravity plumbed new depths and vanquished any residual hope in the inherent goodness of man. If many Nazi officers considered the day-after-day killing of Jewish children difficult but necessary, such that drunkenness in the evenings provided a means of relief, for Hamas, such actions (and much, much worse) were relished and celebrated. Thus the Nazis' status as the gold standard of ultimate evil, never to be surpassed, has also proven to have been a delusion.

One delusion to have survived 7 Oct., however, is that held by many of Israel's friends. Six former Australian PMs, in a 30 October statement that to its credit described as "legitimate" the objective of defeating Hamas, also included this pearl: "We endorse, as we did in office, the Australian Government's enduring support for a two-state solution..." Remarkable. Despite Hamas' and the Palestinian Authority's own explicit rejection of

such a 'solution', enlightened western leaders continue to signal their intention to pressure Israel into yet another unworkable, dangerous and unjust compromise. Ultimately, deluded friends may prove to be more dangerous than clear-minded enemies.

The Oslo Accords, a.k.a. 'the peace process', has proven itself to have been a thirty-year exercise in national self-harm. Of course, many will strongly disagree, but of them, it must be asked, "What has the process achieved for Israel other than a weakened strategic position and innumerable terror victims?" Certainly, among Israelis, many who formerly supported 'the process' have almost overnight been shaken free from the delusion that their 'peace partners' have even the slightest interest in peace.

Arguably, a great delusion that should have died with the events surrounding October 7 is the view that Jew-hatred can be adequately explained *without* reference to the supernatural.

A shadow proves the existence of light. And the recognition of great evil proves the existence of transcendent goodness. How else could evil be seen to be truly, objectively evil?

Many leaders within Christendom, by maintaining their silence after October 7 merely demonstrated their own irrelevance. In a perverse irony, Hamas strategists demonstrated their grip on spiritual realities by dubbing their October assault *Operation Al-Aqsa Flood*. Al-Aqsa is a mosque atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Thus, these Islamic terrorists and the spiritual forces by which they are energised apparently understand something that many Christian leaders do not. This phase of human history climaxes in the controversy over Zion. Ultimately, it is a controversy that embroils the entire world, Israel's people, her land, her city, and finally, her King.

Perry has photographed seventy Holocaust survivors and has created Holocaust exhibitions shown throughout New Zealand. Portions of his work have also been displayed in Australia, Berlin and Dubai.

Perry is also the author of "Israel in the Biblical Worldview", available on Amazon.

Recommended
Viewing**"One Life"** by Joanna Moss

The beloved story of Sir Nicholas (Nicky) Winton of Kindertransport fame is depicted in the latest movie *One Life*. The title draws on the Jewish *Talmudic* saying that saving one life is like saving the whole world, but the meaning would be lost on most people, especially in 2024. Whilst the expression got a cursory mention in the trailer and film, it is not the most interesting part. Nor is the title fitting for a man of such noble exploits with more than 670 children saved. It would have been better to have used the title of his daughter's book that the film is drawn from and demonstrably illustrated, *If it's not Impossible... The Life of Sir Nicholas Winton* by Barbara Winton.

When the movie possibility arose, Barbara Winton insisted that Sir Anthony Hopkins play the lead role of an old man still tortured by the guilt of not saving more children from war-torn Prague. It was certainly a challenging role to play a person born in 1909 who lived through both wars. Winton's son agreed it was authentic. Helena Bonham Carter plays Winton's mother, a German Jewish immigrant and a force to be reckoned with. The impact of his heritage on his decision to save the children; both the moral duty as an immigrant's son and a Jewish person to kin, are not explored deeply. Nor is the role of his heritage or class in his Britishness. But we see that he was raised Anglican and was caught between the two faiths. His family changed their name from Wertheim to Winton just before the Second World War based on discrimination.

In the second time period (1988 ff) we see Winton as a retired stockbroker filling his days with community projects amidst a sea of files with a precious scrapbook encased in an old briefcase. He probably retired around the time of deregulation being old school in Thatcher's New Britain. He exemplifies noblesse oblige, but the sadness is pervasive.

As for life lessons, Winton's life reminds us that we need to "cast all our cares on Jesus" and that God is in the business of redemption. He saw the load Winton was carrying and He used the most unlikely thing—reality TV, to bring about a resolution and it happened in stages. The God of the impossible uses our heritage, situation and skills for good. But we have a choice. From there we see Winton dealing with the past and the principle of sowing and reaping in Nicky's kids. There was resolution for them too. Incredibly, he lived to 106 to demonstrate God's blessing of a long life.

Aliyah from Ukraine continues "Your Prayers are Really Needed"

■ Koen Carlier Christians for Israel Ukraine

We regularly get the question: "What can we pray for?" Then our answer is always: "Pray for protection for our drivers!" Our main job here is to drive, drive and drive. Thousands of kilometres a month in this war-torn country!

From all over Ukraine, we pick up people going to Israel, which is not always without danger because of the war and the winter time. An average drive to and from Kishenov (the capital of Moldova) from Ukraine takes two to three days—including overnight stays. Because of constant drone and missile attacks and due to heavy debris flying around from such an attack, vehicles are often times heavily damaged (see the photo below). We are grateful this is not our mini-bus. While the material is replaceable, human life is not.



