

ISRAEL

& Christians Today

NEW ZEALAND
and
SOUTH PACIFIC

April–May 2026
Iyyar–Sivan 5786



Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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At the scene where a missile fired from Iran toward Israel struck and caused damage in Bnei Brak, central Israel. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

Israel Between Fear and Help—Again!

On 28 February, Israel and the US launched a long-anticipated joint military attack on Iran's revolutionary Islamic regime. The aim of the Israeli-US operation is to end the Ayatollahs' capacity to carry out its declared intention to destroy Israel (the 'Little Satan') and the United States (the 'Great Satan'). Ultimately, it is hoped the war will lead to regime change.

What was initially expected to be a short-lived operation has escalated into a regional war. Despite the targeted elimination of most of Iran's political and military leaders, and annihilation of Iran's nuclear programme and ballistic missile production, the regime is fighting back. Many countries are now involved. The mutual attacks on energy infrastructure are affecting the global economy.

The return to large-scale war has created very different

realities across Israel, depending on location and circumstances. Tel Aviv, for example, has suffered the most from Iranian missile attacks since the start of Operation Roaring Lion on 28 February. In total, dozens of Israelis have been killed by Iranian missiles.

Residents of Tel Aviv usually have a few minutes to reach a shelter. In Haifa, by contrast, people face both Iranian missiles and Hezbollah rockets from Lebanon, which rejoined the fighting on 2 March in solidarity with Iran. There is often little or no warning of Hezbollah rockets, leading some residents to sleep in bomb shelters.

In the western Negev, where the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 sparked the regional war, life has, ironically, become calm following the 'disarmament' of Hamas. In Judea and Samaria, some Jews are now

reporting improved security, partly due to the proximity of Arab areas—making Jewish communities less attractive targets for inaccurate rockets—and due to what some describe as a tougher approach to lawbreakers.

In Beit Shemesh, about twenty kilometres away, nine people were killed on 1 March when a rocket struck a crowded bomb shelter. The community subsequently came together at the hospital, partly by organising the *bar mitzvah* of a boy whose father, Yossi Cohen, was killed in the attack and whose mother ended up in hospital. "The whole community worked together to ensure the *bar mitzvah* took place on the scheduled date. It was tragic, heart-warming, sad and yet joyful at the same time," said a villager about the ceremony on 7 March at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital.



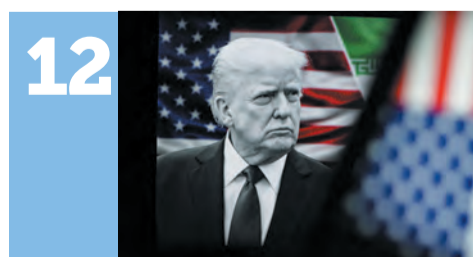
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Colophon

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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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Is War Justified?

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Once again Israel has found itself embroiled in a dangerous war, and civilians in Israel are coming under fire from rockets launched from Iran and Lebanon. The war has extended to include many other countries.

War is ugly and horrific. Can it be justified? Shouldn't Israel and the US simply 'turn the other cheek'?

We often hear Christians condemning every war by definition. Even now, Israel is facing a great deal of criticism throughout the West.

We do not live in Israel. We have not had rockets rained down on us time and again over the past decades. We are not threatened by millions of bloodthirsty religious fanatics who want nothing more than to murder us. We have not suffered an invasion of our country in which 1,200 innocent civilians were slaughtered in the most barbaric manner in a single day.

In a recent press conference, Prime Minister Netanyahu explained the current war on the Iranian regime, from Israel's perspective, as follows:

"We have to be armed. We have to be more powerful than the barbarians, or they will not be merely at the gate. They'll crash our gates and destroy our societies. That's what Israel is doing now with the United States. And I'm very proud of the fact that the Israeli people are standing strong, that the Israeli army is standing strong. We rose from 7 October. Our people, our soldiers, rose like lions. But in protecting ourselves and in joining with our great American friends, we're also protecting the entire world."

This bellicose language jars the ears of us in the West. Since WWII, we have been brought up with the idea that the road



Israeli soldiers operate near the Israel-Lebanon border during Operation Roaring Lion. | Photo: Ayal Margolin/Flash90

to peace is through diplomacy, not war.

The fact is that diplomacy with the evil regime in Tehran has failed. Over the past decades, Western countries have bent over backwards to persuade the Ayatollahs not to seek to annihilate the Jews and destroy the West. To no avail.

The prophets of the Old Testament teach us that there will come a day when the lion will lie down with the lamb, and peace and righteousness will cover the earth. When the *Messiah* rules from Jerusalem, Satan will be bound, the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem, and the nations will go up year by year to Jerusalem to celebrate the *Feast of Tabernacles*.

But until then, we are living in a broken world in which Satan is still exerting his evil influence. *"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8)

It is true that Jesus said "all who draw the sword will die by the sword." But

this does not mean that governments may not use force when needed to ensure law and order.

Nations are allowed to use force to defeat evil. In fact sometimes they have a responsibility towards their citizens to do so. Of course, such use of force must be limited to what is necessary and proportionate. And great care must be used to ensure innocent lives are not lost.

It was the Ayatollahs who started this war, not Israel. For decades they have aggressively pursued the goal of eliminating Israel and destroying the West. They have killed thousands of Jews, Israelis and US citizens around the world over the years - in addition to oppressing their own people, most recently massacring tens of thousands. Israel's intention is to destroy the military capabilities of this evil regime, while limiting civilian casualties as far as possible. That is a noble goal for which we should be thankful.

Prayer Points

Israel

- *"The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him"* (Nahum 1:7). Pray for Israel's protection from enemy attacks from neighbouring countries and from Iran. Pray for God's protection of the country.
- Pray for comfort for all those who have lost loved ones in the war with Iran and in the war with Hamas. Pray that the wounded will recover well and that those suffering from trauma will receive healing and feel comforted by God.
- *"Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You"* (Jeremiah 32:17). From the evening of 21 April to the following day, 22 April, Israel celebrates Independence Day. Give thanks for the great miracle of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and pray for Israel's protection on this day.

Return

- This year marks the 30th anniversary of Christians for Israel's 'Bring the Jews Home' campaign. Give thanks for all the Jews who received help last year to return to Israel. Due to the current war with Iran, the *Aliyah* (return of Jews to Israel) has been put on hold. Pray that, despite the war, many Jews from all over the world will be able to return this year.
- Please pray for the *Aliyah* field workers of Christians for Israel in Ukraine. They often have to do their work in exhausting and dangerous circumstances.
- *"Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of Him.' So shall it be! Amen"* (Revelation 1:7). Pray that the time will soon come when Jesus will set His feet on the Mount of Olives and bring justice and peace to the whole earth.

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

Israel–Hezbollah: Maronite View

■ Shadi Khalloul

Israel is fighting an intense war in the north against Hezbollah. The group violated the ceasefire on 2 March, leading to Israeli strikes on Hezbollah strongholds in Beirut and the elimination of its rocket commander. Israeli troops have engaged heavily in southern Lebanon. To understand Israel's war with Hezbollah, you must understand the centuries-old conflicts in this region and the diverse communities in Lebanon.

I am an Aramaic Maronite Christian. Luckily I am an Israeli citizen. I enjoy the freedom of the Jewish Israeli democracy since I was born in the Galilee, Israel and not on the Lebanese side of the border, where Hezbollah oppresses our Aramaic Maronite Christian nation.

In Israel, there are 10,000 Maronites, while in Lebanon there are about 900,000, and worldwide about 10 million Maronites who migrated after surviving genocides and massacres in the recent past, such as the 1860 and 1914 genocides.

The Maronites are an Aramaic-Phoenician Christian people who have lived in Lebanon for thousands of years. They founded Lebanon as an autonomous entity in the 7th century, which lasted until the beginning of the 14th century. During the last two centuries of that era, they allied with the Crusaders, which were defeated by the Mamluks in 1308; later, the Ottomans took over the Maronite lands. In the 16th century, the Maronites reestablished connections with Rome, France, and the West, followed by a unique alliance with the *Druze* in the 17th century. The Maronites demanded and established the modern country of Lebanon after WWI as a Christian refugee homeland for persecuted Christians in Lebanon and the Levant.

The *Druze* are a distinct monotheistic religious group in the Levant whose faith emerged in the 11th century from Islam, incorporating elements of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. Persecuted by the Islamic majority, they hid in the mountainous areas of Southern Syria and Lebanon. During the 17th-century, they played a foundational role alongside the Maronites in the formation of the Mount Lebanon entity. Although this robust Maronite-*Druze* dualism characterised by shared trade and autonomous governance was disturbed by sectarian conflicts in 1860, it remains a defining historical pillar of the modern Lebanese state.

Lebanon's sovereignty has been hijacked by forces that brought insecurity and instability to Lebanese Christians,



Lebanese Maronites | Photo: Shutterstock

starting a cycle of recurring wars from the first day of Great Lebanon's creation. The first massacre was executed by Shia Muslims in South Lebanon against a Christian village named Ein Ebel in May 1920, because the Shia refused to be part of the new Lebanese country and resisted the French Mandate. This was followed by many other attacks by Shia Muslims against Christian Lebanon.

The Shia are the second-largest Muslim group worldwide after the Sunnis. The Shia presence in Lebanon goes back to the Abbasid Caliphate era, when Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen tribes were brought to settle in lands taken from Christians in South Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley, Metn, Keserwan, Akkar, and Tripoli. This surrounded the last free Christian entity in the Levant as a strategy to choke it and sever its connection to the world. Historically, the Shia settled in areas bordering Christian populations; today, we still see a large presence in the Beqaa and the South, with ongoing attempts to infiltrate Christian areas.

Israel and Its Northern Neighbour

Relations between Jews and Maronites go back to the middle of the 19th century. When Maronites intervened to stop a blood libel in Damascus in 1840, Jews likewise intervened to stop massacres against Maronites in Mount Lebanon in 1860. The relationship continued to flourish through the Patriarchate, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the Zionist movement. In the period 1937-1948, the Maronite Patriarch supported the establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine.

These peace efforts were undermined by Arab Muslim groups, Palestinian terror groups like the PLO, and their leftist

allies, supported by Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. They launched violent demonstrations, sparked civil wars, and carried out terrorist attacks on Israel from the southern border. This forced Lebanon into continuous internal strife and led to external wars with Israel to secure northern Israeli villages.

The Northern Front Today

Nowadays, the northern front is the front line for the free world against the Iranian 'Axis of Evil', led by Hezbollah. This Shia militia strengthened after the civil war and took control of Lebanon after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005. Hezbollah has not only attacked Israel but also the Lebanese people, assassinating Prime Minister Hariri and other politicians and officers, and attacking *Druze* and Christian neighbourhoods and towns.

Israeli villages in the north, Christian and Jewish alike, are under constant threat from Iranian and Hezbollah missiles. Lebanon has turned into a ruin serving the Ayatollahs, where Christians live under a 'Dhimmitude' system and existential threat. Hezbollah uses civilians as human shields and has turned Christian villages in the south into weapon depots and launching sites, just as Hamas does in Gaza.

The Solution

The time for 'containment' is over. Israel must ensure absolute security. We cannot tolerate an Iranian presence a stone's throw from our homes. Hezbollah must be demilitarised across all of Lebanon. No more 'paper agreements' like Resolution 1701. The IDF must ensure no terror infrastructure exists that threatens Israeli security.

Shadi Khalloul is Founder of the Israeli Christian Aramaic Association and the Christian Aramaic Jewish PreEducation Military Program.

www.aramaic-center.com

Short News

Peace with Israel?



A YouGov survey of 260 Syrians shows that nearly two-thirds of respondents support a security agreement with Israel. 59 per cent of Syrians consider peace with Israel likely. In addition, half of the respondents said they want normalisation with Israel following a resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. A similar survey was also conducted among Lebanese. It revealed that they are more skeptical about peace with Israel than Syrians. Only 40 per cent considered this likely, and only 25 per cent of respondents supported normalisation with Israel. | Photo: Flashgo

Great Isaiah Scroll on Display

The Great Isaiah Scroll, the oldest nearly complete book from the Hebrew Bible, is being displayed in its full length for the first time since 1968. Dating to around 125 BCE according to experts, the ancient manuscript stretches more than seven metres. The scroll is presented at the Israel Museum in a specially designed glass case that allows visitors to view the entire artifact. Its vellum sheets still show ancient stitches, stains, holes, and fading letters—evidence of centuries of use and careful preservation. Experts believe the scroll was placed in a cave in the Judean Desert during the 2nd century CE, where it remained hidden until its discovery in modern times.

3D Implant for Tissue Repair

Researchers at Technion University have created an innovative 3D implant designed to replicate lost human tissue. The bioengineered structure integrates muscle and fat along with blood vessels and a lymphatic network—an advancement that may improve treatment for patients who lose large amounts of tissue due to injuries, burns, or cancer surgery. Currently, doctors rely on an autologous flap procedure, which involves moving tissue from another part of the patient's body to repair damaged areas. The new engineered flap aims to offer a more advanced alternative.

Stopping Tehran's Apocalyptic Goals

■ Jonathan Tobin

JNS

Two weeks after the start of the US-Israeli offensive against Iran, naysayers about the wisdom of the operation remain pervasive and loud. The arguments against the war are based on a variety of concerns. The motivations of many of those denouncing the decisions of President Donald Trump are clearly partisan, ideological, and, in the case of a considerable percentage of those on the far right and left, connected to prejudice.

Regardless of the validity of those complaints—and many, if not most, deserve to be dismissed—there is no avoiding the main question to be answered about such a conflict. Is it worth the cost in blood, money and political capital, both at home and abroad, that the administration is expending on a fight with no definite endpoint in sight?

And to that question, there are no easy answers. There is good reason to worry about whether the unintended negative consequences of the war will, in the long run, be viewed as more significant than the issues policymakers are currently obsessing about.

Kicking the Can Down the Road

Nevertheless, even the most reasonable skeptics of the effort, not to mention the deafening chorus of those partisans and ideologues predicting doom for Trump's war plans, are largely failing to address another equally important question that must be answered. Is the cost of allowing the pre-war status quo to continue higher than those associated with the uncertainties of war?

Iran was steadily rebuilding its nuclear programme with an imminent option to race to a bomb, expanding missile production and continuing to orchestrate an 'axis of resistance' dedicated to fomenting chaos and war. That's more than enough to justify the risks of potential disaster that are an inevitable part of all wars.

Like the question about the cost of war, the answer will only be clear after the fact. Yet even now, with the outcome of the campaign still somewhat in doubt, it's obvious that continuing a policy of kicking the can down the road that Trump's predecessors chose—either out of bad judgment, an unjustifiable sympathy for Tehran, cowardice or just plain apathy—would have been as colossal a mistake as even the costliest military blunder.

The dangers that lie ahead are not



Firefighters and volunteers work to extinguish a wildfire following drone attack from Iran, in the Golan Heights in 2025. | Photo: Michael Giladi/Flash90

Both governments have also stated that they favour regime change in Iran. That's something Israel believes is absolutely necessary to achieve

limited to the short-term question of whether Washington and Jerusalem will achieve their objectives, which are aligned with each other but not identical.

The first purpose of the campaign is the eradication of Iran's nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes, in addition to its support and active participation in international terrorism. Washington and Jerusalem are committed to those objectives, which they rightly see as not only crucial to their own countries but integral to the security of the West as a whole. Those are widely seen as achievable goals to one degree or another.

Both governments have also stated that they favour regime change in Iran. That's something Israel believes is absolutely necessary to achieve. The Trump administration would like it to happen, but could live without it, as long as the ayatollahs were stripped of their nukes and missiles, and had their terrorist option foreclosed.

It's far from clear whether the goal of toppling the Islamist government in Tehran can or will be accomplished. If a successful domestic uprising doesn't happen, both countries are wisely reluctant to commit to a ground incursion on the scale required to install a new government.

Economic & Strategic Problems

Still, the problems that are being generated by the war don't only involve Iran retaining nuclear capability or

whether the theocrats can cling to power. Just as important is whether the economic consequences of the war or its impact on equally important strategic problems faced elsewhere by the West will wind up overshadowing what happens in the Persian Gulf or the Middle East.

With respect to economics, it's obvious that Trump and his team—contrary to the false narratives about the war being impulsively decided on a presidential whim or as the result of sinister Israeli or Jewish pressure—were fully cognizant of the implications of combat in the region on the price of oil. That Iran might seek to stop its flow through the Strait of Hormuz was always a likely possibility. And it was a given that the price of oil, and consequently, the price of gas at the pump in the United States, would go up once the war started.

A long-term jump in oil prices would harm the global economy, set back Trump's objectives for American prosperity, and impact domestic politics and his party's chances of retaining control of Congress in the midterm elections this fall. You don't have to be an isolationist who opposes any foreign interventions to understand that any one of those things might be considered a good enough reason for an American president to hold off on efforts against Iran.

The China Factor

Added to that is the impact of the

conflict on the international stage, where the United States is—whether many Americans fully understand it or not—locked in a geostrategic rivalry/conflict with Iran's allies: Russia, and even more importantly, China. As historian Niall Ferguson, who supports action against Iran, has pointed out, this war must be seen in the context of a second Cold War in which the United States is facing off against what may prove to be a Chinese opponent that's far more formidable than the Soviet Union was in the first such conflict in the 20th century.

Removing the Iranian threat is a blow to China in terms of its strategic quest to dominate the globe and because it is an important source of oil to Beijing. But should the United States be embroiled in an unsuccessful war in the Middle East, this would help the Chinese elsewhere. And Russia is benefiting from the way the current war is increasing its oil and gas revenue, and serves as a distraction from its stalemated efforts to wear down Ukraine in that four-year-old war.

While the success of the US-Israeli offensive won't be able to fully evaluated until after the conflict is over, it's clear that both militaries have not been thwarted during the first two weeks of the joint campaign. To the contrary, they have systematically eliminated Iran's military capabilities, hunted down its missile-launchers and done more damage to its nuclear programme.

The fact that a country as large as Iran is not completely defeated in two weeks is not a reason to believe the war has so far been a failure. If the armed forces of the two allies are allowed to continue their military efforts, the already devastating results for Iran will likely become even more impressive. It could possibly go a long way toward rendering the regime harmless to its neighbours and/or unable to resist the desire of its population for a new government. There is no reason to believe that the war is already a 'quagmire,' other than the wish on the part of Trump's opponents that this is what it will turn out to be.

Even if the results are not everything the two governments would wish for, the arguments that say the United States would have been better off delaying action or even appeasing Iran, as the Obama and Biden administrations did, ring false.

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

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The Truth about Israel and Middle Eastern Christians

■ **Caroline Glick**
Israeli-American Journalist

Israel is the only state in the Middle East where the Christian community is growing and thriving. That's not an accident. Since its inception, Israel has viewed Middle Eastern Christians, first and foremost its own Christian community, as its natural allies and partners. Christians in Israel are commanders in the IDF. They are justices on the Supreme Court. They are diplomats and reality TV stars. And their prosperity is reflected in their numbers. In 1948, there were 34,000 Christians living in the State of Israel. Today there are 188,000. Christians are full and equal citizens in Israel. They have the same legal and civil rights as Israeli Jews. Their per capita income and education level are among the highest in Israel.

The chart (opposite) from the Philos Project shows the decline of Christian communities throughout the countries surrounding Israel.

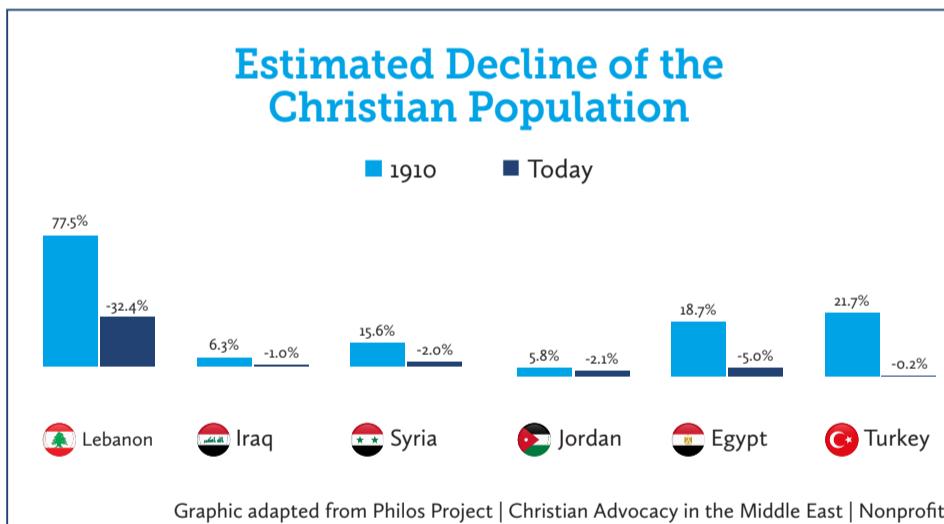
Although the percentage of Christians in Israel's overall population has declined, this is not due to persecution of Christians. It is due to the massive increase in Israel's Jewish population by successive waves of Jewish immigration. In 1948, 650,000 Jews lived in Israel. The first major wave of Jewish immigration after Israel's establishment came from the Arab world. 800,000 Jews were forced from their homes and communities throughout the Arab world in a largely ignored massive ethnic cleansing. Equally, over a million Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Israel when the gates of the Soviet Union were finally opened.

Today it is the Christian communities that are being pushed out of many Middle Eastern countries. As Ambassador George Deek, a proud Israeli Christian Arab has explained, "The ethnic cleansing of Christians in the Middle East is the greatest crime against humanity of the 21st century. In just two decades, Christians like me have been reduced from 20 percent of the population of the Middle East to a mere four percent today."

Christian communities are often compelled to keep their religion to themselves. Dan Burumi, a Jordanian convert to Christianity living in forced exile, recalled in a recent essay on X that last year, Christians in Fuheis, the last Christian majority town in Jordan, installed a statue of Jesus in the town square. "Within two hours, they were



President Isaac Herzog hosted Christian leaders in the Holy Land for the traditional New Year's reception at the President's Residence in Jerusalem. | Photo: Maayan Toaf, GPO



forced to remove it because it was deemed provocative to Muslims."²

In recent months, on instruction from Prime Minister Netanyahu, the IDF stepped in to stop the massacre of Druze in Syria. He stated repeatedly that Israel remains committed to defending threatened Christian communities from Syria to Nigeria.

Those presenting false claims of Israeli state persecution of Christians and an equally false portrait of Christian life in the Muslim Arab world are distorting reality. If they are believed, they will make the world less safe for Jews. But as Israel has proven, the Jewish state is capable of defending itself. Those who will be truly harmed by these distortions are the people they claim to care for—the Christians of the Middle East.

¹ In 2018, George Deek was appointed Israeli ambassador to Azerbaijan. He is the first Israeli-Arab Christian to become ambassador of the Jewish state. Deek emphasises that Christians in Israel enjoy unprecedented religious freedom, access to high-quality education, and professional opportunities that far exceed what is available in other countries in the

Middle East, and he is convinced that Arab Israelis can be a bridge between Israel and the Arab world.

² Some quotes from Dan Burmawi's essay: "In 1930, Christians made up about 20 percent of Jordan's population. Today, they make up only about two percent. Christians can practice their faith freely as long as they remain within the walls of their churches. Christians are allowed to legally convert to Islam and change their official documents. Muslims can never convert to Christianity. Leaving Islam leads to the loss of civil rights. Christians in Jordan have chosen security and sacrificed their freedom. That is the price of survival in an Islamic country. In Israel, Christians are sometimes spat on, but they enjoy genuine freedom and full civil rights."

Would you like to learn more about the situation of Christians in Israel?

In this interview with the American news channel CBN, Shadi Khalloul, an Aramaic Christian and founder of the Israeli Christian Aramaic Organisation, explains what it means to be a Christian in Israel:



Short News

Underground Hospital



Hospitals in Israel have moved parts of their medical operations to underground facilities to better protect patients from Iranian missile attacks. For example, at the Sheba Medical Center near Tel Aviv, a parking garage was converted into a fully functioning hospital within about 36 hours. Intensive care units and operating rooms, among other facilities, have been set up there. This allows care to continue as usual, even during air raid alerts. | Photo: Flashgo.

War & Antisemitism

According to data recently released by the Antisemitism Research Center, the number of antisemitic incidents worldwide has risen by 34 per cent since the outbreak of the war between the US, Israel, and Iran. The incidents included incitement to violence against Jews and conspiracy theories blaming Israel or Jews for the war.

Anti-Israel Coalition

Two members of a coalition of countries formed to punish Israel have withdrawn. Honduras and Bolivia recently announced their departure from The Hague Group. Both countries have new governments and are therefore maintaining warmer ties with Israel. The Hague Group was established to 'take measures against Israel's violations of international law.' The coalition recently met in The Hague to discuss new proposals for measures.