A frequently seen image: a vehicle completely destroyed by flying debris from a rocket impact. | Photo: C4I

■ Uncertain Future

The war has been ongoing for almost two years now, and unfortunately, the end is not yet in sight. Many people feel depressed and exhausted! Will there be a new mobilisation in Ukraine? If Ukraine wants to endure, there will be no other choice. Most of the Jews that we help leave for Israel are children under eighteen years old, women and those over sixty. Men between the ages of eighteen and sixty can only leave the

country with a valid official reason, such as accompanying a seriously ill relative.

■ Busy Time Ahead

The first week of January was quiet, but now we are busy bringing Jews to Kishenov in small groups from cities such as Kharkiv, Dnipro, Kiev, and Zaporozhye. In the coming months, hundreds of Ukrainian Jews will leave for Israel permanently.



Among those who left for Israel was the almost 91-year-old Yevdokiya (pictured above) from Zhitomir. She left with her daughter Rita, who worked for the Jewish Agency for many years. Her son remained behind because of the mobilisation law and could be called up at any moment. It was not an easy trip for Yevdokiya, also because of her age.

Another person that we took to Kishenov was Alexander, who accompanied his sick mother. Alexander worked in a kosher store in Dnipro for many years. His wife and daughter had fled at the beginning of the war and now live in Beer Sheva. It will be a special and emotional reunion after almost two years!

■ Obstacles Included

Every week there is a flight with Jews flying from Kishenov to Tel Aviv. The *Aliyah* (return) continues despite everything. We continue to provide practical help, obstacles included! As *Isaiah 62:10* says: "Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations."

Please support Jews from Ukraine in making aliyah to Israel. It costs \$300 to help one person to return.

A Special Visit to Nikolayev

■ Anemone Rüger Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

"It's been too long, more than two years since we last visited people in Nikolayev," said Alina as she got ready to go visit Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in C4I's sponsorship programme with driver Igor. Since the war in Ukraine began, access to the city has been very limited. Nikolayev is located on the Black Sea, right between Odessa to the west and Kherson to the east. The farther east one goes, the more dangerous it gets. For the past two years, the elderly have been visited by Yelena, a local resident and courageous member of the Jewish community who has turned down many offers by friends from abroad to move to safer places. But now, Ukraine's C4I felt it was time to bring some help and hope and check on the survivors personally.

"You see many destroyed buildings as you drive through town; many houses without windows," Alina shared. "It's very depressing; I don't know how people live there. We drove by the hotel where we had stayed before, and it was a ruin." One of the elderly, 86-year-old Serafima, was nearly the only one left in a 30-family apartment building after heavy aerial bombing. "She was so sweet, so happy we came and broke up her loneliness," said Alina. "Her window had been replaced after it

was blown out in an attack. She looks out on a destroyed building across the street and a tank under her window. Yet, she doesn't want to leave her familiar home. She wears a fur hat because it's cold in her apartment. We brought her a generous food parcel. She was radiant; our visit meant the world to her!"



(Left) Serafima, 86 years old. (Right) C4I Ukraine's Alina reads our card to one of the people she visited: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you..." (*Isaiah 43*).

| Photos: Christians for Israel Ukraine

Believing Without Israel *Grafted into the Noble Olive Tree—Part 9*



Old olive trees. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ 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.

Paul explains in *Romans 11* that as Christians from the nations, we have been grafted as ‘wild branches’ onto the trunk of the noble olive. In contrast, some of the natural branches have been broken off from the tree. Paul explains that some Jews were broken off because of their unbelief, and we, as Christians from the nations, were grafted onto the olive tree. Within replacement and enlargement theology, this has often been explained to indicate that the trunk is ‘Israel’, that most of the Jews have been removed from it, and we have been incorporated into it. So, together with Messianic Jews, we, as Christians, would effectively have become the new Israel. This is a curious way of reading it. First of all, not all the Jews were taken away from the olive tree, but only ‘some’. Later in the same chapter, the prophetic promise is declared: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob” (*Romans 11:26*). So God has not at all finished with Israel and the Jewish people, nor have they been replaced by the church. Israel, as the ‘natural branches’, stands on the noble olive tree, representing God’s eternal covenants with Abraham and his descendants. We, as Christians from the Gentiles, through faith in Jesus Christ,

the Messiah, are grafted onto that same trunk by His grace as ‘wild branches’. We do not thereby become equal to Israel, nor do we replace Israel, but we may share in the blessings, the ‘rich root of the olive tree’ (*verse 17*) of God’s new covenant with Israel. When the covenant was established, God promised Abram: “In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed” (*Genesis 12:3*). So Israel is not replaced, however it means to share in the blessings of the covenant with Abraham.

The Unjust Tenants

In *Matthew 21*, Jesus tells a parable about a landowner who has a vineyard and rents it out to tenants. However, the tenants want to keep the produce for themselves.

“For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel”. *Isaiah 5:7*

Eventually, the landowner sends his own son to the tenants on the assumption that they will spare him. But the tenants kill the son, assuming that they will inherit the vineyard when the heir is dead. When Jesus then asks the chief priests and elders of the people what the landowner will do with these tenants, they reply that he will make the tenants die an evil death. Jesus then replies, “That the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it” (*Matthew 21:43*).

This passage has often been interpreted to suggest that the kingdom was taken from Israel because the Jews killed the son of the lord of the house. God would have taken away Israel’s Kingdom and

the people of God and handed it over to other people who were willing to bring forth the fruit. Those other people were supposedly the Christian church. That is the doctrine as we have known it since the Middle Ages. Again, this interpretation is an example of insertionism. Governed by the persistent perception that Israel’s role as God’s people is finished, such passages are read carelessly. What does it actually say? Israel, in this parable, is the vineyard. We encounter that image more often in the Old Testament. *Isaiah 5:7* says: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.”

The tenants in the parable are the leaders of Israel. Jesus is speaking at that moment to the priests and elders of the

people, the leaders, in other words. He criticises their poor leadership, and it will eventually be taken away from them. We also read something similar in *Ezekiel 34*, where the Lord God also criticised the leaders of Israel at that time. They were poor shepherds and focused not on the well-being of the people but on their own interests. He announced that He would take their shepherdship away from them and appoint a new shepherd. In Jesus’ parable, the vineyard remains just the vineyard. There will only be other tenants. So Israel does not cease to be the people of God. Other people will be involved. It is evident, however, that even in this parable of Jesus, Israel’s position as God’s people does not come to an end.

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Resurrecting Psalm 23

It is time to resurrect *Psalm 23*. To do so, we need to observe that the correct Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is ‘Praises’—*Tehillim*. The book of *Psalms* tells us how to view a life with God when we worship Him. No matter our situation in life, a believer must end up praising God.

Psalms records the highs and lows of multiple authors as well as the demands and expectations they put to God to rescue themselves and His people. Yet, each chapter is ultimately a praise to Him. Instead of viewing chapter 23 as a ‘psalm’, let’s view it from the perspective of ‘praise’.

The end of the first verse of *Psalm 23* is usually translated as “I shall not want.” These four English words are represented by two Hebrew words—*לֹא אֶחְסָר* (*loh ekh-sar*). Although the opening of verse 1 is the present tense—“The Eternal is My Shepherd,” it concludes in the future tense. If we follow the rules of grammar, the end of verse 1 should be “I have everything.” What’s this future all about? The revelational answer comes down to one letter—*alef* (א).

Let me demonstrate. The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *alef* (א) and it has a numerical value of 1. It is the letter that begins the word of the verse *Psalm 23:1* *אֶחְסָר* (*ekh-sar*).

The *alef* is constructed from two other Hebrew letters *yud* (י) and *vav* (ו). The numerical value of *yud* is 10 and the numerical value of *vav* is 6. If you look at the *alef* closely, there are two *yud*’s and one *vav*. By combining these two letters that form *alef*, the total numerical value of the word is 26.

The name of God that begins *Psalm 23:1* is the *Tetragrammaton*, (יהוה), translated as ‘The Eternal,’ since the term is a fusion of three Hebrew time-related expressions, future, present and past. God above time! The numerical value of the *Tetragrammaton* is 26 (*yud* -10; *hey* -5; *vav*-6 and *hey* 5). The *alef* that begins the last word of the verse is hinting to the name of God at the beginning of the verse. *Alef* equals the *Tetragrammaton*.

A Hebrew translation of *Psalm 23:1* would thus be “A melody to David: The Eternal is shepherding me, I will not miss anything.”

The reason I will not miss anything is because of the *alef* that represents The Eternal. When I am all in with Him, I will always have it all.

So, instead of just reciting this verse at a funeral, it is time for the Praise to be part of our living with God!

Comfort, Comfort my 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.

As it is written: “How pleasant are the feet of those who proclaim good news!” (*Romans 10:15b*)

We continue our study of *Romans 9-11*. In chapter 10, Paul talks about the message of the Gentiles to Israel. The message we Gentiles should bring is a good message and a message of comfort.

A Good Message

In *Romans 10:15*, Paul quotes from *Isaiah 52:7*. The words of the preacher are positive without exception: ‘beautiful’, ‘pleasant’, ‘message of peace’, ‘glad tidings’ and ‘good things’ (*τὰ ἀγαθὰ/ta agatha*).

These ‘evangelists’ bring good news, a message of peace (compare *Ephesians 2:17*), and ‘glad tidings of good things’. They are called to proclaim a ‘shalom’, which does more than merely nurture illusions or dreams. The peace of God, which begins in the hearts of individuals, will eventually put an end to all bloodshed and all tears. These messengers of peace proclaim ‘shalom’ in an all-inclusive sense. The ‘good things’ are obviously the ‘wealth’ of the messianic kingdom.

Unfortunately, in the minds of many well-meaning, Bible-believing Christians, the “not so good” dominates when talking about the Jewish people and even in personal encounters with them. The “not so good” could include The great tribulation (before which ‘the Church’ will be raptured, of course!), that Jerusalem will be destroyed once more and “that two parts therein shall be cut off and die” (compare *Zechariah 13:8*), the woes of *Matthew 24*, the wars of Gog and Magog (*Ezekiel 38-39*), or the famous ‘battle of Armageddon’ (*Revelation 16:16*). All these issues offer far more lucrative material for speculation than something ‘good’. A misdirected prophetic curiosity, however, can easily—and often involuntarily—

develop into a message of horror, causing anything ‘good’ to pale in comparison.