Cyber Threats Grow

As Israel finds itself at war with Iran, cybersecurity experts are warning of a parallel threat unfolding online. Authorities say coordinated phishing and scam campaigns are targeting Israeli civilians, taking advantage of heightened public anxiety during the conflict. The goal, experts say, is not only to steal personal information but also to undermine public confidence. Experts note that while conventional warfare focuses on damaging infrastructure, cyber campaigns aim to erode trust and create uncertainty among the population. Israelis are asked to be increasingly aware and take responsibility.

Focusing on the Positive

How a Hostage Family Continues to Live After the Death of their Daughter

■ Dana Nowak

Christians for Israel Germany

Ricarda Louk lost her daughter on 7 October 2023. The family had to watch as Shani was driven through the Gaza Strip, half-naked and motionless, surrounded by cheering terrorists. Two years later, Ricarda speaks about how her family is coping with the loss.

How does a family cope with the fact that their daughter, their sister, was brutally murdered by Hamas terrorists? “Compared to other families, we are doing relatively well today. We are looking ahead, keeping ourselves busy, moving on.” Ricarda Louk radiates inner peace and at the same time deep pain as she tells her story.

She and her husband have been travelling constantly for two years. It is important to them that what happened on 7 October 2023, in Israel and in their lives, is not forgotten. On that *‘Black Shabbat’*, their daughter Shani was taken from them. Their “little girl who was so full of life and love”. Talking about this tragic loss is like therapy.

Not Everyone Manages to Return to Normal Life

In the months following the Hamas attack, the Louk family was in close contact with other relatives of hostages. Ricarda remembers the strong solidarity among the families. “We supported each other and built real friendships,” she says. Many organisations and government institutions also offered assistance. But not every family has managed to rebuild their lives.

My husband and I always said to ourselves, Shani isn’t coming back, we have to move on. We still have other children who need us now. So we tried to be strong, and that helped our family. Of course, the pain remains, but we can laugh together again. That’s what Shani would have wanted.”

Hope for Something Good

Above all the pain and the many questions, the Louk family has one great hope: that the many people who died on 7 October did not die in vain. “My husband always mentions the end of the Second World War. If someone had told the Jews who were led into the gas chambers, or the survivors at that time, that they would have their own state in four years, no one would have believed it. We have hope that things will get better; it can’t get much worse.”

Ricarda cannot say exactly where she finds the strength to carry on and not despair. “Somehow it’s in our family; we grew up with a positive attitude to life. But in difficult situations, you always find more strength than you could have imagined before.”

Ricarda, originally from Germany comes from a Catholic family. When she met her Israeli husband, she converted to Judaism. She would not describe her family as religious, but they do try to keep the *Sabbath* rules.

The *‘Black Sabbath’*: “I thought It Was Fake News”

Ricarda recounts how she experienced 7 October 2023. “At 6.36am, the missile alarm went off and didn’t stop. We called Shani, who was at the Nova Festival in the south. Her boyfriend from Mexico had come to Israel with her. He was also murdered by Hamas.”

Shani answered the phone and told the family that she was on her way home. In the meantime, Ricarda’s family had heard on the news that terrorists from Gaza had invaded Israel. “At first, I thought it was fake news.

We called Shani again, but she didn’t answer. Around 10.30am, my son Amit received a video and was asked if Shani was in the clip.”

The video shows heavily armed terrorists in the back of a pickup truck. At their feet lies a half-naked woman face down. Her limbs are twisted unnaturally. One terrorist is pulling her hair. Others are placing their booted feet on her fragile body. The vehicle is surrounded by Palestinian civilians. They spit on the woman’s head, cheer and repeatedly shout “*Allahu Akbar*” (Allah is greatest).

“My son started screaming and crying, ‘That’s Shani! That’s Shani!’ We recognised her by her tattoos. I was sure it was my little girl! We didn’t know if she was dead or alive. We watched that terrible video over and over again to see if we could find any sign of life in her.”

In Israel, all the authorities were overwhelmed, and no one was available. So the Louks turned to the embassy in Germany. They hoped that they would get help more quickly there, as Shani had both an Israeli citizenship. “We thought that a German would have a better chance of getting out of Gaza than an Israeli.” The family also sent the video to the press. It quickly spread around the world. It was one of the first testimonies of the brutal massacre to become known beyond Israel’s borders.

The Knock We Feared, After Weeks of Waiting

The family lived in uncertainty for three weeks. “It was a terrible time. You’re on the go all day and in the evening, you sit there exhausted, trying to calm down, and then the brooding starts: What are they doing to her right now? At the same time, we could always hear the bombings in the Gaza Strip and were afraid that the hostages would be hit.”

Then one day there was a knock at the door. It was by military representatives and social workers. “When we saw them, we knew what it meant. They told us that a piece of skull bone had been found and identified as Shani’s. You can’t live without that bone. It was found on Israeli soil. So it can be assumed that Shani died instantly and the terrorists took her body to Gaza. She probably didn’t suffer. On the one hand, that was a great relief for us. But until then, we still hoped that she was alive. Now we knew she would never come back.”

It took seven months before the Louks were able to give their daughter a dignified funeral. In May 2024, Shani’s body was found in a tunnel in the Gaza Strip. It had been buried there, alongside the remains of five other hostages. “I always said we didn’t want soldiers to risk their lives to bring Shani’s body home. But it felt good when we were finally able to bury her. We were able to find closure.”

Doubts About Lasting Peace

Ricarda cannot imagine that the situation with the Palestinians in the Gaza will change. “Twenty years of Hamas rule and the associated hatred of Israel have left their mark on the people. Even small children grow up with such hatred towards Jews. In Israel, we live together with many Arabs. Many doctors, bus drivers and pharmacists are Arabs. They just want to live their lives. Still, the events of 7 October changed something fundamental. “It was a huge breach of trust,” she says. “Now we don’t know whom we can trust anymore.”



Ricarda Louk fought day and night for the release of her daughter Shani, who had been abducted by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. | Photo: Private



Dana Nowak (left) visits Ricarda Louk. Artwork behind them was donated in memory of Shani. | Photo: C4I Germany.

Concern About Radicalisation

Ricarda observes with concern that so many young people in particular are taking a one-sided stance in favour of the Palestinian side on social media and at universities worldwide. “They are so radical in their views. Young people see beautiful pictures of Shani on the internet. A girl who is happy and dancing, and then terrorists who kidnap this girl and torture her. It’s such a harsh contrast between good and evil. You would think that people would side with good, but there are so many supporters and followers of these very terrorists among young people. People need to find their way back to humanity.”

Shani had many international friends, including many Arabs. “She was so cosmopolitan. She always said that there are no bad people, only people who are suffering. Our wish is that people will find their way back to goodness.”

Ricarda and her family do not want to become bitter. “We don’t want to allow hatred to take hold, it only destroys you. The army has informed us that the four men in the pickup truck have all been found and are dead. But ultimately, that doesn’t help us either. We want to look ahead, focus on the good things in life; anything else is pointless.”

A Legacy of Hope *Eli Sharabi Honours His Wife and Daughters*



(Left) Eli Sharabi with Shalva's CEO, Yochanan Samuels, and Deputy Director, Itamar Shevach. (Right): Eli Sharabi with Yossi Samuels, the blind and deaf son of the founder of Shalva, Kalman Samuels. | Photos: Shalva Israel

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

In memory of his wife Lianne and daughters Noya and Yahel, Eli Sharabi is turning profound personal loss into a legacy of hope and compassion. In partnership with Shalva, Israel's leading organisation for disability care and inclusion, the Shalva Sharabi Family Center currently under construction in Ashkelon will support families raising individuals with disabilities while also providing care for those coping with trauma and PTSD in Israel's southern communities.

The Sharabi Family

On 7 October 2023, as terrorists from Gaza burst into the Sharabi family home in Kibbutz Be'eri, Eli Sharabi and his wife, Lianne, thought only of their children. They threw their bodies over their two daughters, Noya (16) and Yahel (13), in a desperate attempt to protect them. As Eli was dragged from the house by gunmen, he made one final plea for their lives, shouting that his wife and daughters held British passports.

Realising he was being kidnapped, Eli turned back toward his family and called out, "I'll be back." It was the last time he ever saw them.

Eli Sharabi (53) spent 16 months (491 days) in filthy tunnels under the Gaza Strip with his legs chained, starving and enduring terrible hygienic conditions. He survived the horrors of captivity. But on the day of his release, another devastating truth awaited him. Turning to the social worker escorting him, he asked quietly, "Please bring me Lianne and my daughters." She replied, "Your mother and your sister will tell you." In that moment, Eli understood the bitter truth—his wife and daughters had been murdered. He learned that his wife and two teenage daughters had been killed in their home by the Hamas-led terrorists on the same day that he had been taken hostage.

Despite this profound loss, Eli has shown remarkable resilience. In his recently released book, *Hostage*, he writes: "I want to live. I love life. I choose life."

Those words, *L'Chaim*, to life, have become Eli Sharabi's guiding principle since his release.

In the aftermath of tragedy, Eli asked himself one question: "How do I honour the memory of my family?"

The answer lay in the values they lived by—dignity, compassion, and inclusion. His daughter Noya had volunteered for years with people with disabilities and

determined to transform grief into purpose, Eli made a decision. "I want to dedicate something in their memory at Shalva," he said. "That's what they would have wanted."

The new Shalva Center in Ashkelon, part of Israel's leading network of care for people with disabilities and their families, will be named the Sharabi Family Center.

A Continuation of Values

More than a building, the Center will reflect the compassion, inclusion, and responsibility for others that Lianne, Noya, and Yahel embodied.

The center will offer diagnostic evaluations, therapeutic services, and professional guidance for individuals with disabilities and their families, alongside specialised support for those affected by trauma following the 7 October attacks and the ongoing challenges facing the region.

Serving communities across Israel's south, including Ashkelon, Sderot, Netivot, Ofakim, and surrounding areas, the center will bring Shalva's multidisciplinary expertise closer to families who often struggle to access these essential services.

"I am honoured to introduce the Shalva Sharabi Family Center in Ashkelon, which will provide vital support for children with disabilities and their families," said Eli Sharabi. "My wife Lianne and our daughters Noya and Yahel always looked for ways to help others. It is my hope that the spirit of love and goodness they shared will continue through this center."

"This center represents the very heart of Shalva's mission," said Yochanan Samuels, CEO of Shalva. "Together with Eli Sharabi, we are ensuring that families in Israel's south, especially those facing the dual challenges of disability and trauma, receive the professional care, compassion, and community they need to rebuild and move forward."

The Shalva Sharabi Family Center stands as a powerful testament to resilience transforming loss into action and ensuring that families facing disability and trauma receive the care, support, and hope they deserve.

Support for Regional Trauma

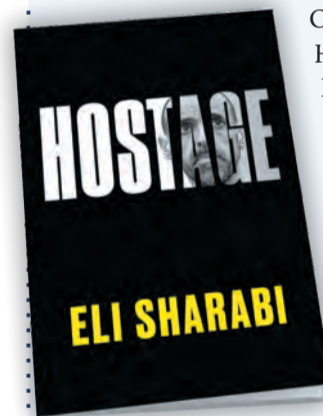
Located in an area deeply scarred by recent events, the Center will serve families facing disability, uncertainty, and emotional pain.

Professional Care with Human Warmth

The Center will offer high-level professional care alongside community, dignity, and belonging.

Eli Sharabi's story, and the Center established in his family's name, stands as a testament to lives taken too soon, and to the enduring human capacity to choose meaning, responsibility, and life, even after unimaginable loss.

Hostage The First Memoir by an Israeli Hostage by Eli Sharabi



On 7 October, 2023, Hamas terrorists stormed Kibbutz Be'eri, shattering the peaceful life Eli Sharabi had built with his British wife, Lianne, and their teenage daughters, Noya and Yahel. Dragged barefoot out of his front door while his family watched in horror, Sharabi was

plunged deep into the suffocating darkness of Gaza's tunnels. As war raged above him, he endured a gruelling 491 days in captivity—all the while holding onto the hope that he would one day be reunited with his loved ones.

In the first memoir by a released Israeli hostage, and the fastest-selling book in Israel's history, Sharabi offers a searing firsthand account of survival under unimaginable conditions—starvation, isolation, physical beatings, and psychological abuse at the hands of his captors.

Eli Sharabi's story is one of hunger and heartache, of physical pain, longing, loneliness and a helplessness that threatens to destroy the soul. But it is also a story of strength, of resilience, and of the human spirit's refusal to surrender. It is about the camaraderie forged in captivity, the quiet power of faith, and one man's unrelenting decision to choose life, time and time again.

Reminiscent of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, *Hostage* is a profound witness to history, so that it shall be neither forgotten nor erased.

“You Were Here Last Year Too”

Why Presence Matters in Israel

■ Leon Meijer

Executive Director | Christians for Israel Netherlands

“You were here last year as well,” an Israeli participant remarked at the *Generation of Truth: Combating Antisemitism* conference in Jerusalem. I smiled. “Did I make such an impression that you remembered me?” He shook his head. “No. You keep coming. You continue to stand with us. And that fills our hearts with gratitude.” It was a brief exchange at the end of January—easy to overlook, yet revealing. On the night flight to Israel, I had wondered whether the trip was worth it. Two days of sessions, speakers, and then straight back home. But that single comment captured something essential: for many Israelis, the simple act of showing up carries enormous weight.

A Presence That Speaks Louder Than Words

Christians for Israel International runs a wide range of activities: publishing books, producing videos, distributing a newspaper, organising teaching conferences, and providing prayer resources. These efforts help Christians worldwide understand Israel’s

biblical significance and stand with the Jewish people in their own communities.

In a world where false theology has entered churches—teaching that Israel no longer has a special place and that the Church has replaced her—it is vital to provide solid biblical teaching that shows otherwise. God’s covenant is irrevocable; Israel remains the apple of His eye. In a world where media outlets often spread misleading or false stories about Israel, it is crucial to counter those narratives and share reliable reports from the ground. Our work aims to offer clarity where confusion spreads, and truth where narratives distort.

We also support humanitarian projects, including a team in Ukraine assisting Jewish people who wish to make *Aliyah*. Comforting Israel is not just a calling; it is a responsibility we take seriously.

But Presence Still Matters

And yet, nothing replaces being physically present.

Israelis today often feel isolated. While international headlines focus on bombings in Iran, they rarely show the impact of the missile barrages on Israeli towns and

cities. More than 500,000 times, air raid sirens have sounded. Each alarm sends families—children, the elderly, the sick, the anxious—running for shelter.

In November 2025, during our *International Leadership Forum* in Jerusalem, we hosted an evening for Israeli guests. There were speakers, music, and food. For weeks afterward, messages kept coming in: “You came. You stand with us. We are deeply touched.”

A month later, when we travelled through Israel with twenty young people from twelve nations, strangers stopped them on the street. “Just the fact that you came means so much to us. Thank you.”

Continuing the Work—and the Commitment

Christians for Israel International will continue educating, informing, and supporting projects on the ground. But we will also keep doing something that cannot be printed, streamed, or shipped: we will keep showing up.

Because sometimes the most powerful message is simply this: “**You were here last year too.**”

Waiting Patiently

■ Ira Sulim-Carlier

Christians for Israel Ukraine

Yevgeny was born in 1947 in Magdeburg, Germany. His father was a Russian military officer, and his mother was a Jewish nurse from Belarus who managed to escape while most of her family—her mother and six sisters—perished in a mass grave during World War II.

After the war, the family remained in Germany near a Soviet military base. Later they moved to the Baltic countries, then to Saratov in Russia, and after several more relocations eventually settled in Krivoy Rog, Ukraine. There Yevgeny began his career building elevators. He also met his wife, Alfiya, and together they raised three daughters. A few years ago, he became a pensioner.

Yevgeny and Alfiya lived in the small village of Lozovatka near Krivoy Rog, where they were the only Jewish family. Their days were filled with the simple rhythms of rural retirement life—repairing the house, tending the garden, raising chickens and their twelve goats, and fishing in a small nearby lake. But the increasingly frequent sounds of shelling were constant reminders that their world was changing, and not for the better.

Eventually they made the difficult decision to move to Israel. At 79, it wasn’t easy to leave everything behind. Most of their belongings they gave away to people in the village, and their old house is now home to refugees from Melitopol, a city currently occupied by the Russian army.

After all the arrangements had been made, and just one day before their planned departure, the war with Iran began and all flights to Israel were cancelled. Yevgeny and Alfiya suddenly had nowhere to go. Their former home was already being used by



Yevgeny and Alfiya (middle) with our C4I field workers in Ukraine. Ira Carlier on the right. | Photos: C4I Ukraine

Ukrainian refugees, and travelling to Israel was no longer possible. There was no way back, so they called us and asked if we could bring them to Kishinov. They decided to wait there until the first opportunity to fly to Israel, hoping to arrive in time for an important event in their grandson’s life.

We hope they will make it in time—that neither war nor any other circumstances will stop them from continuing their journey—and that this new chapter of life in Israel will be filled with special shalom and the blessings of the Almighty.

Their departure reminded us of two Bible verses. In *Zechariah 2:6-7* we read: “*Flee from the land of the north and escape to Zion.*” And as the last Jewish family to leave the village of Lozovatka, their story also brings to mind the promise in *Ezekiel 39:28*—that none of His people will be left behind in the diaspora.





From 'Never Again' to Now

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

I remember 9/11: watching live as the Twin Towers fell, and the stunned disbelief on the faces of thousands of Americans. I remember the shock and numbness felt around the world. How could this happen?

I remember studying history at high school and trying to grasp the sheer number of people slaughtered in the Holocaust. More than the entire population of NZ killed because hatred was not challenged early enough or firmly enough. 'Never again' echoed through the textbooks, and years later I heard the same at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. Never again.

I remember 7 October 2023. The shock, the disbelief. We knew hatred existed, but nobody really thought people could be such animals. I was in Israel three weeks later, trying to bring encouragement to a devastated people. The numbness reminded me so much of the post-9/11 world.

Predictably, the sympathy lasted only a couple of days. Before Israel had even finished sitting *Shiva* for its murdered loved ones, and before Israeli troops had entered Gaza, the narrative changed. Suddenly it was all Israel's fault. Those Jews who supposedly 'control the world' were again blamed. Any mention of Gaza's role in planning, launching, or causing the bloodshed was quickly followed by a 'but' and some explanation for why it was still Israel's fault.

I was in Israel during the first Iranian missile attack. My wife and I were only a few kilometres from the Jordanian border, above which most rocket interceptions seemed to take place. The explosions shook the sky like nothing we had ever experienced, as military aircraft from several countries joined the IDF jets, the Iron Dome, and other air defence systems, heroically defending millions of lives—including mine!

For a week or so after, the skies above Israel were almost constantly patrolled by IDF jets.

Last November, our ANZAC solidarity and study tour visited Majdal Shams, the Druze village in northern Israel where twelve children were murdered by a Hezbollah rocket while they played football. We met a young hero who was severely injured that day as he tried, unsuccessfully, to help his friend to safety. Children playing soccer. Murdered.

And now there's Iran. The once-beautiful nation of Persia, reduced to brutality by a cruel Islamic regime that most Iranians are desperate to get rid of. Tens of thousands—likely 60,000 or more—were murdered, by the Iranian military, for protesting against the regime. That same regime has blatantly hidden its nuclear weapons development, refused to cooperate with the IAEA (the UN nuclear watchdog), leading to emergency UN resolutions. For 45 years, Iranian children have been taught in state schools to chant, "*Death to Israel, death to America and its allies*", a state promise. The Iranian regime has sponsored terror attacks all around the world, and a growing list of nations are naming it terrorist organisation.

And yet, here in New Zealand and around the world, Iranians who have escaped that regime are out protesting in the streets, waving Israeli and US flags. They are calling on these nations to finish the job and restore Iran to the control of its people, not a religious extremist death cult. Many of us who support Israel have joined the Iranian community at protests and events around the country, standing with them in solidarity and praying for an end to the regime.

So, I have a problem with those who, for some inexplicable reason, are backing the Iranian regime. We should never be inciting war, and God prefers peaceful resolutions wherever possible—but sometimes that is simply not possible. Even more disturbing is the return

of that little word: 'but'. Anyone with a negative opinion of President Trump seems eager to use any perceived fault to discredit him and everything he stands for, especially regarding action in Iran. Apparently, what he may or may not have said 30 years ago now automatically precludes him from leading.

Scripture gives us many examples of God using imperfect people—even ruthless ones—to accomplish his purposes. God raises up the Babylonians to judge unfaithful Judah—much to Habakkuk's confusion! In *Genesis 50*, Joseph tells his brothers who had set out to destroy him: "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.*" In *Isaiah 45*, God chose Cyrus the Great, a pagan king from Persia—Iran—to end the Jewish exile and rebuild the temple, even being called God's 'anointed'.

It seems to me that President Trump has much in common with Cyrus—far from sinless. But he is the man God has in place for this time. We do not need to regard anyone as perfect, but we are commanded to pray for those in leadership—all of them. Right now, I pray that Mr Trump et al. will finish the job properly and not leave a bigger mess.

But this raises a deeper, perhaps more uncomfortable question: if God can use people like that, why doesn't He use me?

He wants to. God is always looking for people of strength and conviction, people prepared to stand up and be counted. Apparently, being perfect is not a prerequisite. God can use whomever He chooses. It is tragic that some of our strongest opposition often comes from Christians.

Thank you for joining us at Christians for Israel as we seek to bring the truth of God's purpose for Israel and the Jewish people. We are profoundly grateful for those who support this work and bless Israel. As always, if we can support you in standing for Israel, please contact us.

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Are Israel and the US Permitted to Attack Targets in Iran?

■ Andrew Tucker

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

On the morning of Saturday 28 February 2026, the US (Operation Epic Fury) and Israel (Operation Lion's Roar) launched coordinated air strikes on Iranian military targets. These operations are primarily aimed at destroying Iran's missile, air force, naval and commando infrastructure. The attacks followed the failure of recent negotiations between the US and Iran regarding the Iranian nuclear programme.

Whilst some countries support these operations, there is also much criticism. Many international legal scholars believe that the actions of the US and Israel contravene Article 2.4 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use or threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state.

Their reasoning is that there was no threat of an 'imminent armed attack' by Iran—a prerequisite for invoking the right to individual or collective self-defence as recognised in Article 51 of the UN Charter. In their view, the other exceptions to the prohibition on the use of force—consent from the state concerned or authorisation by the Security Council—have also not been satisfied: they were either absent (consent) or were considered meaningless due to the deadlock in the Security Council (authorisation).

Professor Dr Geert-Jan Knoops rejects this conclusion. According to Knoops, it is simply impossible at this stage to



Israeli security forces near a fragment of a missile fired from Iran toward Israel, intercepted by Israeli air defense systems, seen lodged in the ground in the Golan Heights, 19 March 2026. | Photo: Flash90

determine whether or not Israel and the US faced a threat of an 'imminent armed attack' by Iran when Israel and the US launched their operations. We simply do not know what evidence the US and Israel had at that time. It is quite possible that, despite the attack by the US and Israel in June 2025, they had evidence a few weeks ago that Iran is now indeed capable of carrying out an attack in the foreseeable future using nuclear weapons, and that Iran was threatening to carry out such an attack.

Other experts, such as Professor Geoffrey Corn of Texas Tech University—one of the world's leading experts on the law of war—argue that it is irrelevant whether there was an imminent attack by Iran. They believe

that the actions of the US and Israel are legally justified because they form part of an existing and long-standing armed conflict between the US/Israel and Iran. According to Corn, this armed conflict with Iran did not begin two weeks ago, or even a year ago. It began many years ago. Iran's long history of aggression—beginning with the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979, followed by the bombing of the naval barracks in 1983, the continued use of proxies (Hezbollah, Houthis, Hamas) and the pursuit of nuclear weapons, and the support for Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023—all bear witness to an ongoing aggressive agenda. This, he argues, confirms the ongoing nature of the armed conflict.

In an ongoing armed conflict, Corn argues, there is no requirement for a new threat assessment prior to each attack. Each state has the right to neutralise the other's capacity to continue posing a threat—provided they adhere to the laws of war. One of the principles of the laws of war is that each party may only target legitimate military objectives. Military infrastructure, command and control capabilities, missile launch and regrouping sites, and the leadership of the IRGC are all legitimate targets in this context. Targets such as oil production and refinery facilities are legally more complex; here, a clear demonstration of their significant contribution to the enemy's war effort and a clear military advantage in their destruction is required.

According to Corn, most legal scholars are too 'formalistic' in their approach.

They fail to sufficiently recognise the complex reality of modern state security interests and the changing nature of threats posed by non-state actors and hybrid warfare. Professor Corn and his colleagues advocate a more pragmatic interpretation of international law that recognises the reality of ongoing, intense armed conflicts.

At the same time, Corn emphasises that state actors must articulate their legal rationale consistently and clearly. Professor Corn criticises the inconsistent rhetoric of the US government. President Trump's inconsistent statements, including references to the 'imminent threat' posed by the Iranian regime, weaken the legal basis of Operation Epic Fury. In contrast, he praises Israel's 'unapologetic' and coherent strategic communication, which emphasises the existence of a 'protracted armed conflict' with clear operational objectives.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (*thinc.*) is a Netherlands-based think-tank specialising in international law and policy. Established in 2017 near The Hague—widely regarded as the world capital of international law—*thinc.* works to promote peace and security in the Middle East through research, education, and advocacy focused on the fair and consistent application of international law. Our legal team comprises lawyers and fellows with expertise in public international law, international humanitarian law, human rights, transnational crime, and international litigation and arbitration, supported by an Advisory Board of jurists and academics from Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia. *thinc.* has contributed to high-level legal analyses on Middle East peace and security, counterterrorism frameworks, and more recently, non-nuclear proliferation—including the 'snapback' mechanism and the reimposition of sanctions on Iran under UN Security Council Resolution 2231. We also assist governments in the preparation of written and oral submissions before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and support both state and non-state actors—typically through *amicus curiae* briefs—in proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Since 2023 *thinc.* has assisted Fiji to support the fair and balanced application of international law in the United Nations.



Israeli security and rescue forces inspect the damage at the scene where a missile fired from Iran toward Israel caused damage in Nahariya, March 26, 2026. Photo by David Cohen/Flash90



The Francesca Albanese Problem

How a UN Mandate Creates Controversy by Design

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel

Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, has become one of the most polarising figures in the UN system. Her public statements, especially since October 2023, have drawn sharp criticism from Israel, the United States, Germany, and other governments. Supporters praise her for speaking plainly about violations of international law; critics accuse her of overreach, partiality, and damaging the UN's credibility.

But the deeper truth is this: the controversy around Albanese is not primarily about her personality or her politics. It is about a UN mandate that is structurally one directional, politically entrenched, and almost impossible to reform. She is operating exactly as the system was designed—and that design is what produces the tension.

Her Most Controversial Statements

Albanese has made several high profile statements that triggered international backlash. The most contentious have been her repeated claims that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide or exhibit genocidal intent. This is especially sensitive because the International Court of Justice has not found Israel guilty of genocide; it has only ruled that South Africa's claim is plausible enough to warrant provisional measures. Critics argue that Albanese's language pre judges a legal question still before the Court. Supporters counter that her mandate requires her to assess violations as she sees them.

She has also accused Israel of practising apartheid, echoing the language used by several human rights organisations. But her most incendiary recent remark—describing Israel as “an enemy to humanity”—drew condemnation from multiple governments and UN member states. Critics argued that such language is incompatible with the restraint expected of someone widely perceived as a UN figure, even if technically she is not part of the UN bureaucracy. Supporters insisted she was speaking to the scale of civilian suffering and the obligations of international law.

She has further accused Western governments of enabling Israeli violations of international law, a framing that several states have condemned as politically inflammatory. And she has been criticised for not focusing on



| Photo: Shutterstock

Hamas's actions, including the 7 October attacks. Her response is consistent: the mandate does not authorise her to investigate Palestinian actors except insofar as they relate to Israel's obligations as the occupying power.

Her communication style adds to the controversy. Albanese uses social media and public advocacy more actively than her predecessors, adopting a tone closer to activism than diplomacy. Whether one agrees with her or not, these statements have shaped her public profile—and they highlight the structural tension at the heart of her role.

How This Mandate Came About

To understand the controversy, it helps to understand the origins of the mandate itself. The Special Rapporteur on the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories) was created in 1993 by the UN Commission on Human Rights, at the height of the Oslo peace process. At the time, the international community believed a final settlement was within reach. The mandate was designed to monitor Israel's conduct as the occupying power and assess compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

The one directional nature of the mandate made sense in that moment. Israel was the occupying power; occupation law places obligations primarily on the occupier; Palestinian governance structures were still emerging; and the Oslo process was expected to resolve the conflict within a few years. The mandate was never intended to be permanent.

But when Oslo collapsed, Hamas took control of Gaza, and Palestinian

governance fragmented, the mandate did not evolve. It remained frozen in its 1993 form, even as the political and legal landscape changed dramatically. A mechanism designed for a transitional period became a permanent fixture—and that is the root of today's structural problem.

What Evidence She Relies On—Without Ever Entering the Territory

Another source of controversy is the fact that Albanese has never visited Gaza, the West Bank, or Israel during her tenure. In fact, no Special Rapporteur has been allowed entry since 2008. Israel has denied access to every mandate holder for nearly two decades, including Richard Falk, Makarim Wibisono, Michael Lynk, and now Albanese.

This means that Albanese's assessments are based entirely on secondary evidence, which is standard UN practice when access is denied. Her sources include:

- Interviews with victims, witnesses, humanitarian workers, and journalists.
- Reports from UN agencies operating on the ground (UNRWA, OCHA, WHO, UNICEF).
- Satellite imagery and open source intelligence.
- Documentation from NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, B'Tselem, and others.
- Verified media footage and geolocated videos.
- Legal submissions from states and experts.
- Decades of prior UN findings and

resolutions.

This is how most UN human rights investigations operate when a state blocks access. But it also means her conclusions reflect her interpretation of evidence she cannot personally verify on the ground. That distinction is often lost in public debate, and it feeds the perception that her statements—including genocide, apartheid, and ‘enemy to humanity’—are not grounded in direct observation.

Why She is Not Required to be Neutral

This is the point most often misunderstood by the public. Special Rapporteurs are not UN staff. They are independent experts, unpaid by the UN, and not representatives of the Secretary General. They are not bound by diplomatic neutrality. Their job is to investigate, assess, and report—not to mediate or balance competing narratives.

The mandate itself is explicitly one directional. It instructs the Rapporteur to examine Israel's conduct as the occupying power. It does not instruct the Rapporteur to investigate Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, or Palestinian armed groups except in relation to Israel's obligations. Impartiality, in this context, refers to method, not symmetry. The Rapporteur must apply international law consistently, but is not required to distribute criticism evenly. This is why her reports—and those of her predecessors—appear one sided. The mandate itself is one sided.

How This Affects the UN's Reputation

Here lies the core dilemma. The UN as an institution must be neutral and impartial. Special Rapporteurs are not required to be neutral or impartial. Most people do not understand the difference.

When Albanese makes strong statements—including calling Israel ‘an enemy to humanity’—many assume the UN itself is taking a position. Her statements are her own, not the UN's institutional stance. But the reputational damage is real because the distinction between ‘UN official’ and ‘independent expert’ is not intuitive. The conflict is highly polarised, her rhetoric is unusually direct, and the mandate itself is structurally asymmetric. The result is a persistent perception that the UN is biased, even when the system is functioning exactly as designed.

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Military or Spiritual?



| Photo: Shutterstock

■ Dennis McLeod

In 1947, a vote was held at the UN to decide if the British mandate should be divided into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. In the years running up to this vote, the Arabs had shown a lot of strength against the Jewish population and thought that with their superior numbers, they could easily defeat the Jewish people, and in their words, they could easily throw them into the sea. After all, the Arab army was larger, and the armies of Egypt and Jordan were British-trained, so they had the advantage over the ragtag army of Israel. History has shown that even with Arab victories in some areas, Israel won through in the end and built a thriving country. However, the fight may be stopped for now, but it's not over.

As time passed, the realisation of the Arabs that they had lost never left them, they felt compelled to regain their honour. When Nasser came to power in Egypt, again he looked at a military

victory over Israel. When the 1967 war started, he lied to his people and to the King of Jordan by saying they were defeating the Jewish people and pushing them into the sea. So, King Hussein of Jordan joined the fight, and the Egyptian people backed Nasser to continue the war. But as history has shown, Israel was not down and out and again achieved an astonishing victory. In 1973, during *Yom Kippur* and the High Holidays period, the Arab world once more tried and failed to destroy Israel. In a military conflict, there is a starting point, and when there is a victor, there is an ending point, as in WWII. A promise of military victory can unite the people for a time, but after many defeats and the loss of loved ones, the promise soon fades, so something else has to be used to unite the people behind the call to destroy the enemy. The Arab world has spent billions on armies, guns, tanks, and different armaments. As one Arab commentator stated, money is spent on armaments, not so much to fight an

enemy, but to keep their population under their control, as happened in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and other Muslim nations. Arab control of their people has been blinded by the call to fight Israel.

As the fight against Israel has always ended in overwhelming defeat, how could they keep the fight going? There is only one answer: change the rhetoric from military to a spiritual battle. The attack in Hebron in 1921 proved this to be true. Jews and Arabs were enjoying a quiet morning together. Then word came through from the Mufti of Jerusalem that the Jews were attacking the Al Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount; enough to arouse the people to fight. 67 Jewish people, in Hebron alone, were murdered by the very people they had been enjoying coffee with a few hours earlier.

The shift by the Arab nations from a military to a spiritual cause behind the attacks on the Jewish people justified their military build-up. It enabled them to keep their own people under control

and at the same time while blaming the Jewish people for all their ills so as to convince their people behind to support any future attacks on Israel. Since Israel gave Gaza over to the Arabs in 2005, the rhetoric of the Arab leaders in Gaza is the same as the cry in 1921, namely that Israel is attacking the Al Aksa Mosque. Military defeats may be hard to take, but there is a beginning and an end in military conflict. But a spiritual declaration has no ending, win or lose. The fight must continue, giving a justification for continuing military build-up against a common enemy, while controlling their own people. The same tactic has been demonstrated recently in Iran.

The spiritual battle, which began in the Garden of Eden, will continue until the Lord of Hosts stands on the Mount of Olives, and the groom returns for His Bride. Therefore, we must remain vigilant in our prayers, and support for the Jewish people at all times and places.

Continued from page 4

How Previous Rapporteurs Handled the Same Tension

Every person who has held this mandate has faced the same structural problem. John Dugard was blunt and legalistic, emphasising that the mandate required one directional scrutiny. Richard Falk adopted an activist tone that generated significant controversy and was denied entry by Israel. Makarim Wibisono tried to soften the asymmetry but resigned when Israel refused him access, stating that the mandate prevented him from being impartial. Michael Lynk was more measured and academic, but still sharply critical of Israel. Albanese is more public and assertive than her predecessors, and her communication style amplifies the

structural tension rather than softening it.

The pattern is clear: the controversy is built into the mandate, not the individual.

Why the Mandate Has Never Been Rebalanced

Reforming the mandate would require a majority vote in the UN Human Rights Council. That has never happened—and likely never will. The Council is polarised, with a large bloc of states supporting the existing mandate. Western states criticise the mandate but rarely act, lacking the votes to change it. Israel does not engage with the process, viewing the HRC as biased. For many states, the mandate serves political purposes. The political cost of reform

outweighs the benefit. The result is a mandate that persists by political inertia, not by design quality.

What Could Be Done

Several theoretical reforms exist. The mandate could be rewritten to include all parties, though this is politically unlikely. A broader human rights mechanism could replace it, or a parallel mandate could be created to examine Palestinian authorities. The UN could also improve public communication, making clearer the distinction between institutional positions and independent expert opinions. Rapporteurs themselves could adopt more diplomatic communication styles, though that depends entirely on the individual.

Key Takeaway

Francesca Albanese is controversial, but she is not an anomaly. She is the predictable product of a mandate that is structurally asymmetric, politically entrenched, and widely misunderstood. Her statements—including her claim that Israel is 'an enemy to humanity'—generate reputational tension for the UN not because she is violating the rules, but because the rules themselves create a clash between independent investigation and public expectations of neutrality.

Until the mandate is rebalanced—or at least better explained—every future Rapporteur will face the same storm.



Understanding American Aid to Israel

■ Greg Boucher

Israel Institute of New Zealand

The United States provides Israel with billions of dollars in military assistance each year. Critics question its scale, structure, and moral implications. Supporters defend it as a cornerstone of American strategic policy. Some public arguments rely on misinformation or slide into prejudice. Others raise serious and legitimate policy concerns.

The question is not whether to have a view, but how to develop an informed one—based on what the aid actually is, why it exists, and what tradeoffs it entails. Understanding the structure of American assistance is the first step toward serious debate.

What Foreign Aid Is—and Is Not

Foreign aid is not a single policy tool. It includes humanitarian relief, economic development assistance, and security financing. Humanitarian aid responds to crises—natural disasters, famine, displacement. Development assistance aims at long-term institutional and economic growth. Security assistance is designed to strengthen allied military capabilities in pursuit of broader strategic objectives.

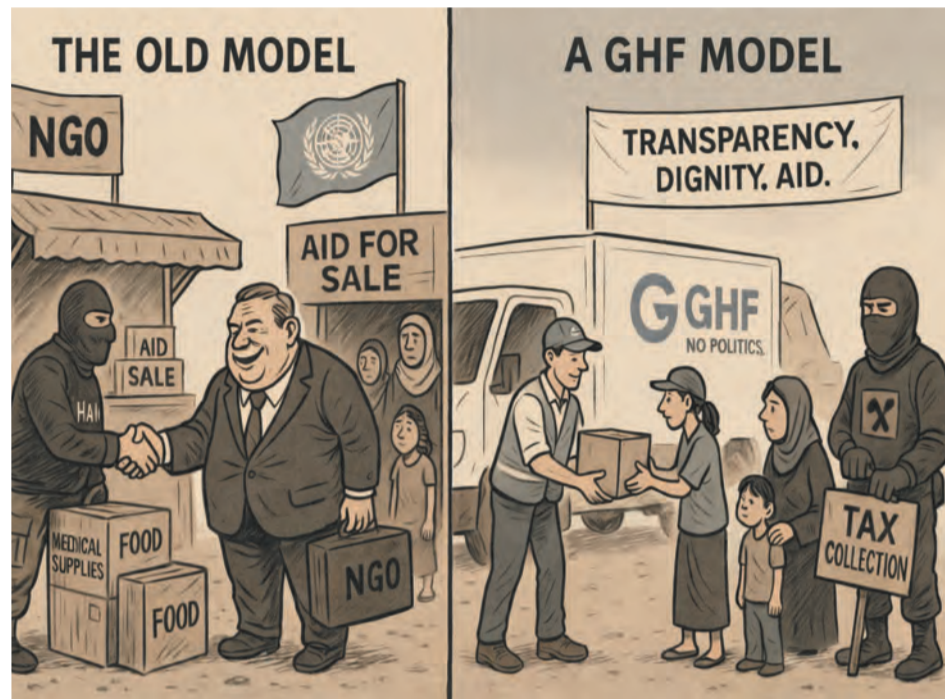
In some circumstances, aid serves both donor and recipient. Military assistance can strengthen an ally whose security benefits the donor through intelligence sharing, deterrence of common adversaries, and contributions to regional stability. For this reason, foreign aid has often been shaped less by charity than by strategic calculation. During the Cold War, the United States directed substantial assistance to countries seen as strategically important in competition with the Soviet Union. Today, security aid remains closely tied to geopolitical priorities.

Israel has historically been among the largest cumulative recipients of US foreign assistance over the past several decades, though annual totals vary significantly by country and period. Other major recipients have included Egypt, Jordan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and more recently Ukraine—each reflecting particular strategic contexts.

Understanding this broader framework helps situate the US–Israel relationship within typical patterns of strategic partnership rather than treating it as uniquely anomalous.

What Kind of Aid Does Israel Receive?

Under a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2016, the United States committed to providing Israel with \$38 billion in military assistance over a decade—an average of \$3.8 billion annually. This funding is



Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), established 2025, is an American-Israeli aid organisation. | Photo: AI

delivered primarily through Foreign Military Financing and is almost entirely earmarked, meaning funds appropriated by Congress must be spent on American-made defense systems and services.

This Structure Means Two Things

First, the aid is overwhelmingly military rather than economic. Israel is a high-income country with a diversified economy; it does not receive large-scale US development assistance.

Second, much of the funding cycles back into the American defense industry. US companies manufacture aircraft, munitions, missile defense components, and related systems purchased with these funds. The arrangement supports American defense production lines while strengthening Israeli military capacity.

American assistance helps preserve what policymakers call Israel's "qualitative military edge"—the principle that Israel should maintain technological and strategic superiority over potential adversaries—without overwhelming its civilian economy. US aid represents roughly 15–20 percent of Israel's defense budget, with the remainder financed domestically.

The partnership has evolved over decades. Israel is not a member of NATO, nor is it bound by a formal mutual defense treaty requiring automatic American military intervention. Instead, the relationship reflects shared strategic interests, intelligence cooperation, technological collaboration, and longstanding congressional support.

Comparing Alliances: NATO & the US–Israel Relationship

The US–Israel relationship is sometimes compared to NATO, but the comparison

is imperfect. NATO is a formal collective defense alliance with Article 5 obligations stating that an attack on one member is an attack on all. The US–Israel partnership developed differently—through sustained bilateral cooperation rather than treaty-bound mutual defense guarantees.

That cooperation includes joint missile defense projects such as the Arrow system, collaboration on Iron Dome interceptors, and Israel's integration into the F-35 fighter programme. Intelligence sharing between the two countries has been significant in areas including counterterrorism and regional threat assessment.

This creates a feedback loop. American defense systems are tested, adapted, and refined in collaboration with Israeli forces. Supporters argue that Israel functions not merely as an aid recipient but as a security partner whose operational experience and technological innovation enhance American capabilities. Critics respond that these benefits must be weighed against diplomatic costs, regional instability, and humanitarian consequences.

Both perspectives deserve serious consideration.

Weighing Competing Considerations

Foreign policy decisions rarely involve choosing between good and bad options. More often, they require weighing competing goods and risks: deterrence and diplomacy, stability and reform, alliance credibility and strategic flexibility.

Should military aid continue during conflicts that result in civilian casualties—particularly during wars such as the current conflict in Gaza, which has

produced extensive humanitarian suffering? Should aid be conditioned on restricting settlement expansion in the Judea and Samaria (the so called 'West Bank'), which critics argue complicates prospects for a negotiated peace? Or would public conditions weaken deterrence, embolden adversaries, or interfere with Israel's democratic decision-making?

These are substantive policy debates. They are not inherently expressions of prejudice. At the same time, criticism sometimes crosses into rhetoric invoking conspiracies, claims of secret control, accusations of dual loyalty, or collective blame. Distinguishing legitimate policy disagreement from ethnic or religious stereotyping is essential.

Reasonable observers disagree not because one side is simply right and the other wrong, but because the tradeoffs are real and unavoidable.

Navigating the Debate Responsibly

Beyond strategy and structure lie questions about how these debates should be conducted.

Public discussion of American aid to Israel often reflects broader disagreements about Middle Eastern policy, international law, and the proper use of American power. Palestinians who live with the conflict directly frequently emphasise humanitarian concerns, rights, and accountability. Israeli supporters and many American strategic thinkers emphasise security threats, regional instability, and alliance reliability. Policy experts debate the effectiveness of aid conditioning and the feasibility of diplomatic alternatives.

These differences are substantive and reflect genuine disagreement about priorities and values.

Three guidelines can help navigate these tensions.

First, accuracy matters. Public debate often confuses military financing with humanitarian assistance or assumes that funds are delivered as unrestricted cash transfers. In reality, assistance is appropriated by Congress and must be spent on specific American defense systems—not delivered as direct cash.

Second, complexity matters. The US–Israel relationship is neither purely altruistic nor purely transactional. It involves simultaneous truths: strategic calculation and moral commitment, security cooperation and diplomatic friction, technological partnership and humanitarian tension. Reducing it to a single motive obscures more than it clarifies.

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Two Nations Living in Harmony

■ Yifat Goddard

My recent visit to Samoa provided an opportunity to better understand the foundations of the relationship between Samoa and Israel. Although separated by vast geography, the two nations have maintained relations since the 1970s. Over the years since, Samoa has demonstrated a consistent and principled approach toward Israel in international forums, reflecting a relationship grounded in values, rather than convenience.

Christianity strongly shapes Samoa's national identity, influencing education, public discourse, and leadership. For many Samoans, the Bible is not only a source of personal faith, but also a framework through which they understand history and current events. Within this perspective, Israel occupies a unique place. The modern State of Israel is often viewed through the lens of the biblical narrative that forms a central part of Christian belief, creating a spiritual connection that extends beyond politics.

In conversations with Christian leaders and church members, I was struck by the depth of biblical knowledge and the sincerity with which they spoke about Israel. Many could easily reference places, events, and stories from scripture, and these references shape how they understand the modern state. Their support for Israel is not based only on political alignment, but also on faith, conviction, and a sense of connection to the biblical story.



Yifat on her visit to Le Amosa O Savavau Preparatory school. | Photo: Yifat Goddard

On a personal level, this visit was especially meaningful. For the first time in two years, I felt fully safe and confident to openly identify as Israeli. I encountered openness, thoughtful questions, and genuine respect that left a lasting impression. It reminded me that God's heart was always for two covenant peoples: Jew and Gentiles.

I am grateful to International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) New Zealand for connecting me with ICEJ Samoa and facilitating these conversations. I look forward to what the future may bring, including further visits, teaching, and continued cooperation to strengthen this meaningful relationship.

Silver, Stories and Yemen's Hidden Heritage

■ Jane Smelt

Approaching the *Bab al Yaman*, the gate to the old city of Sana'a, I was more than relieved to have a friend with me who spoke fluent Arabic. Navigation of the old city is not for the faint hearted or directionally challenged. I hoped that my camera was sufficiently disguised under my long cloak so as not to alarm. As it was, I was a good head taller than any Yemeni, and with fair hair (even under a scarf), I was never going to blend into the background.

...Yemen is not only bombs and missiles, it is also silver and filigree and artisans...

I was in search of stories and was there on behalf of a Christian ministry. My friend introduced me to the market traders and shop keepers who had become friends over the years he had lived in the old city. His friends spoilt me with many free glasses of fresh orange juice. Never before had I been on a 'citrus crawl'. He took me specifically to the jewellers and silversmiths, knowing my interest. This is where the conversations took an unexpected turn. I asked questions; "How long has your family been a silversmith?" "Has this always been your trade?" "Are designs particular to certain regions?" I got a variation on the same answer every time, it went something like, "Oh we are a very old family. All of our forefathers

worked with silver, but of course, then we were Jewish, we converted to Islam, and now we are Muslim." I was astonished. Then I remembered some of the styles of Yemenite jewellery I had seen; *Beit al Badeehi*, *Beit al Bowsani*. *Beit*, a Hebrew word for 'House'. So, the House of *Badeehi* had a familiar ring about it. Hmmm.

In 1949 and 1950, the Jews of Yemen were lifted in their entirety to Israel in an operation called 'Magic Carpet.' The silversmiths were on the planes and took their extraordinary craftsmanship with them. They left their creative DNA behind in Yemen to be outworked through a new generation of Muslim silversmiths, many with Jewish ancestry. According to Marjorie Ransom, an American expert on Yemenite jewellery, the craft has had a resurgence in recent years and there is now a school of silversmithing north of the capital Sana'a.

Five years after these conversations I found myself in Israel, wandering the streets of the old city of Jerusalem and lingering amongst the jewellery. Unsurprisingly, I saw the styles and characteristics I had admired in Sana'a.

Sadly, with the Yemeni involvement in the war with Israel, it would be tempting to see only the evil being loosed from that country. But Yemen is not only bombs and missiles, it is also silver and filigree and artisans with stories to tell. May we all remember to pray for the lost of Yemen. The Queen of Sheba in antiquity sought wisdom from Solomon. May that inheritance be the movement of the Holy Spirit of wisdom amongst the Yemeni. | Photos: Jane Smelt





Fighting for Peace

■ His Excellency Alon Roth-Snir

The Ambassador of Israel to New Zealand

Today, as these words are being written, a missile launched from Iran has struck the city of Arad in southern Israel. It hit residential buildings, wounded many dozens of people — including children — and was deliberately aimed at a civilian population.

“Seek peace and pursue it” (Psalms 34:14). “A time to be silent and a time to speak... a time for war and a time for peace” (Ecclesiastes 3).

This is perhaps the moral axis that best describes the heart of Israel. We are a small nation, surrounded by enemies, that has never ceased to pray for peace even as it has been repeatedly forced to fight for its very existence. For this reason, when Israel engages in confrontation with the regime in Iran, it is not a war of conquest, revenge, or arrogance. It is a defensive war. It is a war imposed upon us by a regime that has openly declared its intention to destroy Israel, that has spent years building a ring of terror around us, and that has already launched missiles and drones toward our civilians and our cities.