A Message of Comfort

In his commentary on *Romans*, Adolf Schlatter suggests that the feet of those messengers of joy are “beautiful because they do not come with a word of judgment, but with the gospel that offers the peace of God”.

It is not by accident that Paul, through his use of *Isaiah 52*, refers his readers back to the second part of the book of *Isaiah* (*Isaiah 40-66*). The Jewish people call it ‘ישעיהו המנחם’/Yeshayahu HaMenachem, ‘Isaiah the comforter’. In contrast, the first part of this prophetic book (*Isaiah 1-39*) is known as ‘ישעיהו השופט’/Yeshayahu HaShofet, ‘Isaiah the judge’.

The prophet, well aware of the sin and unrighteousness of his people, begins the 40th chapter of his book with the words: “‘Comfort, comfort my people!’, says your God. ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Cry to her, that her military service (modern Hebrew) has come to an end, that her offence is forgiven’” (*Isaiah 40:1-2*).

In the second part of the book of *Isaiah*, a mysterious ‘third player’ repeatedly appears on the scene to whom the God of Israel can speak as ‘your God’, but who is differentiated from ‘my people’. God has called an instrument out of the Gentile nations to comfort Israel, to speak tenderly to Jerusalem and to proclaim to her that her hard service has come to an end.

These Hebrew words of *Isaiah 40*, taken literally and without any explanation or



The Judea mountains, near Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

exposition, are incredibly applicable in modern Israel today. Orthodox Jews in particular, are astonished when a Gentile, a ‘pagan’, conveys comfort to them in a ‘friendly’ or even in a ‘loving’ way. In the best case, they have experienced Gentiles who tried to make them aware of how far away from her divine destiny Israel is living. But now Gentiles are coming along who are not only friendly but who also proclaim that “her slavery is ended”.

In today’s modern language, the Hebrew word, which is often rendered as ‘warfare’ or ‘slavery’, designates ‘military service’. Loving words of the ‘end of military service’ are like a healing balm to the spirit of frightened parents whose sons have to serve three years in the army, sometimes under life-threatening circumstances.

Understanding that judgement follows sin, and knowing that God is just, it is easy to imagine the identity crisis and the soul-searching the Jewish people deal with. On the other hand, someone who has not been ‘my people’ from birth and yet has come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their heavenly Father is able to definitively say; “her iniquity is [already] pardoned”.

Reflection

By Rev Oscar Lohuis
Christians for Israel
Netherlands

Watchmen on the Walls of Jerusalem

The State of Israel is being seriously threatened. Governments, terror organisations and whole crowds of people are coming out unashamedly saying that Israel must be destroyed and that the world’s only Jewish state has no right to exist. It is only a very small country in the whole of the Middle East, with very few inhabitants, yet the fight against Israel and the battle for Jerusalem has become the focus of world politics.

As a result of demonising and delegitimising Israel, Jews worldwide are increasingly at risk due to the alarming increase of antisemitism. Jewish students at universities oftentimes no longer dare to openly show that they are Jews because of the resulting hostile climate and the many incidents of violence against Jews. Everyone talks about diversity, equality and inclusiveness, but no action is taken against calling for the genocide of Jews.

Standing in the Gap

As Christians, we have two options. We can either withdraw or stand in the gap. We can remain silent or speak out. We can be intimidated or be bold. We can stay put or stand up for the truth. The Lord God is appointing watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem at this time. Watchmen are needed when the city is under threat. But these watchmen are not just watching for possible enemies who come toward the city with evil intentions. *Isaiah 62:6-7* says that these watchmen also look upward, that they remind the Lord of His promises for Israel.

Spiritual Battle

“I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.” The reason why there is so much enmity against Israel is because of this tremendously beautiful plan of God and the destiny He has for Jerusalem. It is profoundly a spiritual battle, and so let us stand in the gap for the Jewish people, most of all in prayer. Personally, I have never been more convinced of the righteous need to stand with Israel and the Jewish people than today. I hope that you feel the same way.

Facts Speak

Swords of Iron War Situation Update



11,000
rockets fired into Israel from Gaza and Lebanon



253 civilians and soldiers were taken hostage
132 are still captive



1,496
killed



217,921
people evacuated from their homes



14,047
civilians and soldiers injured



295,000
reserve soldiers mobilised

Source: The Institute for National Security Studies—Tel Aviv University, as of February 2024

Israel at War: Prophecy Fulfilled—Psalm 2

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

The horrifying terrorist attack on Israel was planned with deadly detail and executed with horrifying haste. Even the date of deployment, 7 October 2023, was planned: it was one day after the fiftieth anniversary of another existential surprise military attack on Israel—the Yom Kippur War of 1973. This war brought the world to the brink of a nuclear Armageddon.

Make no mistake about it: this is not just a war between Israel and Hamas or Hamas's allies like the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Iran. It involves the entire world. Consider this: peaceful, prosperous Australia was put on an Israeli travel advisory because of the shocking public displays of antisemitism in Sydney and Melbourne. The 'fishers' and 'hunters' are loose (*Jeremiah 16:16*).

Why did Hamas attack Israel with unprecedented barbarism? Why do major nations, the United Nations, and major lobby groups fail to condemn the 7 Oct. attack? Why is antisemitism raging worldwide in a latter-day version of *Kristallnacht*? Why is the Israel-Hamas War different and more dangerous than previous conflicts? Most importantly, are we seeing the fulfilment of Bible prophecy?

Bible prophecies of the last days speak of Israel at war leading up to the coming of Messiah. These include *Psalms 83*, *Ezekiel 38-39*, *Zechariah 12, 14*, and *Revelation 19*. Let's not forget Christ's Olivet discourse found in *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21*—it speaks of 'wars and rumours of wars.' While Bible prophecy is a lifetime of study, discussion, and reflection, we can start this series with a classic Messianic passage: *Psalm 2*.

Why the Fuss?

The second psalm rhetorically begins: *Why do the heathen (nations) rage?* Good question.

The answer is both bad news and good news, depending on your spiritual state. For those who live and love this present evil world, it is catastrophically bad news. Yet for those who know and walk with the Lord, it is the best news possible, called the 'blessed hope' of the church (*Titus 2:13*).

The reason for the rage is that the King—the Son of David, Son of God—is coming back to earth (*vs. 6-7*). Furthermore, the King is coming to Zion. 'Zion' is an important but highly misunderstood word. While it is the name associated with Zionism, it can



| Photo: Adobe Stock

mean 'Jerusalem,' 'Israel,' or 'the Jewish people,' depending on the Biblical context. For our purposes, it means the royal section of Jerusalem, the capital.

In short, the prophetic prospect of Messiah, the Son of David, taking His rightful place on David's throne in Zion is causing an international storm. When He comes, the Lord will ask for—and receive—the nations of the world as His inheritance (*v. 8*). He will rule with a 'rod of iron' (*v. 9* and repeated three times in *Revelation*). The Messiah will clean up the mess of criminality, corruption, tyranny, and unrighteousness. Complete obedience will be required (*v. 11-12*). No wonder the rebels of this world are panicking.

...this is not just a war between Israel and Hamas or Hamas's allies... it involves the entire world.

Now, of course, the world powers neither know nor care about ancient prophecies and their fulfilment. Yet, there are spiritual powers that both know and care about these events: Satan and the demons. During Jesus' earthly ministry, the multitudes loved Him but were unclear about his true identity: was he John the Baptist, Elijah, Elisha or one of the other prophets? However, the demons were one hundred per cent clear on His real identity: You are the Son of God, they exclaimed repeatedly (*Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:41; 8:28*).

Like Satan, these malevolent spiritual forces know the Bible and tremble at the thought of the King coming to Zion. It means their time is up. And they are adept at stirring up the kingdoms of this world to rise up in futility to stop the transition to the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.

After observing the collective global

tantrum below, the Lord's reaction is a derisive laugh (*v. 4*). The rebels in charge are confused, fearful, and striking back furiously; they probably realise that their resistance cannot stop the inevitable, but they want to slow it down and trip it up for as long as they can.

Maybe now we can get a greater understanding of why there is a massive outbreak of antisemitism and persecution of Christians worldwide. Or why there is the naggingly persistent question of Israel's right to exist? Or why most of the world, including the Western world, rejects the notion of a united Jerusalem under the sovereignty of Israel.

Just look at Australia's track record on this topic: at first, Australia recognised

Short News

Extraordinary Find



In a remarkable discovery, Israeli reserve soldiers on routine patrol near the Gaza border stumbled upon a 1900-year-old grinding mortar. The mortar was used to grind grain and made of basalt (volcanic rock). One of the reservists, Lt. Col. Yair Amitsur, who works as an archaeologist and tour guide for the Israel Antiquities Authority, immediately recognised what it was. The find is special because basalt is not found in this area and was probably once brought to this area. Amitsur explained: "The tool reminds us that throughout the generations, the Western Negev served as a significant settlement area, where a variety of cultures settled."

| Photo: Israel Antiquities Authority

"Hamas Steals"

According to reactions from Gazans received by a news channel, Hamas is regularly confiscating international aid goods in Gaza. Someone wrote: "There are long lines for the humanitarian goods, but it is all stolen goods." And: "Life is made impossible for us. All of Hamas is in Rafah." Citizens in Gaza who speak out against Hamas can generally be met with disapproval. Hamas uses its control of aid goods to exercise power.

Tunnels Uncovered



The Israel Defense Forces uncovered a tunnel in Khan Younis in southern Gaza where Israeli hostages had been held in harsh and inhumane conditions. According to testimonies of hostages who returned from Gaza, this is where some of them were held most of their time in captivity. The entrance of the vast tunnel network was beneath the home of a Hamas commander. Senior Israeli defence officials now assess that Hamas's Gaza tunnel network is 350-450 miles long, far longer than previously believed. The tunnels were used for various purposes: combat purposes, ammunition storage and connection to other tunnels.