The Iranian regime does not settle for threats. It funds, trains, arms, and directs terrorist organisations and armed proxies across the Middle East. For many years, it has worked to destabilise nations, ignite fronts, and spread an ideology of death. When such a regime deliberately fires at civilian population centers, and when it repeatedly declares that its goal is to eradicate us, this is no longer a typical political dispute. It is a real, ongoing, and existential threat.

Every night of sirens, every family rushing to shelter, every child awakened in fear—these are reminders of the terrible price of a world in which evil is not stopped in time.

This is also the moral and legal foundation for Israel’s actions. Under international law, a state has the right—and indeed the duty—to defend its citizens against armed attack. The right of self-defence is not a legal loophole; it is a foundational principle of the international order. No country could reasonably be expected to accept a situation in which a hostile regime builds massive offensive capabilities over years, activates terrorist proxies on all sides, and launches weapons at its civilians—all without response. Expecting Israel to absorb such a threat is not more moral; it is simply recklessness wrapped in fine words.

It is important to say this as clearly as possible: our struggle is not against the Iranian people. On the contrary, many Israelis hold deep respect for the Iranian people—for their ancient history, their rich culture, and the courage shown by many of their sons and daughters who have bravely opposed oppression. The struggle is against an extremist, violent, theocratic regime that has turned hatred of Israel into a state doctrine, and terrorism into a strategic tool.

But beyond the legal question lies a deeper moral one: what distinguishes the sides? The answer lies not only in what we say, but in what we intend and whom we target.

Here lies the fundamental difference. Israel directs its actions against military targets, against the Revolutionary Guards, against terrorist infrastructures, and against decision-makers responsible for bloodshed



People take cover in a bomb shelter in Tel Aviv from incoming missiles fired from Iran, 19 March 2026. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

and aggression. The Iranian regime, by contrast, directs its weapons at cities, neighbourhoods, families, and children. Israel seeks to minimise harm to civilians; its enemies use civilians as targets, as shields, and as instruments of propaganda. These are not two equal sides of the same tragedy. This is a fundamental moral distinction between those who defend life and those who sanctify death.

There is also a tragic irony in a regime that brutally represses its own people, tramples their rights, and

Israel does not fight because it has ceased to love peace. Israel fights because it loves life.

As a person, and as a grandfather of three grandchildren—with another granddaughter to be born in a week—I write these words from a deeply personal place. The fear is real. It arises with every siren, with every thought of small children in shelters. Yet alongside the fear there is also clarity: the responsibility to protect our families and our citizens is not a choice—it is a duty. In that sense, the decision to fight is not only a matter of policy; it is a moral imperative.

Therefore, at this moment, support for Israel is not only a political position. It is also a moral one: standing with the right to life, with the essential distinction between good and evil, and with the hope that one day, swords will truly be turned into plowshares.

massacres its own citizens—yet seeks to present itself as a moral actor or a victim. The truth is simpler: a regime that threatens to destroy others, while simultaneously oppressing its own people, is dangerous both to its citizens and to its neighbours.

We do not rejoice in war. We do not glorify power. Every loss of life is a tragedy. Every night of sirens, every family rushing to shelter, every child awakened in fear—these are reminders of the terrible price of a world in which evil is not stopped in time. Precisely because we value human life, we understand that at times one must fight in order to protect it.

Today, between *Purim*—when we remember a moment in history in which we survived an attempt to destroy us—and the season of Easter and *Passover*, when themes of freedom, redemption, and hope are central, we are once again reminded of our enduring desire for peace. This has been demonstrated by the Abraham Accords, which have brought tangible cooperation, stability, and renewed hope to the region. Yet there is also a time for war: a moment when inaction is not moderation but moral weakness, because it abandons the innocent.

Peace can only come when forces of destruction are stopped, when terror ceases to be policy, and when those who threaten annihilation understand that they will not be able to carry out their threats. This is not a call for endless war. It is a call for moral responsibility.

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Embassy Jubilee History 1975–2009



Wellington. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ Joanna Moss & David Zwartz

The sickness and subsequent death of Ambassador Raphael was both a sadness and a blow to the Jewish community. It's never easy to see, metaphorically, an Ambassador being farewelled in a box, rather than alive at a farewell function. But it was the next Ambassador who picked up the baton admirably and remains fondly remembered even today. His name was Yaakov Morris. He was both a journalist and a professional diplomat with a magnificent command of the English language. PM Muldoon was his equal and they had many fierce debates ensuring that Israel's position was in print and across the airwaves. Humorously, Ambassador Morris called himself a 'lepricochen'. He was, as David Zwartz attests "someone who brought his Irish Jewish temperament, eloquence and humour to the job". During the Ambassador's tenure (1977-82) he published a book of poems "*I Met Four Gulls*" with illustrations by then Mayor of Wellington, Sir Michael Fowler, reflecting the strong relationships he had made during his sojourn.

During the late 1970's many embassies closed their doors and moved away from Jerusalem. In response, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) opened there. In the mid 1980s an RNZAF Anglican chaplain based at Ohakea, Murray Dixon, and a

Palmerston North Presbyterian Minister, Rob Yule, heard about it and went to Israel to investigate. They began ICEJ NZ and subsequently Prayer for Israel NZ, providing strong Israel connections with Christians around New Zealand.

The next two Ambassadors were Zvi Zimmerman-Boneh (1983-86) and Efraim Eldar (1986-89). This was a difficult time in Israel with the First Lebanon war, uprisings in the West Bank and an Intifada coupled with high inflation and emigration. Locally, they witnessed the turbulent years of the downfall of Muldoon and the rise and fall of the third Labour Government under David Lange. New Zealand was turning away from Israel. Being an Israeli Ambassador became a hard job, with media reflecting criticism of Israel rather than maintaining balance.

Both the following ambassadors, Shmuel Ovnat (1989-93) and Nissan Koren-Krupsky (1993-1998), worked hard at improving trade links between Israel and NZ, and laid the foundations for the reciprocal Working Holiday Scheme agreement that was signed in March 2010. Koren-Krupsky was a former mayor of Ness Ziona, 29km south of Tel Aviv, which was liberated from the Ottomans by the Kiwi ANZACs in November 1917 at the battle of Ayun Kara. He fostered the NZ connection with the area leading eventually to the

unveiling there of a large Silver Fern Memorial in 2023, thanks to the dedication of Tauranga men, Warren Dawson and Chris Archer.

Two women were appointed as successive ambassadors, Lydia Choukron (1998-2001) and Ruth Kahanoff (2001-02). This was during the Helen Clark era when women occupied the three top roles in NZ. It was a perfect fit and they made the most of making connections despite Helen Clark's strong anti-Israel stance. Choukron was instrumental in establishing the Yitzhak Rabin Nobel Peace Laureate memorial in Wellington in November 2000. Sadly, Ambassador Kahanoff did not see out her term as Israel cut back on diplomatic posts around the world for economic reasons.

Israeli accreditation to NZ reverted to Canberra between 2002 and 2010. Because NZers do not need a visa to visit Israel for up to 90 days, the shift of consular services to Australia did not cause too much inconvenience.

In order to maintain representation, the post of Honorary Consul was established. The first incumbent (2003-08) was Wellingtonian David Zwartz, former president of the NZ Jewish Council, followed by former Judge David Robinson (2010-20) in Auckland, and since then by prominent Auckland businessman, Henri Eliot.

Continued from page 5

Understanding American Aid to Israel

Third, policy critique must be clearly separated from prejudice. Maintaining this distinction between legitimate critique and discriminatory rhetoric protects both the integrity of public discourse and the legitimacy of serious policy criticism.

Principles for Thoughtful Assessment

Several broader principles can guide evaluation. Clarity about purpose is essential. Is the primary goal deterrence? Regional stability? Counterterrorism? Diplomatic leverage? Different objectives may imply different aid structures

—deterrence may favour continuity and predictability, while diplomatic leverage may require conditionality.

Transparency about tradeoffs is equally important. Strengthening an ally's military capacity may enhance deterrence but also carry humanitarian and diplomatic consequences. Conditioning aid may signal commitment to certain norms but risk weakening short-term strategic coordination.

Historical awareness also matters. The US-Israel relationship emerged in the context of regional wars, Cold War rivalries, peace treaties with neighbouring states—particularly Egypt and Jordan—and evolving security threats from both state and non-state actors. Present debates cannot be understood without

reference to that history.

Finally, democratic accountability is central. Foreign aid is funded by taxpayers and authorised through representative institutions. It should remain open to scrutiny, reassessment, and informed disagreement.

Conclusion

American aid to Israel is best understood as a strategic partnership shaped by history, security concerns, technological cooperation, and democratic politics. It is neither inexplicable favouritism nor beyond legitimate criticism.

Reasonable people will disagree about its scope, conditions, and future direction. Some will argue for stronger conditions tied to diplomatic goals.

Others will argue for maintaining or strengthening the current structure to preserve deterrence and alliance credibility. Still others may question whether the partnership should continue in its current form at all.

Those disagreements are not signs of failure. They reflect the healthy tensions of democratic governance between competing values: security and human rights, alliance commitments and diplomatic leverage, strategic continuity and moral accountability.

But serious disagreement requires shared factual grounding and careful reasoning. Understanding what the aid is, why it exists, and what tradeoffs it involves does not end debate. It makes informed debate possible.

Iran, Blood Moons and Purim *A Prophetic Convergence with End Time Significance?*

■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

Iran is back in the headlines with war imminent as they continue to pursue their nuclear programme. At the time of writing, negotiations are ending in early March, just as Israel celebrates *Purim*, and at the same time as a lunar eclipse known as a blood moon will be visible across large portions of America, Asia and Australia.

Could all this point to a looming defeat for the Ayatollah's of Iran?

Purim and the End of Days

It would certainly benefit Israel and the entire world if we are about to see the end of the Iranian regime.

However, regardless of what happens in Iran this year, the Bible clearly tells us of more difficult times ahead for Israel as we head closer to the Lord's return.

The story of *Purim* and Queen Esther is not normally treated as End Time prophecy, yet a Jewish Rabbinic perspective reveals remarkable links to Gog, Magog and the End of Days hiding right beneath the surface of this ancient story—perhaps bringing light to a deeper meaning behind the blood moons happening on *Purim*.

A World Empire and a Wicked Ruler

During the days of Queen Esther, Haman the Agagite rose to prominence in the vast Persian empire, which at the time stretched from India across the Middle East and all the way down to Ethiopia.

Haman means 'magnificent', and Agag means 'exalted', and this wicked man certainly thought of himself as being someone particularly grand. It was commanded that everyone should bow before Haman, which involved prostrating oneself in veneration as to a god. Mordechai the devout Jew pointedly refused—incensing Haman. Ultimately, Haman's fury drove him to seek the annihilation of not only Mordechai, but of all the Jewish people.

Haman's plans fell crashing down on his own head, but is that the end of the story? Or is the book of Esther prophetic of the End Times? Will the End Times see another figure arise who—like Haman—controls a massive empire, demands worship and manically persecutes the Jews?

Agag and Gog

Rabbinic sources see Haman as a precursor to Gog, the famed End Time figure from Ezekiel's book. While Christians generally draw a clear line of



Red moon over Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

distinction between Gog and the antichrist, the Jewish view of the End of Days puts Gog front and centre of the last and final battle.

The Bible identifies Haman as an Agagite (*Esther 3:1-2*), a descendant of the last king of the Amalekites. Curiously this name shares the very same Hebrew root as the rather unusual name Gog. In *Ezekiel chapters 38-39*, Gog is portrayed as the grand leader of a massive end time coalition of nations against Israel. Gog's gigantic northern army crushes down on Israel until God finally intervenes, destroying Gog and revealing His glory to the nations and to Israel.

Bible prophecy teachers typically differentiate between Gog's war and the final End Time battle. A key point raised is that the specific nations mentioned in Gog's coalition are different from those listed in other End Time conflicts. But yet again, a Rabbinic view brings out a different perspective worth considering, especially in the context of the blood moons.

The word 'Gog and Magog' in Hebrew has the numerical value '70' which from a Jewish mind links directly to the Biblical list of 70 nations of mankind (*Genesis 11*). From this perspective, the Gog and Magog war coalition against Israel will include not just a limited handful of nations but rather represents the great and final end time battle against the Jewish nation foretold by the other prophets.

Furthermore, Ezekiel describes Gog as the one foretold by the prophets of Israel (*Ezekiel 38:17*). This is curious as no other prophet directly mentions Gog by name. However, if Gog is simply another title for the final evil ruler of the End of

Days who comes against Israel, then yes, he was predicted in great detail by many prophets of Israel.

Bible teacher Joel Richardson points out that after the war of Gog and Magog, God's name will no longer be profaned (*Ezekiel 39:7*). If the Gog/Magog war occurs immediately before the Tribulation, then it occurs right before the most blasphemous time in human history! Further, it says that then the nations "will know that I am the Lord" (v7) and Israel will have God's spirit poured out on them (v28). Israel and the nations coming to faith in Jesus right before the Tribulation just doesn't make sense. However, if Gog and the antichrist are one and the same, then it is logical that his defeat will indeed lead to God's name no longer being blasphemed and Israel and the nations knowing that the Lord is God.

Finally, as God judges Gog, Ezekiel describes the earth shaking at His presence (*Ezekiel 38:20*) and God being from then on known as the "Holy One IN Israel" (*Ezekiel 39:7*). This reveals that when God judges Gog, He will be physically present among Israel, speaking of His glorious and final return to our planet.

What are the Similarities Between Haman and the Antichrist/Gog?

Both think of themselves highly and demand worship.

Both become enraged and turn on the Jewish people.

Both lead a large coalition of nations against Israel seeking their annihilation and their plunder.

In both situations it looks utterly hopeless for Israel, until God Himself intervenes.

At the end of the story of Haman, many gentiles convert to follow the God of Israel. Similarly, at the demise of the antichrist the nations will finally see and know that the Lord is God.

The story of Esther tells us of the miracle of an amazing divine turn-around and salvation that came to the persecuted Jewish people, and I believe also points us to the future deliverance of God's faithful ones in the final defeat of the antichrist. And as Mordechai and Esther ended up co-reigning with the king, so I believe there is coming a day in which the saints will rule and reign with Jesus in His kingdom right here on this earth.

Returning to the Blood Moons

Could the blood moons appearing on Purim be a heavenly sign pointing us to the importance of these Biblical prophecies right now in our time? While lunar eclipses and blood moons are regular celestial phenomena, the Bible specifically links the appearance of the blood moon to the End Times. The prophet Joel writes:

"The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great & dreadful day of the Lord." (*Joel 2:31*)

The Book of Revelation similarly describes the moon becoming 'as blood' in conjunction with the End Time events (*Revelations 6:12*).

Just as foretold in the Gog and Magog prophecies, we are today increasingly seeing the nations rise against Israel. While there have been many 'Haman' figures arising through the years to come against the Jews, could these heavenly signs be a warning pointing us towards the coming of that last and ultimate Haman?

The Joy of Purim

I feel it is no coincidence that we are receiving this end time warning at the time of the feast of *Purim*. *Purim* is all about joy, all about remembering God's dealings in the affairs of mankind and His ultimate victory over evil.

As we watch the prophetic stage being set for the End of Days, the joy of *Purim* is a reminder to look up, lift up our heads because our 'redemption is drawing near'. We already know the end of the story, and it gives us hope that the day is coming soon when He will indeed set up His righteous Kingdom here on this earth. What a day of rejoicing it will be, and what a hope it gives us even for today! May that day come soon!



ANZAC Legacy in Modern Israel

■ Kelvin Crombie

Australian Historian | Documentor & Founder of Heritage Resources

Two significant ‘proclamations’ are presently being made in Australia. One is the call “From the river to the sea Palestine shall be free”—which effectively is a call to delegitimise and destroy the Jewish State of Israel. The other is to discredit the British, colonial connections to the establishment of modern Australia, as summed up through the phrase “Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.”

Yet one of the key outcomes of our Anzac heritage from both World Wars—where we sided with Britain—is the establishment of the modern State of Israel—which itself is part of Almighty God’s plan for worldwide redemption.

God’s Sovereignty in Creation

When Almighty God created the world He placed the land masses and waterways in certain locations. But the very heart of His plan of creation was humankind, with whom He desired a close personal relationship. This, however, all changed with the act of disobedience and treason by Adam and *Hava* (Eve) in the garden of Eden, which resulted in the breaking of that relationship and the imposition of the penalty of death—upon them and their descendants.

Almighty God then began a plan to redeem and restore this relationship, centred upon the future coming of the seed of *Hava* (Eve), who would defeat Satan, the adversary of Almighty God. This plan also involved the spreading of humankind to all parts of the earth’s surface, hence in time Aboriginal people came to what is now Australia, and other groups including the Māoris went to what became known as New Zealand. Both these lands belong to Almighty God, who determined who would live there, and when.

The Land of Israel at the Centre of the World

The geographical centre of the world was the land of Israel, at the centre of which was the city of Jerusalem. Major trade routes lay in proximity to this land, and as a result major empires throughout history coveted this strategic ‘land between empires.’

Although being in the worst location for political and economic stability and peace, yet this was where Almighty God determined to bring forth His mighty plan of worldwide redemption—of bringing humankind back into a personal relationship with Himself.

Almighty God promised this very land by a covenant oath to Abram (Abraham), Isaac and Jacob (Israel)—and the children of Israel. He also promised that all peoples groups would be blessed through



NZ Mounted Rifles Brigade 1914. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

this Abrahamic covenant. The town mostly associated with these patriarchs and this covenant was Beersheba.

The Promised Individual Seed

The seed promised to Adam and *Hava* came from and to the people of Israel. He was Jesus. As the incarnate and perfect Son of God Jesus came to take the penalty of death which was upon all of humankind. This He did by first instituting the new covenant with Israel (*Jeremiah 31: 31-37; Luke 22: 20*), then vicariously dying on the cross—and rising from the dead on the third day, thereby proving that the penalty of death had been paid for.

He also came to fulfil the promises of the covenant with King David and to be the King *Messiah* of Israel—destined to reign from Jerusalem over redeemed Israel and the redeemed of the world. Yet the majority of the nation of Israel did not acknowledge Jesus as their redeemer and *Messiah*—so this message of redemption went out to the non-Jewish world. The redeemed of the nations became the Church. But what would become of the Israel that did not accept Jesus as the King *Messiah*? Would Almighty God reject them for their national disobedience?

God-forbid—a perfect God could not break His covenant oath. One’s character is dependent upon keeping their promises, sworn under oath, even when the other party disobeys. Yet many in the Gentile-led Church began to adopt the position that God had rejected the nation of Israel. Such an attitude resulted from witnessing the majority Jewish rejection of Jesus; the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD and exiling of the Jewish people from the land of covenant promise. This attitude deepened after the victorious Romans in 135 AD forbade Jewish people

from living in the region surrounding Jerusalem and even renaming the land Syria Palestina—in order to erase the Jewish connection to the land of Israel.

Apart from a remnant the people of Israel then underwent a long period of separation from the land of Israel. It would require a miracle for their return. This exile became more pronounced when imperialist Arab Muslims took control over the land from the year 638 AD. A core principle of Islam was that the land of Israel was part of *dar al Islam*—the region of Islam. In such a worldview there was no place for a restored Jewish national entity. This position was furthered when from 1517 the land came under the control of the Ottoman Turkish Empire—who were the custodians of Islam.

The European Expansion and Discovery of Australia & NZ

The Ottoman Turks also monopolised all the major trade routes from the East—causing the prices of the previous commodities to increase in Europe and provoking the European powers to find alternate sea routes to the Spice Islands and India. As a result of this dynamic the European powers ‘discovered’ regions such as Australia and New Zealand, which from 1788 began to be settled by the British.

Although the British never always treated the local inhabitants in a dignified manner, yet they did introduce the message of Jesus—allowing the first inhabitants to receive pardon from the original sentence of death, and receiving a restored personal relationship with their Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Napoleon, Suez & the Revival

The establishment of these new sea

connections between Europe and the East meant the ‘land between empires’ lost its economic and geo-political significance. This changed, however, when the French under Napoleon invaded Egypt and the land of Israel in 1798-99, aiming to reach India and oust the British. They failed, but their endeavour provoked Britain into being aware of the importance of the ‘land between empires’. These events also provoked countless Christians in Europe, especially Britain, to pray for and proclaim that the time was nigh at hand for Israel’s restoration—to their *Messiah* and to the land of Israel.

Then over the following decades more Jewish people began to take up this call of restoration and the number of Jewish people returning increased. By 1897 these Jewish endeavours resulted in the formation of the Zionist movement. All the while Britain’s concern for the connection to India increased, especially after the French built the Suez Canal in 1869. Britain later took control over the Canal, as well as Egypt. The east side of the Canal mostly remained under Turkish control.

Germany & the First World War

From 1898 Germany became involved in the Eastern Mediterranean, and when the First World War broke out in 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined with Germany against Britain, France and Russia. Soon after Australian and New Zealand troops (the Anzacs), arrived in Egypt. Russia then requested Allied assistance, and so preparations began for a campaign to break open the strategic Dardanelles-Gallipoli waterway.

Then in March 1915 the Russians informed Britain and France that once this strategic location, plus Constantinople and the Bosphorus Straits, were captured they were to be surrendered to the Russian Empire. The Russians also informed Britain and France that they could take control of other areas of the Ottoman Empire. Although Britain had no desire to control the land of Israel, they did not want France to control the east (Sinai) side of the Suez Canal. The British Government now began to consider the future of what was then Turkish-occupied Palestine.

Gallipoli Defeat & the Conquest of Israel

The Allies were defeated at Gallipoli, and the victorious Ottoman Turks now aimed to seize the Suez Canal. A British-led force, spearheaded by Anzac horsemen (the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles) was formed and captured the Sinai region in 1916. Then in early 1917, following a decision from prime minister David Lloyd George, this force crossed into Turkish-occupied



Palestine. The first battles were at Gaza, where the British-Anzac force suffered two major defeats. The military objective later focused on capturing the town of Beersheba—associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Then in June 1917 the Jewish Zionist movement presented a proposal to the British government that when the land of Israel was liberated from Turkish occupation that Britain would endorse the establishment there of a Jewish national home.

The Allied attack on Beersheba began on 31 October 1917, and following British and New Zealand successes, victory was finally gained by the gallant charge of the Australian Light Horse. On that same day the British War Committee meeting in London promised to establish a Jewish national home in the land of Israel—once the land was fully redeemed from Turkish-Islamic occupation. This decision was later known as the Balfour Declaration.ⁱⁱ

This campaign was fought with geopolitical factors in mind—the land of Israel was sandwiched between Britain (and Europe) on one side and India and the empire including New Zealand and Australia, on the other. This factor again reveals that a sovereign God had determined exactly where the physical boundary lines would be established and when certain people groups would be where. God knew exactly what He was doing when He placed the land of Israel at the centre of the world—and when He sent the British to settle in Australia and New Zealand.ⁱⁱⁱ

Redemption of the land from Islamic control took another major step on 9 December 1917 when British-led forces including Anzac horsemen captured Jerusalem.^{iv} On 11 December the official surrender ceremony occurred on the steps of the Citadel or Fortress of Jerusalem—opposite Christ Church—at which New Zealand and Australian soldiers participated.

By 31 October 1918 the Ottoman Turkish Empire was defeated. At subsequent peace conferences Britain and France were offered mandates to prepare these liberated regions for local sovereignty. The Mandate for Palestine was offered to Britain in 1922 by all member states of the League of Nations—to prepare the land for a future Jewish national home. The League of Nations recognised the historic connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and this endorsement became enshrined into international law. This act vindicated that Almighty God honours His covenant oaths and promises. Islamic control and occupation over the land of covenant promise was being repealed. In the vast territory captured mostly by British, Australian, Indian and New Zealand soldiers, the Arabic-speaking nations of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and



Australian Light Horse entering Jerusalem, 1917. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Jordan were ultimately formed. A very small part of that captured region was to become the Jewish national home.

The full restoration of Israel was now drawing nearer, whereupon ‘all Israel’ would come to know God in a personal way through the new covenant. This reconciliation, Paul wrote, would be “like life from the dead” (*Romans 11:15*) and would be closely associated with the physical return of Jesus to Jerusalem.^v But most Jewish people living in the land of Israel at the time (and still today) were not inclined to consider turning to Jesus. It would be nothing short of a miracle for the nation to turn en-masse to accept Jesus as *Messiah*.

Unfortunately, most of the local Muslims and Christians did not understand Almighty God’s plan for the redemption of the world, and opposed Israel’s physical restoration. Satan knows that when Jesus returns to Jerusalem and establishes His reign over the redeemed of Israel and the nations, he will be bound, therefore he will do everything possible to hinder this return and the associated spiritual restoration of Israel.