Amalek, Opposite of Israel

■ Lea de Lange

The Scroll of Esther is an exceptional book in the Scriptures. God is not mentioned, or only once, furtively, indicated by Mordechai in a conversation with Queen Esther. If she will not come to the rescue of the Jews, then “Salvation will come from another place” (God?). The protagonists, Mordechai and Esther, seem to be hiding in a foreign land, where they bear a kind of pseudonym, Mordechai (after Marduk, a Persian idol) and Esther (after the Persian Venus), although there is also a Hebrew root in the name ‘Esther’: ‘Astir’ (I will hide). Everything happens tersely in this Scroll; even God rules His people from behind thick screens, evoking associations to the clouds of ‘Kawod’—glory—that shelter the people in the desert so Amalek has no hold over them. There, during the exodus from Egypt, God manifests Himself emphatically, unmasked. It is He Himself who passes through Mitzrayim (Egypt), who speaks to Moses, who bestows the teachings on His people from Sinai, but here in Persia under King Achashverosh (*Xerxes I*, 486 – 465 BCE), everything happens in secret. God hides His face, perhaps because the far-flung people cannot bear this face.

The evil role in the story is played by Haman, a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag and a high-ranking politician before whom all throw themselves into the dust, all except Mordechai. Why? Mordechai is from the tribe of Benjamin, Yaakov’s youngest son, still unborn when father Yaakov bowed to the wicked Esav, ancestor of Haman. Benjamin remained unaffected by this humiliation: he was unborn. Mordechai, the scion, is the Jewish man, bowing only before God.

Haman gossips to Achashverosh like a leering snake about the Jewish people, as enemies of Israel are wont to do, trying to sully the good name after which Israel will be easy to exterminate (compare: Nazi Germany, compare: the Arab narratives, designed to sow hatred against Israel so that it will lose customary international rights, become ‘outlawed’. The daily increase in antisemitism proves the soundness of the old tactic).

Every Adar, the last month of the Jewish year, Israel commemorates the events in Shushan, the capital of the great Persian Empire. The destruction of Israel did not proceed there; the Jews were given royal permission to defend themselves. Haman does not succeed in his plan: genocide. That’s all? Yes, but it is a lot; thinking back to the Sho’ah, we know how much. And even today... if the



Jewish men reading a large Scroll of Esther, which tells the story of the Jewish festival of Purim, at the Western Wall. | Photo: Flash90

world would simply let Israel fight (and conquer without turning back the clock later) against her enemy, then peace would have reigned in the Middle East for decades.

The Jews in Persia strike back, and if Israel goes to war against Amalek, God will be with them; after all, it is God Himself who forbade His people to forget what and who Amalek is to Israel: “Remember what Amalek did to you.”

On the *Shabbat* before the *Feast of Purim*, the congregation of Israel reads in the *Book of Deuteronomy* (25) the passage called ‘Zechor’, ‘Remember’. Never forget what Amalek did when you left Egypt. Flatten out any memory of Amalek among the heavens, but do not forget. What did Amalek do? It attacked Israel’s weak and weary (weak in doctrine, straying from faith). Amalek does not fear God, unlike Israel, and that is why the Bible commands Israel that “When you find peace from your enemies around you in the Land that the Lord your God will give you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall wipe out every memory of Amalek from under the heavens, you shall remember this.” This is a God-mandated war, to be waged by men and women against Amalek fighting against God Himself. Israel must wage God’s war on earth against a demonic entity, existing only to ‘lick up Israel’s blood’ like dogs.

At the *Feast of Purim*, the Esther Scroll is read aloud; everyone must hear every word and carefully follow the

reading. It is a feast of joy. One should send each other edible gifts and also think of the poor, all to promote unity and brotherly love within Israel, because when Israel is united, then Amalek has no hold on them, no hold on the weak and weary, the ‘missing’ is filled by the strong, the indefatigable. The people are strong.

When the world is delivered from all evil, when the promised kingdom of God be revealed on our earth, then all prophetic predictions will be actual, no longer veiled, covered up. Man will see what Israel’s Prophets foretold; God reveals His face to us forever unveiled. Israel will have reached its destination: a holy people, a kingdom of priests studying the *Torah* scrolls. No enemy will then be able to threaten Israel, even the memory of them will have vanished, but still, Israel will unfold the Scroll of Esther from year to year to read the *Purim* story, word for word, reverently as it was commanded to the people once and for all. When Israel will live forever in peace in the Land of the Fathers, even then, it will remember every year how an antithesis raged in the world, a negative of Israel, a cold and chilling people who extinguished the fire of the burning bush, even the fire of Israel: Amalek, a people living to harm Israel. Just as Israel was supposed to serve God with joy, Amalek sought joy in its destruction.

Lea de Lange (1938–2013) was a Dutch-Israeli writer. This is an adaptation of an article that first appeared in Dutch in 2004.

Signs of Faith

By Kees de Vreugd

Sabbath Candles

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

It is Friday evening. Night falls, and the working week is completed. Eighteen minutes before *Shabbat* begins, Jewish girls and women light the lights of the *Shabbat*.

Lighting the candles is the first *mitzvah* (religious duty) of the *Sabbath*, even before *kiddush* is made. Generally, at least two candles are lit. They refer to the *Sabbath* commandment in the two versions of the Ten Commandments: “Remember the Sabbath day” (*Exodus 20:8*) and “Observe the Sabbath day” (*Deuteronomy 5:12*). The woman is the

backbone of the home and of the people of Israel. Therefore, she typically lights the candles. She often lights a candle for each of her children in addition to the two *Sabbath* candles. Tea lights can be used for this. But because the light also recalls the *menorah* in the temple, some people use lamps with olive oil. In any case, the light should burn long enough to enjoy it in the evening.

The light of the candle, the light of the *Sabbath*, refers to the light of the first day of creation. The *Sabbath* is the end and culmination of the creation week, but creation is an ongoing process. The light sheds its glow ahead of the new week.

In the Bible, we find no explicit instruction to light *Sabbath* candles. Nevertheless, the *berachah* (blessing) that accompanies it gives thanks to God

for sanctifying Israel with His commandments and ordering the lighting of the *Sabbath* lights. Jewish lore has heard all kinds of allusions to it in the Bible. The basis is the ‘delight’ and honour of the *Sabbath* (*Isaiah 58:13*). Light gives an atmosphere of dignity and brilliance; it brings peace because it makes us discern each other’s unique qualities and so be together in harmony. Moreover, it is written, “For the commandment is a lamp and *Torah* is light” (*Proverbs 6:23*).

Finally, it also resembles the soul. The flame needs the matter of the candle. Similarly, the soul needs the body to express its potential in this world. Light, like the soul, is intangible, immaterial. A flame is always striving upwards. So does the soul.

Important Projects in 2023 Thank you for your Generous Help!

“Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” *Psalm 28:9*

It has been a challenging year for Israel. Since the massacre on 7 October 2023, and the war it caused, Israel and the entire Jewish people are particularly dependent on reliable friends who stand by their side. Thank you for your help, which has made it possible to alleviate hardship, provide comfort and give hope. A heartfelt thank you on behalf of all the people who were helped! The donations and prayers from Christians for Israel are a ray of hope!

Below, you will find more information about our most important projects.

We would like to thank you for all the donations received. We are also very grateful for the donations for our ministry costs, including the production, print and postage of our free newspaper, *Israel & Christians Today*.

Emergency Campaign Israel—October 2023

Residents of the various kibbutzim towns and villages hit by the terrorists on 7 Oct. have been evacuated and housed in temporary facilities. Some of their homes were destroyed, looted or burnt down. Children have been orphaned, and some parents are now childless. There are daily rocket alerts in the south and north. Many are traumatised, especially the hostages who were released. Together with organisations in Israel, we assist where help is needed: Clothes, shoes, medicine, psychotherapy, doctor visits, learning programmes for children, accommodation and much more.



Emergency Aid to Israel after the attacks on 7 October

Aliyah

In 2023, we once again supported immigration of Jews from Ukraine, Russia, Ethiopia and France. A new start in Israel is not always easy. We provide help with the integration of new immigrants directly on-site in Israel. Even after 7 Oct., young people from Ukraine (see photos) have continued to immigrate to Israel to



Aliyah from Ukraine, France, Ethiopia and other countries

realise their dream. They want to complete their schooling in Israel and integrate into society.

First Home in the Homeland

First Home in the Homeland offers young families a loving home in a kibbutz to assist them with their integration. For them, moving to Israel is the fulfilment of a dream. However, many new immigrants find it difficult to build a new social network and often feel isolated because they do not yet speak the Hebrew language well. Through this programme, they quickly connect with other families and learn Hebrew. This prepares them well for their life and their new job in Israel.



(Left) First Home in the Homeland. (Right) SOS Ukraine: Emergency Aid, Food Parcels

SOS Ukraine

With your help, we were able to help more than 6,000 Ukrainian Jews emigrate to Israel. Our team in Ukraine worked tirelessly in 2023. They brought food parcels across the country, wherever there was a great need. They visited Holocaust survivors and took people who wanted to make *aliyah* across the Moldovan border, from where they were taken to the consulate and airport in Kishinev or Bucharest.

Holocaust Survivors

For many Holocaust survivors, the feeling of loneliness is added to the existing material hardships. In addition, more than half of them suffer from psychological after-effects of oppressive and traumatic experiences endured during their childhood or youth. After the massacre on 7 Oct., many fears have resurfaced. With the support of the Café Europa project in Jerusalem, lonely survivors can meet weekly for a coffee break with a programme. The Hineni soup kitchen often provides Holocaust survivors with their only meal of the day. We were also able to help impoverished Holocaust survivors in Ukraine this year. They receive help in the form of home visits, food, the financing of medication, glasses, hearing aids and much more.



Holocaust Survivors in Israel and Ukraine

The Jaffa Institute

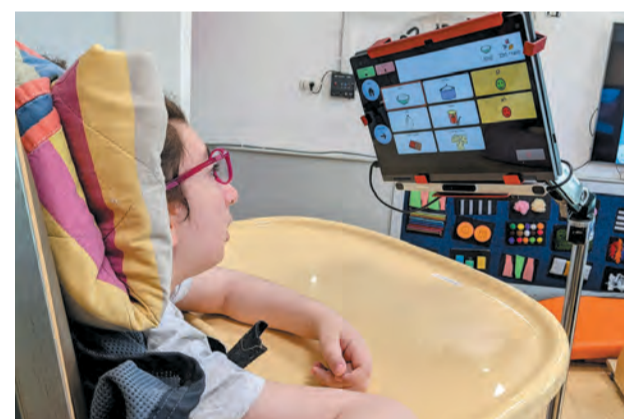
The Jaffa Institute helps children at risk because they come from disadvantaged families. That may be because of having an alcoholic father leaving a mother who cannot cope with her family or because they are orphans. Through the Jaffa Institute, they not only receive education and attention but also food and a vision for their lives. Children and young people receive a warm lunch as part of the after-school programmes.