Then from 1933 following Nazi persecution in Germany thousands of Jewish people came to the land of Israel. Once again the Arabic-speaking leaders resorted to violence. The British proposed to partition ‘Palestine’ in 1937, into a very small Jewish State and a much larger Arab State. The Arab leadership rejected this offer outright. For them there could be no Jewish State at all.

The Second Anzacs and Total Genocide Averted

The plight of all Jewish people in Europe then deteriorated when Germany invaded Poland in 1939, plunging the world into another War. In early 1940 the first of tens of thousands of soldiers from New Zealand and Australia arrived in Egypt and the land of Israel. While persecution of Jewish people intensified in Europe these soldiers fought all over

the Eastern Mediterranean endeavouring to stop the combined Italian and German forces from taking control over the region, especially the Suez Canal.

Then in 1942 the Nazi-leadership officially decreed their plan to murder eleven million Jewish people in Europe and surrounding regions—including in the land of Israel and the Middle East. The quest to murder the 700,000 or so Jewish people in the Middle East would be conducted together with local collaborators.

Thankfully the attempt upon the lives of the Jewish people in the land of Israel and the Middle East was stopped, due mostly to the Allied victory at the battle of El Alamein in Egypt in late 1942. Tens of thousands of Allied forces, including many Australians and New Zealanders, were involved in this strategic victory.^{vi} The Jewish people living in the Middle East were physically saved. Unfortunately, however, some six million Jewish people were murdered in what became known as the Holocaust.

The State of Israel Established—a Modern-day Miracle

Following the end of the War and with hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors desperate to leave Europe, the British closed the gates to ‘Palestine’. Ultimately, they relinquished the Mandate to the United Nations, which voted on 29 November 1947 to partition ‘Palestine’ into a Jewish State and an Arab State. Australia and New Zealand voted for the establishment of both Jewish and Arab States.

While the Jewish leadership accepted this offer, the regional and local Arab leadership refused to accept the United Nations decision. The collective Arab leadership refused the opportunity to form their own sovereign state—preferring instead to destroy Israel.

The Outcome

There is absolutely no doubt that the

soldiers from New Zealand and Australia, the majority of whom were of British heritage, played a pivotal supporting role in this physical restoration of Israel. But this physical restoration is but only one part of God’s great plan of worldwide redemption. This plan still anticipates the collective nation of Israel accepting Jesus as Redeemer and King—and of Jesus’ ultimate return to Jerusalem-Zion, where He will reign over redeemed Israel and over the redeemed of the nations.

ⁱ I am of part Aboriginal heritage and have part-Aboriginal relatives who served as Australian soldiers, including in France in 1918. I also lived in Israel for twenty-five years, and do not endorse the sentiments in either of these two proclamations.

ⁱⁱ My own research and involvement in this period is found in *Anzacs, Empires and Israel’s Restoration; Journey to Beersheba; Anzacs & Israel; Gallipoli – The Road to Jerusalem*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Deuteronomy 32: 8-9; Psalm 104: 5-9; Acts 17: 24-26.*

^{iv} On this occasion one Anzac unit was involved—the 10th Light Horse Regiment from Western Australia.

^v *Matthew 24: 30-31; Acts 1:6-9; Zechariah 9: 3-4a.*

^{vi} My own research on this subject is found in: *El Alamein—Halting an Impending Holocaust in the Middle East (Mundaring: 2012)*.

ANZAC War Graves

Few Kiwis are aware that NZ ANZACs from WWI are buried in Gaza. Actually they are buried in two war cemeteries: Deir El Balah and Gaza War cemeteries under the auspices of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Since Israel is a long way from NZ, our government pays the CWGC to maintain Kiwi graves all over the world, using local contractors. In the Middle East, many WWI kiwi ANZACS are buried in Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Israel, and across North Africa, Italy and Greece from WW2. There are a few from WW2 in Israel.

Those buried in Gaza are primarily from the Gaza battles in March and April 1917; prior to the battle of Beersheba and those who died from the border area in Sinai. There are 36 named graves.

In February using satellite imagery, about a third of each of the two Gaza cemeteries have suffered ‘extensive structural damage’. Israel has been blamed. This is unfortunate, but since access is restricted the full facts are unknown. Thankfully not on the scale of the Maala CWGC cemetery in Yemen; which is ostensibly destroyed. Kiwis have been unable to visit the Gaza cemeteries for decades, due to security threats.



Israel, NZ Baptist Union and ‘Treason’—Part 3

■ Perry Trotter

An adaptation of a recently published video.

This is part three of my response to some of the errors promoted by NZ Baptist Union regarding Israel. The arguments I am making could just as easily be applied to many of the major Christian organisations around the world that embrace replacement theology. In my previous piece I made the point that although replacement theology takes many forms, what they all have in common is *denial*. Denial that the explicit and detailed biblical promises to Israel will one day be fulfilled, as written.

Why do I focus on the ultimate restoration of Israel, when discussing this issue? For two reasons: because it is such a dominant theme in Scripture. And secondly, if one wants to understand the current period, it is essential first to understand where history is heading. The remarkable antagonism toward Israel and the Jewish people—and the peculiar controversy over the city behind me—is inexplicable apart from an understanding of the scenario revealed by the prophets of Scripture.

Evangelicals usually claim to have ‘a high view of Scripture’—meaning that they believe both Old and New Testaments are the word of God. And yet many, including leaders promoted by the Baptist Union, deny that Israel will ultimately be restored. Of course that creates a serious problem. The biblical text speaks so frequently and plainly about a future regathering and restoration of Israel and yet replacementists prefer denial.

In order to sustain such a denial of Israel’s restoration the replacementist must mishandle and misrepresent the biblical text. And the Baptist material provides many examples.

In my book, *Israel in the Biblical Worldview*, I attempt to categorise the main methods that replacementists employ in order to turn the biblical text on its head. In this short series I will only have time to address a few of these.

I am standing on a rooftop with the Old City of Jerusalem behind me. Bethlehem is situated about 8 km in front of me. Interestingly, Bethlehem comes up in the Baptist material. In speaking about the writings of the prophets, Dr Church claims that “...while these books do have some specific prophecies, like, for example, Micah 5:2 ‘foretelling’ that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, specifics like this are rare.” Here he appears quite willing to interpret a portion of prophecy precisely as it reads. Good. Yet he is clearly unwilling to do so consistently, even within its immediate context. And he makes the remarkable claim that specific prophecies are rare. The text reads:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

This ‘ruler over Israel’ is referenced in a multitude of Old Testament texts. A God fearing Jew in the first century, with access to the writings of the Hebrew prophets, could have had a comprehensive understanding of this ruler. Not only his place of birth, but also his family line, including his descent from

Judah and David, the timing of his appearance, his rejection by the majority of his own people, and, I am convinced, even his divine origin.

But my point is that the rulership over Israel, as mentioned in this specific prediction, is something that is described in multiple places and clearly has not happened. Furthermore, many of the texts that describe this rulership, make it abundantly clear that it is inextricably linked with Israel’s re-gathering and restoration.

Let’s further consider Dr Church’s claim that “specific prophecies, like this are rare”.



Slide 1: Here is the text he pointed to, shown in its broader context of four chapters.



Slide 2: And here are what appear to be ‘specific prophecies’ relating to Israel’s restoration in that immediate context. I think the honest reader, willing to take the text as written, will recognise that these texts are best understood as predictions relating to the period of Israel’s ultimate restoration. For those of us who believe Jesus is the Messiah, that would be the period of His second coming.



Slide 3: If we also include predictions that appear to deal with Israel in the period of her dispersion among the nations, then the number of ‘specific prophecies’ in the immediate context is even greater.

The opening passage in this context could hardly be more specific and predictive:

In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

So much for Dr Church’s claim that ‘specific prophecies’, like the one he quoted, are rare. Clearly that is not the case.

Other approaches employed by replacement theologians are very well illustrated in the resources recommended by the Baptist Union material. One such resource is *The Gospel and the Land of Promise*, a book published in 2011. Most of its authors were closely associated with Laidlaw College or Carey Baptist College.

While walking through Jerusalem last week, I came across St George’s, and immediately thought of *The Gospel and the Land of Promise*. Why? Because St George’s is or was the home church of Palestinian Theologian Rev Dr Naim Ateek. And Ateek is referenced favourably dozens of times in *The Gospel and the Land of Promise*.

While Dr Church seems willing to selectively ignore multiple biblical prophecies, Dr Ateek takes things much further: “When confronted with a difficult passage in the Bible or with a perplexing contemporary event, one needs to ask such simple questions as: Does this fit the picture I have of God that Jesus has revealed to me? ... If it does, then that passage is valid and authoritative. If not, then I cannot accept its validity or authority.”

There is something refreshingly honest about Ateek’s statement. Rather than engage in disingenuous theological manoeuvring to avoid the obvious intention of the text, Ateek simply grants himself magisterial authority and declares the inspired biblical text *unacceptable*. Ateek doesn’t like what the prophets have to say about Israel’s national restoration and his solution is not simply to ignore the text, but to effectively declare it null and void.

So what has this to do with the NZ Baptist Union and Laidlaw College? Well, again, Ateek is quoted or referenced favourably dozens of times in a resource recommended by the Baptist Union to “provide further context for the current conflict”. Are evangelical Baptists who claim to see the Old and New Testaments as the word of God, really comfortable with this approach?

Many anti-Zionist evangelicals really do have a dilemma. They dislike what the Bible says about Israel’s restoration, yet they wish to maintain their evangelical ‘credentials’ and so are not willing to simply ignore the text or to declare it unacceptable. For them, silencing the prophets will require more sophisticated approaches.

Approaches that maintain an air of respect for the text but nonetheless still serve to annul its plain meaning.

Watch or read the full critique at: <https://israelbiblicalworldview.org/nz-baptist-union>

A Kiwi Talks Indigenous Zionism in Montreal

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

You might reasonably ask why I would leave the warmth of a New Zealand summer to spend a week in Montreal in the depths of winter. In truth, the weather was absolutely magical for someone unaccustomed to snowy climates. The icy air drew a sharp gasp as it first filled the lungs, yet it was bracing and exhilarating. Apparently 13°C was a warm day.

Also invigorating was a lively roundtable of around twenty academics, mostly Israeli, discussing ‘*Conceptions of Jewish Indigeneity in Zionist Thought and Politics*.’ Co-sponsored by Concordia University, Bar-Ilan University, and Ben-Gurion University, the conference brought together speakers from Israel, New Zealand, Ireland, and Canada, drawing on disciplines including history, archaeology, religion, indigenous studies, and public diplomacy.

The following are excerpts of a report written by Randy Pinsky.

What is Zionism?

“With everything that has happened, it is ever more clear of the realisation of the need to go back to Zionism when talking about Jewish indigeneity,” stated Paula Kabalo, head of the Azrieli Centre for Israel Studies.

Although the word has been distorted and often weaponised by those who wish to discredit it as ‘colonial’, ‘oppressive’ and ‘racist’, it is critical to restore it to the original meaning.

“At its essence, Zionism refers to Jewish self-determination”, said Arieh Saposnik of Ben Gurion University (BGU). “It is the belief that the Jewish people have the right to live safely and securely in their ancestral homeland of Israel—no more and no less.”

With a connection to Israel spanning over 3,000 years, there has been a continuous presence in one form or another. In spite of numerous exiles, there has always been a link and a yearning to return.

From archaeological evidence to Biblical records and the engrained reference to Israel in every Jewish custom and holiday, the connection is indisputable...

A common misconception is that most Israelis are from European countries, referencing the two major *Aliyah* migrations in the early 20th century. Yet this negates the continuity in the land for the past 3,000 years.

“People tend to speak of indigeneity as a binary,” shared Lev Deych of The City University of New York in *The Times of Israel*. “In reality, anthropologists treat it



International scholars from Israel, NZ, Ireland, & Canada met with the Israeli Consulate General in Montreal.

as a multicomponent concept... Once you start examining these components separately... it becomes a regional story of deep, intertwined roots rather than a colonial morality play.”

First is genetic ancestry. Landmark DNA tests have conclusively traced Jewish ancestry to the ancient Near Eastern populations of Canaan, Israel and Judah, evidencing clear Levantine roots from the region.

As a result, “Jews are indigenous to the land not metaphorically or sentimentally, but biologically and historically,” said Deych, bluntly adding, “the anti-Zionist fantasy that Jews are foreign interlopers or descendants of medieval steppe nomads belongs in the same category as flat-earth cosmology.”

The Proof is in the Stones

There is centuries-old evidence of the connection to Israel, with the word ‘Jerusalem’ being mentioned close to 700 times in the Bible (and not once in the *Quran*).

For those hesitant to view the Bible as evidence of Jewish continuity, conference co-convener Shawn Zelig Aster points to archaeology. Cuneiform tablets from 587–538 BCE use Hebrew—not Babylonian—months for agricultural records, and include distinctly Jewish names such as Ephraim, Nechemiah, and Eliyahu.

“Indigeneity was not something the ancient Israelites took for granted,” said Zelig Aster. “The Jewish people were repeatedly conquered—not conquerors—yet never disappeared.” As a result, claims that Zionism is colonial lose force. “In fact,” he added, “Jewish attachment to the land makes it an anti-imperialist project.”

In order to counter accusations of Israel being a colonial power, it is crucial to unpack what it means to be ‘indigenous’.

Particular insight on this topic was provided by the two aboriginal leaders

in attendance; the Honourable Justice Harry LaForme who is *Anishnabe* from Canada, and Sheree Trotter of Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem who is *Māori* from New Zealand.

“Israelis have many weaving similarities to the indigenous people of Canada,” said LaForme. “They have a distinctive language, culture, traditions, historical link, and the resolve to remain distinctive.” He observed the numerous parallels of peoplehood, oppression, displacement and attachment to ancestral lands...

“The State of Israel [may] have been established in 1948, but the Land of Israel has held a central place in Jewish history and tradition for over 3,000 years.”

Justice LaForme corroborated this finding, “The Jews are the indigenous people of Israel,” ending with, “*Miigwetch* (‘thank you’ in *Anishnabe*)—*ahm Israel chai*.”

Yet when one attends a talk or protest, these claims are often undermined, with the term Zionism and indigeneity being weaponised as a means to discredit Israel.

The continuous efforts to simplify the conflict into a binary of indigenous-settler/colonial; oppressed/oppressor is unable to account for the continuous Jewish presence in the land. Instead, facts are adapted to confirm a narrative of an oppressed Palestinian indigenous people subjugated by white colonial Israeli settlers.

Speakers such as Ori Freiman and Havatzelet Yahel reinforced the need to address the ‘8th front’ in the Israel-Gaza war on campuses and in the public led by social justice warriors disseminating misinformation and catchy chants devoid of historical complexity.

“Israel’s strength has in fact been used as proof against its indigeneity due to not fitting the narrative of being marginalised,” said Yahel.

McMaster University professor Freiman leads a database tracking anti-Zionist rhetoric, which often shifts from supporting Palestinians to questioning Israel’s right to exist.

“There have been efforts to link indigeneity with the Palestinian movement to undermine the Jewish connection to the land,” said Yahel. “Palestinian indigeneity has been carefully shaped in academic and public discourse.” While it gained traction after 7 October, the colonial-state narrative was already established, needing only reinforcement through slogans.

As an Indigenous Person...

An additional concern is when aboriginal people use their own status to justify claims made against Israel, immediately garnering credibility due to their identity. Parallels are often made between the Palestinians and subjugated indigenous peoples. This was exemplified by when Māori leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer gained notoriety through shouting, “Palestine is the last bastion of resistance against global western colonialism. If Palestine is not free, neither are we.”

According to Justice LaForme (*Anishnabe*), those who appropriate Indigenous terms like resistance, occupation, and colonialism spread “false narratives and ideologies of hate.” Such claims not only deny the continuous Jewish presence in the land but are also “anathema to our seven sacred teachings,” including love, wisdom, truth, courage, and respect.

In fact, he argued, “Israel is the world’s most successful decolonisation project.”

Māori academic Trotter from Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem echoed this sentiment. She condemned the bias in the media and the selective understanding of nuance. In her opinion, “They flatten historical complexity, downplaying difference and context, in favour of a simplistic binary.” Rather than actually help the Palestinian situation, “this merely serves to efface the moral agency of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.”

While protesters seek to undermine the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel and claim colonialism, “The Balfour Declaration should be understood not as a statement of British colonial ambition, but [rather] as a recognition of Jewish indigeneity and a commitment to decolonise the land in favour of its original people,” said Deych.

Critical thoughts in a critical time.



Empire and the Jews—Part 2

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

A fashionable narrative is that Zionists acted in league with the British Empire to seize control of Palestine. This, the second of two articles, demonstrates how far the British went to undermine Jewish interests in favour of Arab demands.

During World War II, the British Foreign Office and the US State Department are concerned that any release of thousands of Jews from Europe would divert wartime transport and undermine their policy of placating the Arabs. At the 1943 Anglo-American Bermuda Conference, officials agree that there is no way forward to substantially help the Jews of Europe. The secretary to the British delegation writes “It is time that the idea of a ‘measures of rescue’ ... was shown up as illusory.” Foreign Secretary Eden tells the Cabinet that the Conference is a “marked success.”

Diplomatic officials of the two nations block or slow walk financial and other arrangements to assist Jews in Europe to escape. Frustrated by this, in 1944 Henry Morgenthau Jr, the US Treasury Secretary, comments “When you get through with it, the attitude to date is no different from Hitler’s attitude.”

However, in 1943, Churchill launches a review of the 1939 White Paper by ministers who are favourable towards the Jews. They are opposed by Eden and the Foreign Office. Progress is stalled when Jewish Irgun terrorists assassinate Lord Moyne, a senior British diplomat, in Cairo. No decision is announced before the Labour party forms the post-war government in 1945. Labour’s stated policy is strongly pro-Zionist. Briefings of the new government by diplomatic officials and military leaders insist that cooperation with the Arab states is the ‘cardinal point’ and ‘overriding consideration’ in Middle East policy. Labour abandons its pro-Zionist stance.

With Europe suffering millions of displaced persons, Britain pushes to return Jews to their country of origin. It refuses to allow 100,000 Jewish survivors held in camps in Germany and Austria to migrate to Palestine. London protests to Moscow over the movement to send hundreds of thousands of Jews from Soviet-bloc countries to Palestine. The British suspect a ruse to destabilise Britain’s position in the Middle East. They also pressure Poland and Rumania directly to clamp down on Jewish emigration. In Operation Embarrass, British agents blow up empty ships in Italian ports that could take Jewish refugees to Palestine and set up a false front, ‘The Defenders of Arab Palestine’, to claim responsibility.



British civilians evacuate Palestine via Agir Airfield to Egypt, February 1947. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Finding the Jews and Arabs ‘irreconcilable,’ the British pass the Palestine problem to the United Nations in 1947. Britain’s navy continues to blockade Palestine, even firing on or boarding ships. Over 100,000 Jewish immigrants attempt to enter by sea. 1,600 drown, 50,000 are held by the British in concentration camps in Cyprus; many are turned back, a few thousand succeed. The last 25,000 are only released from Cyprus after Israeli independence. Bitter confrontations between British forces and Jewish insurgents in Palestine lead to mutual executions of prisoners and the bombing of the British HQ in Jerusalem with over 90 deaths.

British politicians and officials are strongly antisemitic. Anthony Eden is Foreign Secretary 1935-38, 1940-45, returning to that post 1951-55 and becoming Prime Minister 1955-57. His private secretary says “Unfortunately [Eden] is immovable on the subject of Palestine. He loves Arabs and hates Jews.” Labour’s Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin (1945-51), makes antisemitic remarks and his ministerial Under-Secretary says “I have no doubt that Bevin detested Jews.” Palestine’s Chief Secretary, Henry Gurney, says the Jews are “becoming more and more Nazi.” Lt. General Evelyn Barker, regional commander (1946-1947), passes military secrets to his Arab mistress and says he loathes the Jews. Lt. General John Glubb leads Jordan’s Arab Legion against Israel in the 1948-1949 war. He refers to “totalitarian Nazi Jews.” Churchill later writes “All our military men disliked the Jews and loved the Arabs.”

Colonial intrigues around the formation of the Jewish state eclipse any spy story. From the 1920s, King Abdullah of Transjordan advocates a

Greater Syria to include Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine under his rule. Britain secretly advocates the creation of a Greater Syria under its own stewardship: securing Britain’s position by putting a halt to Jewish ambitions in Palestine. France and the United States oppose the plans. The Arab League’s High Committee also wants to fold Palestine into a Greater Syria, but minus British or Transjordan rule.

As fighting builds up between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, the British continue to supply weapons to the Arab states claiming they have no reason to suppose that they would find their way to Palestine. Britain’s Mandate ends on 14 May 1948. Responsibility for hospitals, schools, and other local services is transferred to municipal authorities. However, Britain chokes off vital arteries: it freezes personal savings accounts, runs down the government’s funds, shuts the oil refinery, cuts off British shipping, closes the sole commercial airport, and suspends postal services. Britain refuses to help in securing a peaceful transition once its Mandate ends. Behind the scenes, Britain arranges to support its ally Transjordan in seizing the portion of Palestine promised to the Arabs by the UN

In the 1947 UN vote on a Jewish state, Britain abstains and afterwards does the bare minimum to maintain law and order in Palestine. In the face of US President Truman’s support for a Jewish state, British policy by late 1947 accedes to a ‘small’ state. London aims to maximise its position in Transjordan and Egypt—where it has military bases—and retain a land corridor between them through the Negev. The British Foreign Office bans British citizens from joining Jewish forces but allows them to

join Transjordan’s Arab Legion.

A powerful British Arabist group in the Middle East support London’s Imperial goals: push the French out of Syria, keep the Jews down, and pull the Arab nations into the British orbit. The Arabists pursue a tough line: they organise Arab protests against the Zionists, arrange to open up Northern Palestine to armed Arab irregulars, and encourage Arab leaders to attack a Jewish state. Thus Britain has two different Middle Eastern policies of different degrees of hostility to Israel.

The Mandate is to end on 14 May 1948. French intelligence reports that British agents are engaged with Arab leaders over developing invasion plans for 15 May. On that day the armies of five Arab nations invade, stirred on by British intelligence. Civil war turns into the 1948-1949 War of Independence. Jordan’s Arab Legion, led by British General John Glubb, is the most successful of the invaders.

From their bases in Egypt, British forces monitor the movement of Israeli forces in the Negev. When the Israelis shoot down five British Spitfires, the British lack both the will and the resources to respond. London suggests that Israel release Gaza and the Negev as part of a peace deal—preserving British hopes of a land corridor usable by its military. Israel refuses.

Armistice agreements are signed with Israel by Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria in 1949. Article 1 in each begins “With a view to promoting the return of permanent peace in Palestine.” Britain opposes any such peace. From 1948 until 1967 Egypt and Jordan control Gaza and the West Bank respectively; they grant no self-rule to the locals.

Britain retains her hostility toward Israel into the 1950s. A detailed 1955 plan—Operation Cordage—envisages a staged terrorist attack on Israel, provoking an Israeli response against Jordan, and leading to an RAF offensive against Israeli airfields combined with a land attack by Arab armies. The intent is to detach the Negev from Israel, force a rump Israel back into the British Empire, and gain favour in the Arab world. When the Egyptians nationalise the Anglo-French owned Suez Canal in 1956, London promptly changes sides. Britain allies with France and Israel against Egypt in the secret Sèvres Protocol and an abortive invasion of Egypt.

This article draws substantially from Simon Smelt’s book ‘Israel’s Land & People in History & Prophecy’ (the 2nd Edition; 1st edition titled ‘From the River to the Sea: the Land in History & Prophecy.’ The book provides many footnotes.



The Afterlife According to Scripture—Part 2

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Director | Beth Melekh International

This series will look at the use of key nouns and terms and the wealth of information in the meta-narrative of Scripture that clearly establishes both everlasting life and perpetual fire respectively.

The Messiah In The TaNaKh (OT)

Ancient Israelites (Jews) believed in the coming *Messiah* and the physical resurrection until the Judgement, and everlasting life for the righteous in Him. They held these beliefs long before modern Rabbinical Judaism's revisionism, progressive Christianity's deconstructionism, even prior to the first century Jewish Biblical Rabbinical Judaism of *Yeshua's* earthly ministry and most certainly long before the Hellenization (4th Century BCE) of the known world. In fact, they held these beliefs from ancient days.

"And enmity, hatred I will put between you (serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall crush, strike, bruise your head, and you shall strike, bruise his footprint, heel, footstep". Genesis 3:15

One need not be a scholar of the *Ha-Brit Ha-Chadashah (NT)* in order to see the Messianic significance of this passage. The pronoun describing the woman's seed is singular, an individual is being spoken of here. That individual is clearly the *Messiah Yeshua*, who through His death on the cross, crushed the serpent's head of power. Thus as the second Adam (*1 Corinthians 15:45*), *Yeshua* freed humanity from bondage to death. The heel represents *Yeshua's* humanity, His connection to the earth, which, for a short time, was bruised by temporary death.

Isaiah the prophet speaks of the Messianic child saying: *"Therefore, Adonai Himself shall give you a miraculous sign; Behold, (ha-almah) the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name 'Imanu-El (with us God)."* *Isaiah 7:14* [Author's Translation]

How do we know for certain that the Hebrew (*ha-almah*) means the virgin in this passage? We know based on the phrase that precedes it, *"Adonai Himself shall give you a miraculous sign."* A young woman giving birth is not a miraculous sign. To the contrary, it's an expected part of the natural order. On the other hand a virgin giving birth, that's an irrefutable miracle.

We note that *Imanu El* is not the child's name but a description of His nature.

The *Midrash Ha-Ne'elam* sees here the common plight of every Jew in his struggle against the evil inclination *yetzer ha-ra*. The serpent is said to seek to seduce the Jew into trampling on the commandments with his heel, but it is claimed that the Jew can overcome by using his head (the supposed seat of the *Torah*). However, this view at best represents a 2nd century CE polemic against *Messiah*— following Jews and does not reflect the ancient Biblical Jewish view that sees the present text as representing the *Messiah*.

The misinterpretation given in *Midrash Ha-Ne'elam* neglects the fact that we cannot redeem ourselves, not even through *Torah* observance.

It's through the goal of the *Torah (Romans 10:4)*, the true head, *Yeshua* alone, that we are able to resist the serpent and be set free from bondage to death. (*Colossians 2:13-15*)

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Yeshua be with you." *Romans 6:20* [Author's Translation] (*Ref. Galatians 4:4*)



| Photo: Shutterstock

Moses prophesies the coming *Messiah* in approximately 1313 BCE almost 1000 years prior to the Hellenization of the known world (4th Century BCE).

"YHVH (Mercy) The Lord your Elohim (Judge) God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brothers. You are to listen to Him!" Deuteronomy 18:15 [Author's Translation]

Ancient Israelites (Jews) took this promise to heart and awaited the 'Prophet/Messiah' with fearful expectation because *HaShem* had followed Moses' initial words with:

"I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it will be that whoever will not listen to My words, which He speaks in My Name, I will require an accounting of it from that one." *Deuteronomy 18:18-19* [Author's Translation]

Resurrection, Messiah, New Heavens & New Earth In The TaNaKh

Ancient Israelites (Jews) believed in the resurrection and the *Messiah's* place as Mediator based on, but not limited to, passages such as *Job 19:25-27* and *Isaiah 26:19*.

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last day he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh (physical body) I will see God, Whom I will see for myself, and my eyes will behold, and not another. My kidneys (seat of emotion) are consumed within me!" Job 19:25-27 [Author's Translation]

We note that *Job's* Redeemer is God and that He will "stand" on the earth. We further see that this will happen "at the last day" after *Job's* "skin has been destroyed" and yet he says "in my flesh (physical body) I will see God," which is an allusion to the bodily resurrection of the dead.

From this passage and others we also glean the truth that the resurrected, having awaited the final Judgement in *Sheol*, will dwell, not in Heaven but on the earth in transformed, metaphysical bodies.

"Your dead will live; my dead body will arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for your dew is lights, your night mist, and the land/earth will cast forth the dead." *Isaiah 26:19* [Author's Translation]

This is one of the places in Scripture from which the Israelite (Jewish) belief in the resurrection is proved; a belief that predates Hellenistic thought by at least 300 years. This verse is also applied to the times of the

Messiah, and to the resurrection in His days. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin, fol. 90:2, & Ketubot, fol. 111:1; Midrash Kohelet, fol. 62:3*).

"Your dead will live" is an allusion to the resurrection of the righteous and specifically to the resurrection of the righteous of Israel.

"My dead body will arise" is firstly a personal testimony of the prophet himself and secondly the prophetic testimony of the *Messiah*. The first person singular should not be interpreted to refer to multiple people.

"Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust" is a metaphor for the resurrection of the dead. This is a poetic repetition like the couplets of the psalms which seeks to remind the reader that these matters are firmly established.

"For your dew is lights, your night mist:" This is an allusion to the present glory of God in the convergence of the resurrection. The *Shekhinah* or *Kavod HaShem*, is pictured as a mist or dew of lights that raise the dead. Water (dew) and light are pictured together here as the mechanisms for bringing forth the plant that grows from that which had perished. As *Rav Shaul* (Paul the Apostle) says: *"For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."* *1 Corinthians 15:53*

Isaiah also prophesies the New Heavens and New Earth some 700 years before *Messiah's* entry into time and space through the womb of the virgin:

"For behold, I create heavens new and the land/earth new, and not to be recalled (remembered) are the first things (perishable) and nor will they ascend upon My inner being (heart, core being)." *Isaiah 65:17* [Author's Translation]

The New Jerusalem In The TaNaKh

Isaiah the prophet wrote of the New Jerusalem 300 years before the Hellenistic age.

"The Word Who Yeshayahu (Isaiah) ben son of Amotz (Strong) saw concerning Yehudah (Praise, Judah) and Yerushalayim (Flood, downpour of peace, Jerusalem). 2 And it came to pass in the end of the days, that firmly established will be the mountain house of HaShem (YHVH: Mercy) as the head of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and like a beam of light all nations shall flow toward Him (it)." *Isaiah 2:1-2* [Author's Translation].

(*Ref. Isaiah 25:6-8; 10:19-22; Zechariah 2:10-12*)



The Resurrection of Israel in Stages—Part 2

From the Valley of Desolation

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up |
New Zealand

“The valley which was full of bones” Ezekiel 37:1. Israel’s journey has been miraculous from the outset. From Abram, who was promised at 75 years of age that he would become a ‘great nation’ even though he had no heir at the time; from the Hebrews in slavery in Egypt, without power or provision to deliver themselves; from the many times Israel faced annihilation in Scripture only for God to show up and deliver them; to the resurrection of Israel at the end of the age—Israel is a miracle.

The valley of dry bones is a picture of the suffering and desolation visited upon the Jewish people throughout the centuries, culminating in the worst atrocity of them all—the Holocaust. Ezekiel’s valley is where the Jewish people found themselves at the end of the Second World War in 1945. The popular axiom “Out of the ashes of the Holocaust arose the modern state of Israel” is true. The fact that the Jewish people would rise as a nation-state once again after a hiatus of two millennia, and just three years after the fires of extermination had been extinguished, was a miracle.

The greatest miracle in history was the resurrection of Jesus... The second greatest was the resurrection of Israel... in 1948.

There is only one explanation I have for this—God! The God of the Bible who created the Hebrew people, their Kingdom, who initiated their exile and now their return, is behind their miraculous resurrection taking place today. And while some may say “but where was God during the Holocaust?”, I have a few things to say in brief in God’s defence.

God was in the prophetic voices of Zionist leaders being heard across Europe, well known voices like Zeev Jabotinsky who said in September 1938, one year before the outbreak of war—“See the volcano which has started to spew out the fire of extermination. I see a terrible sight. Time is short, but it is still possible to be saved... if you believe me, then listen to my eleventh-hour cry. In the name of God, let each and every one save his soul while he still can.” (Woodley 34).

God was in the hearts of praying intercessors who were crying out to Him day and night during the war years for the deliverance of the Jewish people



Israeli Air Force jets flying over the ruins of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp in 2003. | Photo: IDF

and the defeat of Nazism. They were intercessors like those at the Bible College of Wales under the leadership of their Director Rees Howells, whose Bible College and prayer centre were in Swansea, and written about in Norman Grubb’s Rees Howells Intercessor.

God was in the liberating Armies who paid a high price in their own blood to ensure the defeat of Hitler and the

liberation of the remnant of Israel.

God was also in His covenant with the Israelites as stated of the Hebrews who would come out of Egypt and of the Jewish survivors who would come back to their homeland: Here in *Exodus 2:24,25* “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” And here in *Isaiah 14:1* “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land”.

Even in the valley of desolation, God the Saviour was still at work to rescue his people.

And God was also in His Holy Scriptures, making known ahead of time what would later take place, serving as a witness and as a warning. In each of the following prophetic ‘shadows’ of the Holocaust we see the promise of the sunrise after a night of darkness.

In *Hosea 2:15* He promised to turn the Valley of Trouble into a Door of Hope:

“There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope (Tikvah)”, and so they came out of the valley singing *Hatikvah*—Israel’s modern national anthem.

They would pass through the Sea of Trouble, but the surging sea would be subdued as stated in *Zechariah 10:9-11*: “Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return. I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them. They will pass through the sea of trouble; the surging sea will be subdued...”

It took six years to subdue the surging sea of the Second World War. As Israel passed through the Red Sea at the beginning of her national journey toward Canaan, so she would pass through the Sea of Trouble as she set out for Zion in the last days.

Whilst respecting other opinions, I am not the only minister who believes that the Time of Jacob’s Trouble referred to in Jeremiah chapter thirty is a reference to the Holocaust. Jeremiah’s Time of Trouble for Jacob would then be followed by Israel’s independence as stated in *Jeremiah 30:7-8 NIV*: “How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. ‘In that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them’.”

In World War Two Europe, the Jewish people would suffer an exile within an exile. Already away from their ancient

homeland, the Nazi regime deported them from their host countries and resettled them in ghettos, concentration and labour camps, in preparation for their final journey to the gas chambers and execution sites. Ezekiel called it “a day of clouds and darkness”. But the clouds would disperse as the promise of resettlement in their own land would shine through. From *Ezekiel 34:12-13 NIV*: “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land”.

The Lord promised Israel that he would be with them through this difficult end-time trial. He said in *Isaiah* that he would be with them when they went through the water and the fire (*Isaiah 43:2*). On a national level, and by the grace of God, they overcame the valley of dry bones, the valley of trouble, the sea of trouble, the time of trouble, and the cloudy and dark day.

The greatest miracle in history was the resurrection of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. The second greatest was the resurrection of Israel as a nation state in 1948. Who would have thought that after Hitler’s attempt to kill the Jews of the European continent, some nine million in total of which six million were exterminated, that just three years after those fires of extermination had been extinguished, the Star of David would be flying among the community of nations?

The battle for Israel to arise from the valley of dry bones was intense. The battle for Israel to survive beyond the valley is still intense. These are the birth pangs of the kingdom of God. The kingdom that is about to be manifest not just spiritually, as in the present time, but also physically in power. Beyond the valley we see five positive phases unfolding in the national resurrection of Israel. These five phases we will look at in subsequent publications.

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Jewish Life—France

■ Joanna Moss

In the series introduction, the chart showed Jewish life blooming in Russia and Eastern Europe 1825-1939. The main exodus headed west to the USA primarily, but also to the UK and Western Europe. Today, approximately 90% of Jews live in either Israel or North America. France is thus part of the other 10% and remains the heart of European Jewry. Sadly European Jewry is diminishing in significance. France has the third highest Jewish population in the world. Like others, it has experienced waves that have shaped its identity.

Overview

Jews have lived in France since early times. In the 13th and 14th centuries the community was centred on Avignon in the south. They faced periods of expulsion and reintegration. On the French Revolution eve, 40,000 Jews lived in France. Most were *Ashkenazi* (84%) and spoke *Yiddish*, living in Paris and Alsace-Lorraine on the German border. The other 16% were *Sephardic* Jews centred on Avignon. The Enlightenment had a profound effect upon European Jewry and societal attitudes to Jews. France was the first country to emancipate them, during the French Revolution (1789-99). Antisemitism has plagued French Jewry throughout its history. The historic and current size of around 480,000 - 550,000 depending upon definition, provides a solid core to Jewish life, but always less than 1% population. They tend to be well-educated, highly-skilled and relatively wealthy.

Waves

In the early 1900's France became an attractive place for Eastern European Jewry. Its freedom, high culture, intellectual and artistic communities drew inquiring Jews. They were an accepted part of society. On the eve of WW2, there were two communities—established French Jewry and recent arrivals from Eastern Europe numbering about 300,000 in total. The Nazis arrived in June 1940 and Jews began being rounded up and deported. Recent arrivals had less protection than established French citizens. About 70,000 died in the Holocaust.

After the Holocaust some Jews left France for the safety of UK, America and Canada. However, from 1945-48 around 80,000 Jews arrived from Central and Eastern Europe fleeing the DP camps and communism, yet wanting to remain in Europe.

In 1950's-1960's, once France withdrew from North Africa, 300,000 mainly *Sephardic* Jews were able to enter France by virtue of a governmental ordinance granting them French citizenship. The



Historically, the Marais is Paris' Jewish quarter. Today many Jews have moved to the 17th arrondissement and Neuilly. | Photo: Shutterstock

community was profoundly changed as a result.

Ethos

France's motto: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, and *Laïcité* (state secularism) lie behind a strong sense that Jews are French first and Jewish very much second. Given their longevity and status, Jews are seen as an integral part of France, rather than as a minority community per se. Without visible signs, they are indistinguishable from the majority French community.

Make-up Today

Today 60% of French Jews are *Sephardic*. Only 7% are *Haredi* and 5% Conservative or Reform. Most religious Jews are Modern Orthodox. French Jews are primarily urban dwellers with Parisienne Jews dominating (350,000), Marseille 70,000, Lyon 25,000, Toulouse 23,000, Nice 20,000 and Strasbourg 16,000. Overall, there are about 230 communities providing a rich tapestry of Jewish life. Interestingly, only about 40% of Jews are affiliated with a synagogue in line with the secular nature of France. Two contradictory trends are evident—on the one hand assimilation is an ongoing feature, yet religious revival is also found among some Jews seeking identity and belonging.

Governing Bodies

The Representative Council of French Jewry (CRIF) is the official body of French Jewry liaising with the government. Religiously, there are separate bodies based on the type of religious practice and a Chief Rabbinate as community spokesman. Jewish Social Funds (FSJU) funds the Jewish community based on needs. There are many Zionist bodies and youth movements.

Key Personalities

Rashi wrote his famous bible commentary in France in the 11th century. Dreyfus was a Jewish French army officer famous for

the Dreyfus trial (1896-1904) that spurred Zionism questioning *égalité* and French Jewry's future. Painters such as Chagall, Modigliani and Soutine are a source of Jewish and French pride. Léon Blum was the first elected Jewish Prime Minister in the world in 1936.

Education

Jewish education begins in dedicated kindergartens all the way to university and religious seminaries, covering about 35-40% school students. There are only 20 Parisienne Jewish day schools, so most Jews attend Catholic/private or public high schools. Historically, this was not a problem. However, with increasing antisemitism, it is. Without safe schooling, many parents reconsider their future in France. Most French universities offer courses in Jewish studies including *Yiddish*, *Hebrew* and *Ladino* (historic language of *Sephardic* Jews) reflecting communal history and the place of Jewish scholarship. Rabbinical seminaries train students for the wider French-speaking world.

Culture

Given the rich, cultural French history, unsurprisingly there are dedicated Jewish cultural institutions. Several Jewish libraries are located in Paris such as the Medem Library that houses the largest *Yiddish* collection in Europe. The Centre de Documentation de Juive Contemporaine provides an important resource for French Jewry. Such is the important role played by Jewish artists, there's a Museum of Jewish Art and the Cluny Museum hosts a major collection. The Holocaust is represented in the monument to the unknown Jewish Martyr and a French centre for Holocaust documentation. Amazingly, there are more than 250 *kosher* restaurants in Paris alone!

Annually, France hosts a Jewish Book Week, Jewish Music week, seminars and

symposiums. Jewish dance and theatre companies are active as well as Jews forming an integral part in major French cultural organisations. There are two weekly Jewish newspapers, monthly journals and longstanding, dedicated television and radio programmes.

Antisemitism & Aliyah

Antisemitism has been a feature of French life. Historically, as a Catholic country, it was religiously-based, Jews were Christ-killers. Then it became ethnically-based and more recently it is centred on ethnicity and Israel.

Antisemitic events are now frequent leading to Jews congregating in Jewish enclaves or leaving France altogether. Many French Jews don't see a future for their children. Jewish schools are heavily fortified. One in five French Jews have removed *mezuzah* from their doors and many refuse to wear things that will identify themselves as Jews in public. Sadly, attacks have been brutal and fatal.

Staged emigration is a distinct feature of the French exodus. It often begins with young adults serving in the IDF (seed), sometimes with parents buying property in Israel for *Shabbat* leave. The aim is to improve Hebrew and build connections within Israeli society. Upon army service completion, they don't generally return to France unless for study. Many make *Aliyah* formally. Job searches begin in Israel with a view to staying. Next parents begin by spending holidays in Israel with their resident children and improve their Hebrew (acclimatisation). Grandparents are brought to Israel for holidays to try living there. Often staying in French areas e.g. Netanya, to minimise the language and cultural shock (testing). Finally, mother moves to Israel permanently whilst many fathers remain in France managing the business that funds the Israeli family lifestyle, and commutes. Fathers work from Israel where possible aiming to reduce return trips (establishment). Concurrently, the French family home may be sold or downsized now the children have left home. Opportunities to sever ties with France include retirement, Israeli professional registration, a business sale or an Israeli business purchase. Grandparents may be the last foothold in France. It all hinges upon earning enough to stay in Israel.

French Jews face rising harassment and uncertain safety. As confidence fades and institutions weaken, many are leaving for the UK, Canada and the USA too. Increasing Hebrew language courses and French apartment purchases in Israel, are major indicators of a forthcoming exodus. Since 1972, approximately 115,000 arrived in Israel, 40% in the last 10 years, mostly ex-North African families.



Aliyah and Emigration

Joanna Moss

That's right—*Aliyah* and emigration, not immigration. What made 2024 and 2025 year's data so significant was that more Israelis left than arrived. That statistic had only previously occurred in the 1950s and 1980s and has sparked disquiet in Israel. That wasn't the only bad news. Population growth in Israel slowed to its lowest level ever (1%) with falling birthrates across most categories, ageing populations raising the death rate and negative immigration. The days of high births and low deaths are numbered. Migration will be a key determining factor.

Numbers making *Aliyah* have been subdued since COVID. For a time after COVID significant numbers of Israelis returned to serve in the war. That has now dried up. Others left when reserve duty or the war became too much. But it was the scale of numbers leaving that has shocked Israel—82,700 in 2024 and 69,000 in 2025. Emigrants are only counted after they have been away for more than a year. There has always been a trickle, resulting in a significant number in the Israeli diaspora; including about a million in the USA alone. Traditionally, Israelis sought better work opportunities and different lifestyles abroad. This time it's different. Israeli-born are moving to Cyprus, Germany and South East Asia with direct flights to Israel alongside traditional destinations like USA. Reasons for leaving cited have been: wanting a life free from war, seeing no future in Israel including the burgeoning burden of *Haredim* and societal divisions, and then, recognising



San Francisco is a magnet for High Tech Israelis. | Photo: Shutterstock

that, with Israel's increasing isolation and BDS-style discrimination, high-tech ventures and global careers are better pursued offshore. The numbers of offshore listings on foreign stock markets bear these numbers out. This is of particular concern for Israel generally and for tax revenues especially, as these emigrants are the rain-makers. For them, their Israeli passports are their insurance policies.

The decision to emigrate is never taken lightly. Two years of war followed by a period of 'ceasefire' plus the *High Holy Days* provided reflection time for Israelis, as did the looming threat of another war with Iran. There would have been a lot of weighing up of various factors as well as 'pull factors' in job opportunities for sought-after highly skilled Israelis across the globe. Interestingly, many who left were foreign-born. These are often non-Jews

who came in under the Law of Return. Naturally, the exodus from Russia has slowed to a trickle.

Antisemitism

European, British, American, Canadian and Australian antisemitism has gone through the roof. The French have taken a pragmatic approach over the last decades with staged immigration. Given comments like, European Jewry is finished, it is possible that some communities will need to be rescued. For many diaspora Jews, the big issues are community security and future prospects; including whether the local police will protect them or not. British Jews are feeling under siege and some are finding their neighbours and friends leaving. American Jews are asking themselves about their future safety and whether their children can go to college (university). If you can't send your child to school safely, you have to do

something. The safety factor and low cost of an Israeli education are enticing. Some Jews are taking trips to investigate. American religious Zionists are an obvious group who will want to come to Israel. It's both push and pull factors.

Conclusion

It is anyone's guess what Israel's population will be in a year's time as there are so many uncertainties. Israel could bleed people desperate for an alternative life. Talented people could be poached, such as the global demand for health professionals, although Israel is running a global recruitment initiative. Medical specialists earn far more in English-speaking countries.

Alternatively, there could be a flood of Jews making *Aliyah* necessitating prefabs or a tent city as it was with the MENA Jews in the 1950s. Wealthy diaspora Jews are being encouraged to purchase an apartment as an insurance policy. The flood of new housing across Israel has certainly helped with expanding the population, but the cost of housing remains high. Israel is a country for the rich some say.

Working remotely now offers more opportunities for talented people wishing to relocate to Israel, especially those mono-English speakers. But the high cost of living and lack of Hebrew skills remain significant barriers to many contemplating a move to Eretz Israel, especially low-middle income Jews. Commentators like Hillel Fuld remind Jews about Holocaust lessons—that it's better to leave now with something, than be stuck like the German Jews with nothing, fleeing for their lives. Time will tell.

The ANZAC Legend—An Authentic Relationship

Barry Rodgers OAM

President of Beersheba Vision Inc.

Beersheba Vision, led by Barry Rodgers OAM, partnered with Vision Christian Radio to place a monument in the ANZAC Memorial Garden at Kinneret Academic College on the shores of the Galilee. The project was inspired by Australian historian Kelvin Crombie, who highlighted its historical significance. Designed by renowned *Light Horse* artist Jennifer Marshall, the statue—titled *No Greater Love*—depicts an Aboriginal trooper tending the grave of a fallen comrade from the Battle of Semakh, where Australian and New Zealand soldiers, including Aboriginal troopers, served. Kinneret Vice CEO Ziv Ophir worked tirelessly to bring this tribute to life and recently shared a heartfelt letter with his 'dear Australian and New Zealand friends,' reflecting the gratitude of those in Israel.

"For over a week, Israel has been engaged in a complex campaign against Iran and the extremist forces that

have threatened not only Israel but the wider Middle East and free world for decades. This is a defence of its citizens and an act of solidarity with democratic nations. In recent days, my family and I have repeatedly rushed to shelters as sirens sound, day and night. A heavy silence now rests over a place usually filled with life and learning. Yesterday morning, just before another siren, I stood at the Semakh Railway Station. The grounds were empty. At the Australian and New Zealand Cavalry Memorial Garden, before the statue and the eucalyptus trees, I was struck by how history echoes across generations—and how vital it is to remember." More than a hundred years ago, as today, soldiers set out from distant shores to defend the values of the free world, placing their lives on the line for something greater than themselves. Standing there yesterday, I felt that truth more powerfully than ever before.

The Australian Light Horse Memorial Garden here is more than a monument. It is a quiet and enduring testament to the bonds between our two nations, and to

the shared memory we are privileged to carry together. I am deeply committed to honouring and preserving that memory, now more than ever.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for taking the time to read these words."

Abridged by Managing Editor



ANZAC Solidarity group at Semach Light Horse memorial, Galilee.



In and Out of Shelters

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President | CFOIC Heartland

More than two years ago, I began this regular column as a way to communicate to you the experiences of the terrible war that began on 7 October 2023. I would never have dreamt then that we would still be enmeshed in that same war today. The first nine months were catastrophic. The focus was on Gaza and the need to destroy Hamas and release our hostages. At some point, the fighting became less intense but persisted nevertheless until the final hostages, both alive and the remains of those who had died, were returned to Israel. But Hamas is still alive in Gaza, albeit weakened, and Israel remains in control of about half of the Gaza Strip, which requires ongoing vigilance and frequent fighting.

During this time, we experienced several rounds of fighting with Hezbollah in the north, including the amazing pager attack and ultimately, the removal of Hezbollah leader, Hasan Nasrallah. Despite the cease-fire that took effect in Southern Lebanon, the IDF retained a strategic presence in the area and continued to fight against Hezbollah and destroy their weapons caches as the opportunity arose. We were told that the threat from the north had been largely neutralised and the tens of thousands of residents of Kiryat Shmona and the smaller northern communities who had been evacuated in October 2023, were able to return home and rebuild their lives.