Jaffa Institute: help for children at risk

ADI

ADI helps children and young people with multiple disabilities in Jerusalem and the Negev. Jewish, Arab and Bedouin children find a home here where they are cared for and supported.



ADI: Help for children with multiple disabilities

Arab Christians

Thanks to your donations, it was possible to organise a summer Bible camp for the members of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem, led by Rev Naim Khoury. Clothing, food and small Christmas surprises were purchased and distributed in Bethlehem and Nazareth.



Support for Arab Christians

Please continue to faithfully support these projects in 2024!

Food Parcels for Jewish Communities *Your Support is Needed*

Dear friends of Israel and the Jewish people,

As Christians for Israel, we have been distributing food parcels to the Jewish community in Ukraine for many years. Facing the challenges of a second winter during the war, the temperatures plummet well below freezing. Amidst the uncertainties wrought by the ongoing war, we hold steadfast to the belief that God continues to guide His people through these difficult times. He cares for them and continues with His plan!

Recently, we had the privilege of visiting 82-year-old Jewish Valentina in her modest, dilapidated home in eastern Ukraine. Confined to her bed, the food parcel we delivered was crucial, yet equally significant was the comfort we could offer through our visit. We assured Valentina that the God of Israel watches over her.

The provision of food aid remains an important part of Christians for Israel's efforts in Ukraine. This winter, our goal is to distribute more than 40,000 food packages (equivalent to over 400,000 pounds) to support needy Jewish elderly, struggling families, and refugees.

Knowing that we can contribute to the well-being of the Jewish people brings solace and motivation. We invite you to join us in making this important work possible through your generous donations and prayers. Together, let us bring comfort and encouragement to those in need.



Warm greetings on behalf of the entire team of Christians for Israel in Ukraine.

Koen Carlier
Aliyah Fieldworker
Christians for Israel Ukraine

In Ukraine, tens of thousands of Jews continue to face poverty. The provision of food parcels by the Christians for Israel team is crucial for these individuals to withstand the harsh winter conditions.

This winter in Ukraine, our goal is to distribute 40,000 food parcels to impoverished Jewish families, Holocaust survivors and the elderly. A food parcel costs \$26.

Your assistance can make a significant difference. Will you support one or more parcels?



- One \$26 parcel contains:**
- 1 kg spaghetti
 - 1 kg macaroni
 - 1 kg grits
 - 1 kg rice
 - 1 kg bulgur
 - 1 kg sugar
 - 2 kg flour
 - 500 gm oatmeal
 - 1 tin of peas
 - 1 tin of corn
 - 1 litre cooking oil
 - 1 tin of chicken
 - 1 pack of coffee
 - 1 pack of tea
 - 1 bar of chocolate

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL NZ MINISTRY

- Emergency Situation in Israel
- My donation for ministry costs, print & post
- thinc.* (countering anti-Israel 'lawfare')

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

- Aliyah - Ethiopia
- One person (Ukraine) - \$300
- One family (Ukraine) (5 people) - \$1250
- One bus (Ukraine) (25 people) - \$6250
- First Home in the Homeland - \$765
- Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - \$1460

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

- Food Parcels in Ukraine - \$26 each
- Children at Risk - Jaffa Institute
- Hineni Soup Kitchen - \$15 per meal
- Holocaust Survivors
- Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)
- Arab Christians
- For Zion's Sake
- Israel Alzheimer's Centre

TOTAL DONATION \$.....

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ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

- 2024 Christians for Israel CALENDAR (\$10 donated to Emergency Situation in Israel) \$29.00
- NEW: The Jubilee: Discover the End Time Mystery by Enoch Lavender \$22.00
- NEW: Two States for Two Peoples? by Wolfgang Bock and Andrew Tucker \$16.50
- Behold He Comes by Rev Willem Glashouwer **Special \$45.00** \$35.00
- Christians for Israel NZ Israeli & Friends Cookbook **Special \$34.95** \$20.00
- Israel on Trial by Dr Matthijs de Blois and Andrew Tucker **Special \$49.95** \$39.95
- Until - Fourteen Prophetic Horizons by Rev Willem Glashouwer \$25.00
- Living a Life in Victory by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$25.00
- The Signs of the Times by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$19.95
- Why Israel? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$20.00
- Why Jerusalem? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$20.00
- Why End Times? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$20.00
- Why is it so Difficult for Jews to Believe in Jesus by Cornelis Kant \$12.95
- Israel: Covenants & Kingdom by Willem JJ Glashouwer \$15.00
- Towards the Establishment of the State of Israel by Edda Fogorollo \$21.50

Please add \$5.50 for postage & packaging (or \$9.40 for rural postage)

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Check out our website for a full list of essential resources

TOTAL \$.....

Thank you for supporting Christians for Israel. If you are donating via online banking for the first time, 'thank you!', please don't forget to put your name as the reference. If you receive the paper via a group or church and you are not on our database, please give us a call or email us so we can allocate a supporter number to you. It saves administration time if we have all the details and allocate your donation correctly.

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Please confirm by emailing info@c4israel.org.nz

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