Iran attacked Israel with missile barrages several times during that period, including ongoing attacks from the Houthis in Yemen. In June of last year, there was all-out war with Iran, as we attempted to destroy their ballistic missile and nuclear capabilities. The US joined the effort and destroyed two vital nuclear sites, but shortly thereafter, they forced Israel to halt the fighting, leaving Iran's ballistic missile capability largely intact. Since then, Iran doubled down on their ballistic missile production and initiated steps to restart their nuclear programme.

On Saturday 28 February, the US and Israel jointly attacked Iran, taking out their top leadership and launching Operation Lion's Roar/Epic Fury to completely destroy Iran's military capability and enable regime change. Shortly afterward, Hezbollah launched missile attacks against Northern Israel. So here we are again, engaged in major warfare with Iran and their proxy terrorist group Hezbollah. The entire country has been running to bomb shelters for weeks and the people of



Yonatan and Libi were married days before the war, then drafted to separate bases in the north.

Northern Israel are practically living in bomb shelters because they have no advance warning of an attack. And although the circumstances change from month to month, we are still at war and life is not really normal.

I had gone to the US in February for a series of meetings and lectures to promote the work of CFOIC Heartland and to educate Christian audiences about Israel, about the war and about life in Judea and Samaria. While there, war talk coming out of Israel became far more serious than before and I made the decision to return to Israel earlier than scheduled. It was a wise decision.

Just before the war broke out, my nephew Yonatan got married (*photo above*). His older brother Amichai had fallen in this war just two years ago, in January 2024. The wedding was an amazing celebration of life after tragedy; even as we remembered Amichai and his terrible sacrifice, we celebrated the new family that was being created—life goes on. On the *Shabbat* following the wedding, the entire family of both bride and groom gathered together in Karnei Shomron to celebrate the new couple. As is the custom, we enjoyed large family meals together, with singing, blessings and Bible teaching. Friday night went without a hitch.

On Saturday morning, the first siren went off just after 8am. When we received the all-clear, we went to the synagogue as usual—we were not updated on exactly what was going on other than the fact that Israel had attacked Iran. The *Torah* reading that day included a special segment dedicated to the holiday of *Purim* which would fall just a few days later. We read *Deuteronomy 25:17-19* which reminds us of Amalek's attack against the Israelites

as they left Egypt, an attack that represents for us the evil of antisemitism as it has harmed us throughout the ages. Haman is associated with Amalek; hence, the custom to read these verses on the *Shabbat* preceding *Purim*, the day we celebrate our salvation from the wicked Haman of Persia some 2,500 years ago.

As the siren rang out and we rushed downstairs to the shelter of the synagogue, we kept repeating to ourselves the words from the end of *Deuteronomy 25*—destroy Amalek! Indeed, we believe that we are engaged in the battle against Amalek today in the form of modern-day Persia (Iran), even as our ancestors fought against Haman and ancient Persia. And then as now, we await God's salvation. As we read the Book of Esther on *Purim*, we felt as if we were reading current events—once again, we are threatened with annihilation by Persia and once again we fight and defeat our enemies with God's help.

During the coming days, we continued to run to the shelters, sometimes eight times a day, sometimes less and during the night as well. But spirits remained high throughout. In fact, as we gathered at night in our community shelter, pajamas and all, we were a bit groggy but settled into comfortable chats with our neighbours as if it were afternoon tea-time. Our shelter reflects our neighbourhood, mostly retirees with the occasional family with teen-age children. But in neighbourhoods comprised mostly of young families, there is singing and dancing, colouring and puzzles and other child-oriented activities to keep the children busy and happy.

In the meantime, my newly-married

nephew and his beautiful bride were both drafted into emergency reserve duty just days after their wedding. Thankfully they were both stationed in the north and, although at separate bases, they are able to see each other from time to time. But I am overwhelmed with gratitude to these two young people and others like them, who time and time again put their personal lives on hold to run to the defence of our people.

As I write this article, I have no idea when and how this battle will end. In Israel, we are unified in our determination to fight this war to the end. We cannot tolerate countries with both the capability and the determination to destroy us. We are patient as we sit in our bomb shelters, night and day, as our schools are closed and so many businesses remain paralysed. It is all worth it if we can rid ourselves of this terrible enemy and its proxies once and for all. We can no longer tolerate the threat of ballistic missiles from Iran, Iraq and Yemen firing at us at the whim of evil dictators. We will no longer sit tight while terrorist organisations like Hamas and Hezbollah and their patron states, Lebanon and Iran, rain terror upon us in the form of missiles and guerrilla warfare. Our people deserve a normal life and we are determined to return to normalcy.

Israel has shown itself in these recent years to be a regional power. The IDF is a full partner with the US in the battle against Iran, which is crazy when you think about it. Israel is smaller than the smallest state in the US and yet we have developed the technology and intelligence that is helping major superpowers defend themselves. God promised Abraham some 4,000 years ago that "*Through you all the Nations of the World will be blessed*" and today we are seeing that promise being fulfilled. But Israel can bless the world with far more than military know-how. We have become world leaders in technology, medicine and science. But the greatest blessing we have ever shared with the world is the knowledge of God. We hope and pray that peace will come to our region which will enable Israel to share with the world the many blessings that God has bestowed upon us. For the good of all humanity!

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).



Ukraine—Four Years of War

The Work Continues

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

24 February marked the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the Ukraine team at Christians for Israel is working tirelessly to help Jewish communities in many ways. Here is a brief status report.

When Koen Carlier, head of our Ukraine ministry, was practically forcing supplies of mattresses and food on Jewish communities at the end of 2021, no one could have imagined that four years later, this Eastern European country on Europe's doorstep would still be burning and bleeding.

No one could have imagined that 30 years after the end of the Cold War, Russia would continue a war on Ukrainian territory that has already lasted longer for the population than the German occupation during World War II. The US Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates a total of 1.8 million casualties, including up to 140,000 dead on the Ukrainian side and 350,000 on the Russian side. Russia has not been able to break the will for freedom of the country, which has been independent for 35 years, and Ukraine, for its part, has not been able to repel the Russian occupation.

In the spring of 2022, the Russian front closed in like a crescent moon around the eastern half of Ukraine—from the shared border with Belarus in the north to the Black Sea in the south. After the planned blitzkrieg failed, the hell of the front line in the east solidified along the separatist districts of Luhansk and Donetsk. With the (re)opening of a second front in the north in the spring of 2024 and increasing attacks on cities along the Black Sea, Ukraine is once again surrounded by a pincer-like siege ring. It is no longer possible to travel north, south, or, for a long time now, east.

However, a drone or missile attack can hit any place at any time. When a guided drone enters Ukrainian airspace, it can take hours before it strikes or is neutralised. That is why in some places there are days when the air raid sirens hardly ever stop. And no one seeks safety anymore, because life must go on somehow.

What is new this winter is the now devastating state of the energy infrastructure, which is being attacked with increasing frequency—a key strategy in this war of attrition. While power outages were still a surprise in

the early years of the war, and the country was able to compensate for the outages after targeted Russian attacks with other power plants, days with only one or two hours of electricity are no longer an exception, even in the interior of the country. As soon as the lights come on, people rush to the power outlets to charge their cell phones and power banks and quickly cook something.

What was also unforeseeable four years ago is that we are still able to carry out our work in Ukraine; that our brave staff on the ground are still there, standing by the Jewish people wherever they need help and comfort. After the chaotic first months of the war, when all resources were being used to evacuate refugees, it became clear that all the aid provided so far would continue to be needed. The children of war from back then do not want to or cannot leave again now that they are elderly, and families often cannot bring themselves to part with their husbands, who are conscripted into military service and are not allowed to leave the country.

More than 10,000 hot meals are served each month in over 20 soup kitchens. The team, together with local helpers, packs an average of 2,000 food parcels per month. Ukrainian Jews are driven to consulate appointments and finally to the airport in Chisinau on the day of their departure—every week. And the survivors of the Holocaust are visited in their loneliness and given gifts. Alina made 700 visits last year to the Jewish seniors in our sponsorship programme.

Now the war has once again entered a critical phase. Targeted attacks on the remaining power plants have brought the country closer and closer to the brink of collapse, with double-digit sub-zero temperatures lasting for several weeks. It is the coldest winter since the war began. The fact that the mayor of Kiev called on the millions of inhabitants of this metropolis to leave the city was unprecedented. More than half a million people have left the city, and one million households in Kyiv are without electricity. No electricity also means no water. The frost has caused irreparable damage. How long will the country, will our team, be able to hold out?

“What keeps us going is the knowledge that we are not alone,” says Koen Carlier. “The prayers of our friends on the home front keep us going.”



In the early weeks of the war, many Ukrainian Jews fled to Israel in a mass exodus. Since then, our team has been taking individual families to the airport each week. For the elderly, starting again elsewhere is daunting, and men aged 18–60 have not been allowed to leave for four years. For those able to travel, the decision is difficult—but once made, our team provides practical help and loving encouragement. | Photos: C4I International



MEALS ON WHEELS—For many elderly in Jewish communities, a daily hot meal is no longer guaranteed. Widows and widowers often struggle alone, with pensions too small to cover food, medication, and heating. Many live in upper floors without lifts, making even basic tasks difficult, and support for families with disabilities is limited. C4I runs over 20 soup kitchens across Ukraine, providing around 10,000 kosher meals each month, prepared with care.



YOUTH ALIYAH—Through the Na'aleh and Selah programmes run by the Israeli Jewish Agency, Jewish teenagers can complete their final school years or further studies in Israel without their parents, supported throughout. At that age, they quickly learn the language and integrate; many remain, with families often joining later. In September 2025, Christians for Israel once again funded a flight for Jewish youth.



FOOD PACKAGES—Volunteers pack around 2,000 food parcels each month to support elderly Jewish community members amid ongoing hardship.

Biblical Prophecy, Iran, and Israel:

Interpreting Ancient Texts in a Modern Context

■ Leon Meijer

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

The conflict between Iran and Israel is a struggle of all ages. What does the Bible say about Iran and Israel? I discussed this recently with Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer, President of Christians for Israel International.

Glashouwer's central argument is that the Bible contains many references to ancient nations—particularly Persia and Elam—that correspond geographically to present-day Iran. These texts provide insight into the spiritual and historical dynamics shaping the Middle East today.

The conflict between Israel and Iran cannot be understood solely as a modern political issue. Instead, it has deep historical and biblical roots. In the Bible, the region now known as Iran was called Persia or sometimes Elam, both of which appear in prophetic passages. These ancient kingdoms played important roles in biblical history, and their presence in prophecy suggests they might relate to modern events.

Persia's relationship with Israel in the Bible is not entirely negative. One of the most famous examples is the Persian king Cyrus the Great, who allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon and rebuild the temple. This historical episode shows that Persia was at times supportive of the Jewish people. Therefore, biblical references to Persia should not automatically be interpreted as hostility toward Israel.

Despite this historical cooperation, Glashouwer notes that some prophetic passages suggest that Persia—or regions associated with it—may play a role in conflicts involving Israel. One of the most significant examples he discusses is found in the book of *Ezekiel*, particularly chapters 38 and 39. In this prophecy, a coalition of nations gathers against Israel under the leadership of a figure known as Gog from the land of Magog. Among the nations listed as part of this alliance is Persia.

This reference to Persia may correspond to modern Iran. Glashouwer suggests that current tensions between Iran and Israel could potentially align with the broader pattern described in Ezekiel's prophecy. Nevertheless, he stresses that the exact details and timing of such events remain uncertain. Prophetic texts often contain symbolic language and should not be treated as precise predictions of contemporary



| Photo: Canva AI

political developments.

The book of Jeremiah also includes a prophecy concerning Elam. Historically, Elam was located in what is now southwestern Iran. In Jeremiah's prophecy, Elam experiences judgment and upheaval, followed by a promise of restoration. Glashouwer suggests that this passage might indicate a period of significant change or turmoil affecting that region. Yet he also cautions that the prophecy may have had an earlier historical fulfillment and therefore should not be interpreted too narrowly.

In addition to political and historical analysis, Glashouwer emphasises that the Bible speaks about the spiritual conflict behind world events. For example, the book of Daniel refers to the mysterious figure described as the 'prince of Persia.' In Daniel's vision, this spiritual being opposes a messenger from God for twenty-one days. Many theologians interpret this passage as an example of spiritual forces influencing earthly kingdoms.

For Glashouwer, this idea helps explain why conflicts surrounding Israel seem to recur throughout history. He argues that the struggle involving Israel is not merely geopolitical but also spiritual in nature. In his view, the biblical narrative portrays Israel as central to God's plan for humanity, which means that the nation often becomes the focus of global tension and opposition.

The discussion also touches on the significance of modern Israel's existence. Glashouwer notes that the re-establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 is widely viewed by many Christians as the fulfillment of biblical promises about the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral land. This restoration, he suggests, has renewed interest in prophetic passages that mention Israel and the surrounding nations.

Nevertheless, Glashouwer warns against using prophecy as a tool for predicting exact political events. Instead, he encourages viewers to approach biblical prophecy with humility and careful interpretation. Prophetic literature often contains symbolic imagery and complex historical references, which makes it difficult to draw direct connections between ancient texts and modern geopolitical situations.

In the final part of the interview, Glashouwer shifts the focus from conflict to hope. While many prophetic passages describe wars and turmoil, they ultimately point toward a future in which God restores peace and justice. According to Christian theology, the culmination of biblical prophecy involves the coming of the *Messiah* and the establishment of God's kingdom. Studying prophecy should inspire faith and reflection rather than speculation or fear. The purpose of prophecy, Glashouwer argues, is not simply to predict political developments but to remind believers that history ultimately unfolds according to God's plan.

The Sermon

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

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major discourses given by Jesus in the Gospel of *Matthew* (chapters 5 to 7). In it, Jesus explains the constitution of the Kingdom. As a teacher, He was sitting on the mountain teaching His disciples, while the people who had flocked from all over the country (see *Matthew 4:25*) remained at the foot of the mountain. This is reminiscent of the time when Moses received the *Torah* on the mountain and taught it to the elders of the people, who waited at the foot of the mountain.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with eight 'beatitudes'. Actually, there are nine, but in the last one the disciples are addressed directly, while the first eight are stated in general terms, in the third person.

By contrast, the Beatitudes as recorded in Luke, are all direct statements. Luke mentions four Beatitudes (*Luke 6:20-22*) at the beginning of a speech that he situates on a 'level place' (*verse 17*) and is therefore called the 'Sermon on the Plain'. Three of these correspond to the Beatitudes in Matthew. One ("*blessed are you who weep now*") is different. This brings the total number of Beatitudes to ten—a beautiful biblical number. God spoke Ten Words on Sinai and at creation.

What does 'blessed' actually mean? There are

various Hebrew words that could be the basis for the Greek word '*makarios*'. The most obvious is the word *ashrei*, which we know e.g. from *Psalms 1*, which sings the praises of those who walk in the way of God's commandments. Then you will prosper: "*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ... but finds pleasure in the law of the Lord.*" That is to say, those who gladly do God's law, think about it, and fill their lives with it. Then you will prosper. You could almost say that circumstances do not matter. You feel good about it.

Ashrei is related to the Hebrew word *osher*, which means happiness. So, 'blessed' actually means 'happy'—ten times happy, if we take all the beatitudes together. We hope to reflect on this in the coming series.

The Mystery of Israel and the Gentiles

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” Romans 11:25-27.

In the Old Testament the word ‘mystery’ (ἔκρημα—μυστήριον/mysterion) appears only in the Book of Daniel. The meaning of the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar are a mystery, which “the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers” of the Babylonian King are unable to decipher (Daniel 2:27). Daniel and his trusted companions ask the ‘God of Heaven,’ and He reveals to Daniel the meaning of the dream, the mystery, ‘in a night vision’ (2:18-19). During the course of the story the King realises: “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery” (Daniel 2:47 ESV).

Every ‘mystery’ in a biblical sense requires an interpretation. A human being is not able to explain a mystery by himself. No person, solely on the basis of his own experience or logical thought, can understand a mystery. In order to understand a mystery, a direct word from God, a divine revelation (ἀποκάλυψις/apokalypsis), is necessary. Thus, in the Book of Daniel, God is simply referred to as the One who ‘reveals secrets’ (2:29,47).

In the New Testament, the use of parables and symbols is also referred to as a ‘mystery’ (μυστήριον/mysterion). Thus, Jesus speaks to his disciples ‘in parables,’ for it is given to them ‘to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.’ Paul calls what the Bible says about marriage a ‘mystery’ and interprets them as a parable for the relationship between Messiah and his body (Ephesians 5:31-32). In Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, several ‘mysteries’, that is, images or symbols, are explained to the seer John (Revelation 1:20; 17:5,7).

But here, in Romans 11:25, the Apostle Paul employs neither a comparison nor an image when conveying a ‘μυστήριον/mysterion’ to his Gentile Christian readers in Rome. Rather, he refers to the second chapter of his first Letter to the Corinthians. There he speaks of “God’s wisdom hidden in a mystery, which the [one, true] God decreed before the ages for our glory” (verse 7).



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In Colossians 2:2-3, Paul calls the Messiah Jesus, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”, the “mystery of the (one and living) God”. He explains this ‘mystery of godliness’ in more detail to his disciple Timothy: “He was revealed in flesh, justified in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16).

In Ephesians, Paul calls God’s plan “to unite everything in the Messiah as head, both, what is in heaven and what is on earth” the “mystery of his will” (Ephesians 1:9-10; compare also Ephesians 3:8-10). In chapter three he explains the “mystery of Messiah” (verse 4) “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (verse 5): “The Gentile nations are co-heirs with Israel and part of the body of Christ. They are partakers of the promise in Messiah Yeshua through the gospel” (verse 6).

To the Colossian Church, Paul goes into raptures about the “wealth of the glory of this mystery” that Messiah is now no longer merely to be sought in Israel, but also found “among the Gentiles”: “Messiah in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25-27). At the end of Romans, Paul focuses on “the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for eternal times, which has been, however, disclosed now through prophetic writings according to the command of the eternal God”. This mystery is “to make known the obedience of faith among all the Gentile nations” (Romans 16:25-26; 1:5-6).

Paul also talks about the μυστήριον/mysterion) that, “not all of us shall fall asleep, but all of us will be transformed, suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, at the time of the last trumpet.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Finally, this word is also used in the context of the person of lawlessness, whom the Lord Jesus will “consume with the spirit (breath) of his mouth” (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). In our current context in Romans 11:25, the Apostle describes God’s action with regard to Israel as a ‘mystery’.

“It is a fact that of all the writers of the New Testament, only the Apostle Paul writes of the great and extensive mysteries of God” (Schacke, 255). The Apostle admonishes the deacons of the Church to “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Timothy 3:9). He refers to himself as a “servant and steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1) and asks for intercession “that the word may be given to me when I open my mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel boldly” (Ephesians 6:18-19). At the same time he is aware of the fact that it is “the mystery of Messiah for which I am also in bonds” (Colossians 4:3).

To the prophet Daniel the knowledge of the mysteries of God was one step in his remarkable political career. But the gifted statesman knew: “My wisdom does not exceed the wisdom of any living” (Daniel 2:30). The revelation of a mystery is always a sign of God’s loving attention, never a proof of human achievements.

In Memoriam

Yochanan Visser

At the beginning of March Christians for Israel received word that our valued analyst Yochanan Visser passed away. For many years, Yochanan devoted himself with great dedication to keeping readers informed and providing them with insight into developments in Israel and the Middle East.

With great dedication and a keen eye for detail, Yochanan kept readers of *Israel & Christians Today* and the Christians for Israel website informed

about developments in Israel and the Middle East. Especially in the period following the attack of 7 October 2023, he maintained blogs in which he closely followed and analysed the events surrounding the war in Gaza.

Yochanan believed that true dialogue starts with a willingness to listen and, where necessary, to change one’s perspective. This requires courage—one he exemplified and hoped to inspire in his readers.



Liberation and Restoration

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

Pesach celebrates the liberation from the bondage of Egypt. The People of Israel were slaves of the Pharaoh in Egypt (*Exodus 1*). But the Lord heard their cry and delivered them from Egypt and brought them to the land that He had promised to their forefathers (*Exodus 6*).

The exodus from Egypt is the foundational experience of the People of Israel. It is remembered every year, not just as an event in the past, important as it may be, but as a personal experience of every Jew in every generation. One of the rules of telling the story on *Pesach* is that each person must see himself or herself as if they had personally left Egypt. And so, in many communities it is customary to share personal experiences of liberation at the *Seder* table (*Seder*, lit. 'order', is the Hebrew term for the *Passover* banquet on the first evening of *Pesach*: families gather around the dinner table, tell together the stories of the exodus according to the *Haggadah*, i.e. the texts that comprise the liturgy of the evening, and share the meal, including the *matzah*—unleavened bread—and four cups of wine).

The *Pesach* experience is expressed in many ways in the liturgy. *Pesach* lasts seven days; the first and the last days are 'holy convocations'. It is remarkable that, on the *Shabbat* falling in the intermediate days of the feast, in the synagogue service, the *Haftarah* (reading from the Prophets) is *Ezekiel 37:1-14*—the vision of the valley of the dry bones. Obviously, the plain meaning of the prophecy is



Table served for *Passover Seder (Pesach)*. | Photo: Shutterstock

about the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian exile. People had lost all their hope (*verse 11*). If hope is lost, all is lost. They felt like being dead in a foreign land, far from the holy city and the temple. In that situation, *Ezekiel* was bringing a message of hope, because God would interfere and return the exiles to Jerusalem—a new *Pesach* experience.

However, it has also always been understood, both in Judaism and in Christianity, as a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead. The ancient rabbis in the *Talmud* discussed the question whether the vision is to be understood literally ('in truth') or as a parable. The answer should be: yes! It is both. As concluded in the *Talmud*: 'In truth, it was a parable.' Jewish understanding never separates the

spiritual from the material. The liberation from Egypt is both physical and spiritual. It is going from the land of bondage to the land of freedom; from slavery to serving the Lord. The return from the exile in Babylon is designated as life from the dead (*Romans 11:15*). The restoration of Israel thus becomes a metaphor for the resurrection of the dead. And conversely, in the end of time, the resurrection of the dead will be a sign of the final restoration of Israel. In contemplating that, we also consider the absolute unity of Jesus with His people Israel. If the New Testament understands Jesus' life and ministry, culminating in His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave, in terms of the biblical history of Israel, then His resurrection is also proleptic of the restoration of Israel. Or in other words, in His resurrection, the restoration of Israel is vindicated.

Today, I believe, we cannot read this chapter on the resurrection of the dry bones without bearing in mind the *Shoah* and the establishment of the State of Israel, three years after the *Shoah*, as a new *Pesach* experience in our times. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, has an artwork that connects the *Shoah* to the prophecy of the dry bones. The mass graves of Europe were opened, and the bones were collected and brought to life in the newborn State of Israel. "Our hope is not lost"! is a key line in the national anthem of Israel, which is aptly titled '*Hatikvah*', the hope—a true reversal of the hopelessness of the exiles in Babylon.

Israel is coming home, again. No war or hostile treatment of the nations can stop that. *Messiah* is gathering His people, restoring them to the Land, and to God's covenant.

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

Why Passover is Your Memory

For many Christians, the word '*Passover*' triggers a mental shortcut straight to the Upper Room. The Exodus? That is often filed away as 'Jewish History'—a dusty chronicle of someone else's ancestors wandering a desert 3,300 years ago. But there is a massive spiritual cost to viewing the Bible strictly as history: History is what happens to others; memory is what happens to me. Think of a family photo album. No one points to a picture and says, "There is a documented historical account of a 20th-century graduation." They say, "That's me." The Bible consists of photographic textual memories. When you view these sacred texts as your own identity rather than data points, the disconnect vanishes.

Biblical memory isn't about nostalgia; it is a past episode lived in the present moment for the sake of the future Kingdom. On *Passover*, we aren't just reading about ancient slaves; we are experiencing the transition from the bitter taste of bondage to the fresh air of freedom. This isn't what happened to 'them'; it is what is happening to us.

Once we feel that freedom, we must confront its responsibility. In modern society, freedom is often defined as 'doing whatever I want.' However, this paradigm rarely aligns with God's will.

A free God created human beings in His image, hoping they would freely choose Him to actualise His will in the world. God knows the danger: unchecked freewill often views others as transactional entities used to gratify immediate desires. At its extreme, this becomes the tyranny of Pharaoh.

Passover, like the other holidays in *Leviticus 23*, acts as a cyclical period to reflect on these 'Big Ideas.' If the New Year asks us to reflect on God as King, *Passover* asks us what it means to be truly free subjects.

The foundation of this freedom is how we use our time. The biblical sense of time goes beyond the construct of past, present, and future; it is the belief that every moment is an opportunity to sanctify His will.

For the Christian, *Passover* is an invitation to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Jewish people in the original redemptive moment of sacred history. We don't just 'study' the Exodus; we join the narrative. By embracing the Exodus as our own foundational memory, we recognise that our faith is rooted in a God who breaks chains and calls a people out of darkness.

On *Passover* evening, we become storytellers in a shared covenant. We celebrate the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ensuring that this inclusive narrative of liberation continues until the day of ultimate redemption for all.

The Bible Speaks

The Mountain of Expectation

"On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem." *Zechariah 14:4*

The prophet Ezekiel witnesses how the Glory of God leaves the temple and the city of Jerusalem and settles on the Mount of Olives (*Ezekiel 11*). The exile of Judah begins. But he is also allowed to prophesy about the return of the Lord to the new temple at the end of time (*Ezekiel 43:4*). The words of God sound powerful: "This is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites forever."

Another prophet, Zechariah, also speaks about this. He tells how God is inflamed with zeal for Jerusalem, and that His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives when Israel is threatened (*Zechariah 8 and 14:4*). And that is why it is not without reason that Jesus reveals to His disciples here what will happen in the future and how there will be signs in the heavens before the great day of the Kingdom arrives.

Based on: <https://www.c4israel.org/news/biblical-significance-of-the-mountain-of-olives/>

Operation Epic Fury: Was the War between Iran and the US/Israel Inevitable?

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Note: We are temporarily departing from our Israel and Iran series—dealing with the past and future—to focus on the war that broke out on 28 February 2026.

It was the *Sabbath* morning in Israel when the air raid sirens were activated, beckoning the population to their closest bomb shelter. War had broken out between Israel and its archenemy, Iran. Operation Epic Fury (US name) had begun. For the first time, Israel was not fighting alone but alongside its great ally, the United States. Comparisons have been frequently made between Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Sir Winston Churchill with US Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Donald Trump. If the current leadership wins its war as World War II leaders won theirs, the comparison will hold.

Iran has never been weaker: high inflation, no public support... It has sustained much damage in two recent wars.

Operation Epic Fury was meticulously designed and flawlessly executed. With the failure of negotiations, Israel and the US sincerely believed that Iran was a growing threat, so they swung into action. Israel sent out two hundred flights, and each plane had two targets each. In amazingly swift speed, the allies sank Iran's navy and took control of its airspace. With one attack, they destroyed the bunker of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, killing him and forty eight other targeted leaders. Three days later, the allies bombed the Assembly of Experts meeting where the next supreme leader was to be chosen.

As of this writing, Israel and the US continue to pursue their military objectives.

Why War?

The Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979 after abolishing the Persian monarchy, which lasted twenty-five-hundred years, all the way back to Cyrus the Great. Their goal was to establish a theocratic, fundamentalist, puritanical Shiite Islamic republic. The regime that would expand into the Sunni Arab Muslim world, destroy Israel, and into the rest of the world (minus the United States).

Ali Khamenei was Supreme Leader from 1989. For the previous eight years served as the country's President. Patient,

ruthless, and tireless in the goal of fusing political Shiite Islam with the power of a nation-state, Khamenei focused on nothing else. He was a dedicated revolutionary.

Like his mentor and predecessor, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, he constantly emphasised the following:

- Shia Islam is the one true religion.
- Iran, like ancient Persia, is ordained for hegemony.
- Only a high-ranking Shiite cleric is qualified to run the country as the Supreme Leader and must not be questioned.
- Nuclear power is Iran's right. For this reason, the clerical regime would never forsake its nuclear programme. It spent decades in time and \$1 trillion in money to get to this point. Regime supporters would be outraged if they abandoned it now.

- Khomeini and Khamenei both saw America and Israel, the great Satan and little Satan respectively, and as impediments to Iran's goals. Their soon and quick demise was declared repeatedly.

Iran fought a dirty, bitter, costly war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq (1980-88). Khomeini provoked Saddam's initial invasion, and though the war could have ended after two years, Khomeini's stubbornness stretched it out to eight. The war cost one million soldiers and gained nothing. Khomeini was dead in less than a year, leaving his successor with a broke, unsettled, and drifting nation.

Khamenei's response to this challenge was the development of the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps). Under his leadership, the IRGC has grown into an economic and military powerhouse. They serve the Supreme Leader alone and are fiercely, even fanatically, loyal to him. It is this group that must be dealt with if Iran is to break completely free from the dictatorial clerical rule it has been under for nearly fifty years.

Was This War Inevitable?

Critics of Operation Epic Fury like to say that Iran was not an imminent threat, and this was Trump's 'war of choice.' Question: Iran cannot attack the US mainland presently (so it is attacking US

military bases in the Middle East). Should it wait until Iran has nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles that can reach the continental United States before attacking? Or wait until Iran deploys EMP technology that can knock out the nation's power grid for months and years?

The war between Iran and Israel/US started in 1979. From then there have been weekly public demonstrations chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." And Iran has backed up its bellicose rhetoric with action. The key weapon to spreading the revolution is terror. Iran's 'Shia Crescent' are subservient nations between Iran and the Mediterranean who will protect its interests. The 'crescent' is really a terror empire consisting of Iraq's Shiite militia, Syria's Assad regime (now deposed), Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen. These proxies have been conducting terrorist attacks around the world, including Australia and the UK. Twice, Iran has targeted Donald Trump for assassination.

The recent pre-war negotiations had the following American demands:

1. Iran is to cease its nuclear enrichment programme. The fear is that if Iran gets the bomb, it will use it.
2. Cease its ballistic missile programmes.
3. Stop funding the terror proxies and terrorist activities globally.

What are the chances that the ruling mullahs are prepared to agree to these conditions? Their current rhetoric and past actions don't provide much hope. While Iranian leadership can be surprisingly pragmatic, they can be unbending with the fundamentals, even if it risks the apocalypse.

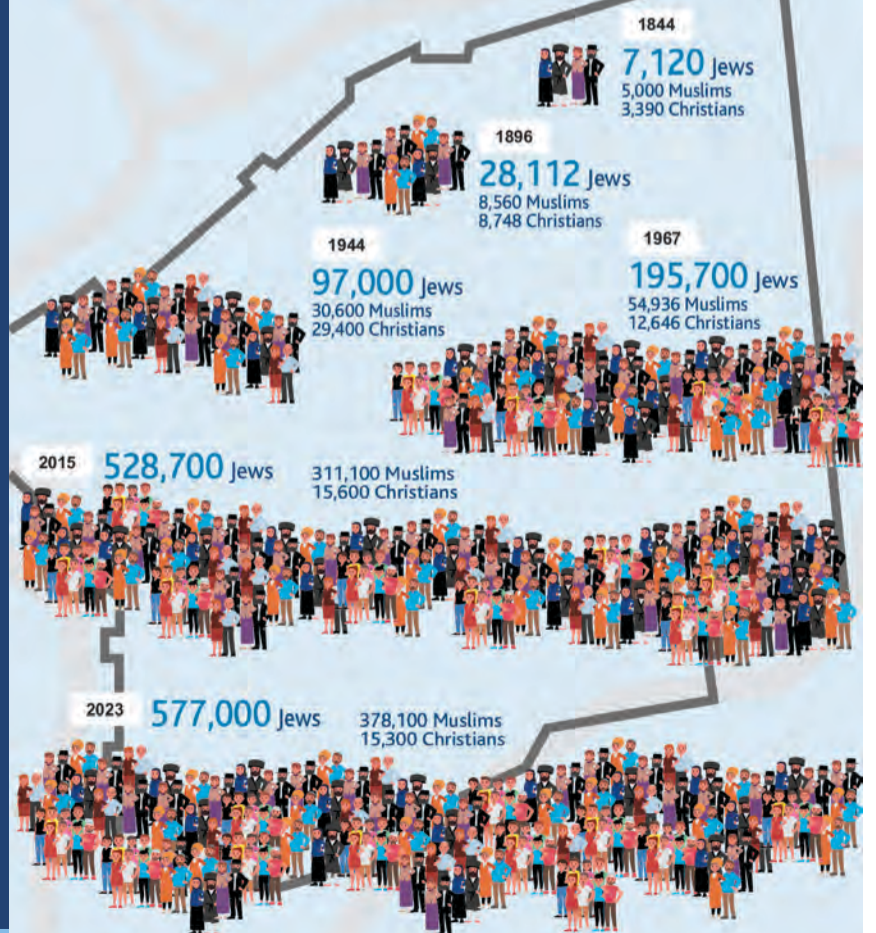
Iran has never been weaker: high inflation, no public support, forsaken by Russia, China, and the proxies. It has sustained much damage in two recent wars. Plus, Iran has a super serious water shortage. The timing for a military strike seemed ideal.

The question is: did Donald Trump choose to start a war or simply choose the timing to end it? You decide.

With the Jewish holiday of *Purim* which coincided with the start of the war, it looks like the modern-day Mordecai will defeat Haman, "For such time as this" (*Esther 4:14*).

Facts Speak

Population of Jerusalem through the Centuries



Short News

Investment in
Eilat's Water Supply

Israel plans to significantly expand the water supply in the southern resort town of Eilat. The national water company Mekorot plans to increase the capacity of a desalination plant and build additional infrastructure. The project will cost approximately 800 million shekels and is expected to double the supply of drinking water in the region in the coming years. According to Israel's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, the expansion is necessary due to population growth, tourism, and agricultural development in the area. With this investment, Israel also aims to strengthen its reputation as a global leader in water technology. Through efficient desalination, the country can produce sufficient drinking water for residents and businesses despite drought conditions. Work on the plant's expansion has now officially begun. | Photo: Flash90

2nd Temple Period
Workshop

Archaeologists in Jerusalem have made a remarkable discovery: a workshop where stone jars were produced about two thousand years ago. In a cave on the slopes of Mount Scopus, researchers found hundreds of unfinished jars and remnants of production waste. According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, the workshop dates to the Second Temple period. The find provides new insights into the daily life and religious practices of Jews during that time.

Israel 8th in Global
Happiness Survey

Israel ranked eighth in the latest World Happiness Report published in March, maintaining its position for the second consecutive year. Israel's ranking has steadily improved since 2021. Israelis have a sense of meaning and purpose, which contributes to their overall satisfaction with life. Notably, Israelis under 25 were the happiest group within Israeli society, ranking third globally in their age group. This contrasts with many other Western nations. Young Israelis appear to be much more grounded compared to their international peers.

European Jews: Beginning of
Jewish Immigration—Part 2

■ Edda Fogarollo

Historian | President | Christians for Israel Italy

In the previous article we explored how rising antisemitism and violent pogroms in Eastern Europe convinced Jewish thinkers that emancipation alone was not enough. Facing persecution and insecurity in the late 1800s, figures like Leo Pinsker (a loyal subject of the Russian Tsar) began to argue that the Jewish people needed a homeland of their own to ensure safety, unity, and national self-determination.

The need for a 'homeland' was felt in France a few decades earlier, where the new era unfolded by the French Revolution enabled Jews to enjoy judicial equality and rights as well as filling important political posts. For example, the Jew Adolphe Crémieux was twice elected as minister. He was sent to Syria in 1840 together with another famous exponent of European Judaism, the Englishman of Italian origin Moses Montefiore, in order to follow the unfolding of a case known as the 'Damascus affair'. This involved some Jews being accused of ritual homicide.

After his return to Paris, Crémieux was astonished to discover that numerous French leaders showed antisemitic attitudes and wondered where this might lead in other European countries where Jews did not enjoy the same equal rights as in France. These circumstances made him more aware of the need to rebuild the ancient native country of the people of Israel. And so he actively participated in the establishment of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. Founded in 1860 thanks to the initiative of a group of six well-known Jewish people in Paris and the help of Crémieux, who later became the chairman, the Alliance aimed to make up for the lack of a central social structure within the Jewish community and had the mission to become a "centre of moral progress, religious solidarity and protection for all those who suffer because of their condition of being Jew".

And so Zionism turned out to be an ideology awaiting a leader: establishing some settlements in remote areas of Palestine did not mean laying the foundations for a national state.

After the foundation of the Alliance, Crémieux threw his weight behind the project of Charles Netter for the creation of an agrarian school in Palestine with the aim of teaching agriculture to the Jews and preparing them for the rebuilding of their nation. "If you accept my proposal," Netter wrote, "this will represent a great leap forward. You will show the public that the Jews can work the land, and you will reclaim possession of the Holy Land, where our ancestors proclaimed the uniqueness of the Creator." In 1870, Netter travelled to Constantinople and obtained a decree from the Ottoman Sultan authorising him to purchase about 3,000 dunam (roughly corresponding to 3,000 hectares) of land on behalf of the Alliance. The latter provided 100,000 francs for the construction of the agrarian school, called *Mikveh Israel* (Hope of Israel), and to ensure its functioning during the first three years.

**The Beginning of Jewish Emigration From
Eastern Europe and the First Zionist Associations**

In Russia, following the terror and violence ignited in 1881, a new policy of repression was introduced with a set of laws and decrees that further discriminated against the Jews and isolated them from the rest of the people. Thousands of Jewish farmers were forced to abandon their fields in search of better security in the cities while those who had the means could



Mikveh Israel, before 1899. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

leave for other lands from the port of Odessa—heading for the US, Canada, South America or Western Europe with the hope of finding a better life. This marked the beginning of mass emigration between 1881 and 1914 when about 2.5 million Jews left the lands of the vast Russian empire.

During this period, a small number of emigrants decided to establish some agricultural settlements in Palestine. In order to facilitate this movement, various secret associations emerged under the umbrella of *Chovevei Zion* ("Those who love Zion"), which later became part of *Chibbath Zion* ('Love for Zion'). Among the by-laws of these associations, founded by students of St Petersburg, was the rule: "Every son of Israel who acknowledges there is no salvation for Israel unless he establishes a government in the Land of Israel is accepted." Among the associations were members of Bilu, students of the University of Kharkov who gave the Zionist movement a certain pioneer mysticism when they left for Palestine. Once there, they started to work as day labourers for the agrarian school and, with great effort, managed to survive. Life was not

easy either for them or for those emigrants of other Zionist associations: apart from the hard work on the rough terrain, they also had to endure difficult relations with the Arabs along with continuous suspicion by the Turkish government.

Poverty and disease, especially malaria, were endemic. Survival was only possible thanks to the subsidies granted by those who supported the Zionist cause from Russia, who collected enough funds to support as many as 15 to 20 families a year, and later contributions from Poland and Western Europe came. But the money collected was still not enough to sustain the dream of emancipation, though the programme of immigration had managed to send some 20,000 to 30,000 people to the Land between 1881 and the beginning of 1900.

However, many of these eventually returned to Russia or moved to the West. Hardship emerged both within the *Chovevei Zion* and in Palestine because of the Turkish government. The wave of emigration worried the Ottomans who suspected Russian conspiracy to establish a bridgehead in their territory and finally forbade Russian Jewish immigration and land purchase in the region. And so Zionism turned out to be an ideology awaiting a leader: establishing some settlements in remote areas of Palestine did not mean laying the foundations for a national state.

Myth: 'Israel Occupies Land Belonging to Another People'

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

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

Myth: 'Israel Occupies Land Belonging to Another People'

Many believe that Israel is occupying land that rightfully belongs to the Palestinians, and that the Jews have taken this land from another people. But who exactly are the Palestinians?

From the 1960s onwards, Yasser Arafat, the Egyptian-born (!) leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), began to hijack the term 'Palestinian'. By this, I mean that he attempted to define only the Arabs who fled Israel in 1948 and their descendants as 'Palestinians'. In 1948, when the State of Israel was established, about 750,000 Arabs—encouraged by neighbouring Arab countries—left Israel. Much of this was not an expulsion, but rather the result of the surrounding conflict, leaving these Arabs as refugees.

It is noteworthy that until the mid-20th century, it was primarily Jews in Palestine who called themselves 'Palestinians', not Arabs. For instance, one of the Jewish Zionist newspapers in Palestine was called *The Palestine Post*, which later became known as *The Jerusalem Post*. Additionally, the Jewish football team from Palestine, which participated in international competitions, was known as the 'Palestinian football team'.

I remember that one summer our neighbour's house was rented out by Israelis when they were on vacation. We got to know them and were engaged in animated conversations. At one point, the husband mentioned: "I am of Palestinian descent." I was looking at him, thinking, "he doesn't look very Arab." But then it clicked. What he meant was that his ancestors on his father's side had lived in Palestine for many generations. Jews in Palestine referred to themselves as Palestinians long before the Arabs did. Many Arabs identified primarily as Muslims or Mohammedans. The concept of a purely Arab Palestinian people has never existed. While the idea of an 'Arab Palestine' is widespread, it simply isn't historically accurate.

Palestine Three Hundred Years Ago

The composition of the population of Palestine at the end of the 17th century sheds significant light on the historical context of the region. In 1695, Dutch scholar Adriaan Reland—born in Utrecht—published a book in Latin titled *Palestine* illustrated on the basis of old monuments.¹ It is about the Palestine of that time. Reland was not only a philologist, but also a geographer, cartographer, and traveller. He was fluent in several European languages, as well as Arabic, Ancient Greek and Hebrew. In his work, he examined nearly 2,500 places and former settlements mentioned in the Bible. He also recorded the population size of these locations as they existed in his own time.²

Some of the most important findings and conclusions about Palestine at that time include:

- The land is mainly empty and desolate, with very sparse population. The most important and densely inhabited towns are Jerusalem, Acre, Tzfat (Safed), Jaffa, Tiberias and Gaza.
- The majority of the population consists of Jews and Christians. Muslims were a small minority, most of them Bedouins.
- Nazareth, the capital of Galilee, has about 700 residents—all of whom are Christians.
- Jerusalem has a population of about 5,000 people, nearly all of whom are Jews, with a small number of Christians.
- Tiberias and Tzfat are inhabited exclusively by Jews.
- Gaza has approximately 550 residents, half of them Jews, and half Christians. There were no Muslims living in Gaza at that time.
- In 1695, it is common knowledge that the land's historical roots are Jewish.
- None of the settlements in Palestine had names of Arab origin, except for the city of Ramla.
- Nearly all place names have Jewish origins, with some Greek or Roman (Latin) names.
- Jews are successful in agriculture, particularly in vineyards, olives groves and wheat production. Christians are active in trade and transportation. Reland only mentions Muslims in the context of nomadic Bedouins who occasionally come to cities as seasonal labourers in agriculture or construction.

Reland's book completely undermines modern claims about long-standing 'Arab Palestinian traditions', or the existence of an 'Arab Palestinian people'. One



Ottoman troops and Palestinians in Da'wud Street, Jerusalem, 1898.
| Photo: Wikimedia Commons

telling detail is the name Palestine, which Arabs today pronounce as *Filastin*. This name is not Arabic in origin at all. It is the Latin translation of the Hebrew word *Peleshet*, the term used by the early Israelites to refer to the Philistines. The Philistines were a seafaring people from the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, who settled along the southern coast of Israel around 1200 BC. Their main cities included Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, Ashdod and Ekron. The name Palestine is therefore not Arabic but Latin, and it refers to a non-Arab people, namely the Philistines.

In light of the composition of the population of Palestine around 1700, the modern narrative that Jews take land from the Arabs becomes extremely difficult to defend.

Mark Twain travelled to what was then called Palestine in the late 19th century, nearly two hundred years after Reland, and he described a very similar situation. Twain described a desolate and neglected land that was little more than a remote province of the Ottoman Empire. Beginning around 1840, increasing numbers of Jews began to return to and settle in Palestine. At that time, the land was still largely empty and undeveloped. As the Jewish immigrants began cultivating the land and revitalising the economy, more Arabs were drawn to the region. However, they are not the original inhabitants of Palestine. They are not 'The Palestinians'. 'The' Palestinians never existed.

The current so-called 'Palestinian people' is a modern invention. The population of Palestine was mixed, and Arabs and Muslims were by no means the only inhabitants of the land, and for many centuries, they were not even the majority.

¹ The book by Adriaan Reland (1676-1718) about Palestine, published in Utrecht in 1714, can be found in its entirety on the internet (in Latin):

Part 1:
http://books.google.com/books?id=jscUAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false

Part 2:
http://books.google.com/books?id=sZcUAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false

² Wikipedia- contributors. (2024, March 16). Adriaan Reland. Wikipedia. https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adriaan_Reland

Oscar Lohuis' book can be purchased from Amazon.



Poster published by the Zionist Congress in 1925, encouraging visits to the 'Palestine Exhibition'. | Photo: GPO Israel





Stand with Israel in Times of Crisis

Since the outbreak of the war between Israel and the United States on one side and Iran on the other, many residents in Israel have been living under the constant threat of rocket attacks. In large parts of the country, air raid sirens sound frequently, and people

are forced to seek safety in bomb shelters. Our partner organisations in Israel are working around the clock to provide critical support—delivering emergency aid to families, offering food assistance to the elderly and helping new immigrants build a life in

Israel under these challenging circumstances.

We are receiving many requests for help from Israel. With your help, we can reach more people in need.

Will you join us?

Help to New Immigrants

“When Will the Sirens Stop?”

Daniella (28) and her daughter Ilai (8) made *Aliyah* to Israel on 24 February from Argentina. For now they are living in an absorption centre in Karmiel and joined a special integration programme run by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Daniella and Ilai were supposed to arrive in Israel just before *Purim*, and Daniella had told her daughter that *Purim* is always a wonderful celebration. Things turned out differently, however. Just four days after leaving everything familiar to them behind, Daniella and Ilai were confronted with the reality of war. Every time the air raid siren sounded, they ran down four flights of stairs to reach the bomb shelter in time. Inside the bomb shelter, Ilai kept asking, with tears in her eyes, “When are we celebrating *Purim*? What about my costume? When will those sirens stop?”

Exhausted

This is just one of the countless stories of Jewish immigrants (*olim*) who chose to come to Israel to build a new life, and who are now (again) confronted with the harsh reality of war. The Jewish Agency puts everything in work to support them during this difficult time.

Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency explains: “Since the outbreak of the war between Israel, the US and Iran, people in Israel rush to shelters and safe rooms day and night. This is especially difficult for the elderly and families with young children. Furthermore, all of us are exhausted after more than two and a half years of war. The only hope is that the regime of terror led by the ayatollahs will be eradicated. This would usher in a new era of security, not only for Israel, but also for Europe, the US, and the rest of the world.”



Daniella and Ilai seeking safety in a bomb shelter.
| Photo: Jewish Agency for Israel

Food Aid for Families, Seniors, and Holocaust Survivors

Offering Help

Families, seniors, and Holocaust survivors often struggle to obtain enough food. Through Colel Chabad, people in various cities across Israel receive hot meals every day.

In recent days, more than 12,000 meals were distributed in Jerusalem, Ashdod, Dimona, Beit Shemesh, and other locations. In addition tens of thousands of food vouchers are being provided to families, seniors, and Holocaust survivors, enabling them to purchase basic necessities on their own.



Rev Saleem (right) after packing food parcels.

Long Nights Filled With Fear

Nazareth, home to Rev Saleem Shalash and his ‘Home of Jesus the King’ congregation, is currently in the line of fire. Shalash: “The situation in Nazareth and in northern Israel has become extremely challenging. Almost every night, we are woken up four or five times by the sirens warning of attacks. Families run to bomb shelters or safe rooms time and again, sometimes just minutes after they have gone back to bed. The nights are long, exhausting, and filled with fear.”

Nazareth and the surrounding region are facing rockets from Iran and from Hezbollah in the north. Many families live in deep fear, and children in particular are affected by the repeated alarm signals and explosions. A father from Nazareth said: “My children ask me every night if the siren will go off again. I try to stay calm for them, but inside we are all very tired and afraid.” A mother said: “Sometimes the sirens go off four or five times a night. The children wake up crying, and we run to the shelter in the dark. As a parent, you feel helpless.”

Providing Basic Necessities

Because of the war, many people are unable to work normally, and some are losing their income. More families ask Rev Shalash and his team for food parcels

and other assistance. Shalash: “Right now, we’re also supporting public shelters in Nazareth and Haifa. We provide mattresses and blankets so people can rest, even if only for a little while. We also bring kettles, sugar, coffee, tea, cups, and spoons, so that the people spending long nights in the shelters can have something warm and comforting. An elderly woman told us: ‘The nights seem endless here. When someone brings a hot drink or a blanket, it reminds us that we are not alone.’ These small gestures mean a lot to families who may be sitting there for many hours.”



Colel Chabad food aid.



PROVIDING HELP IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

Help to Victims

In times of war and terror, the aid organization ZAKA is on high alert, ready to provide assistance wherever possible. ZAKA's logistics centre is located in Beit Shemesh, where a rocket fired from Iran recently struck, killing eight people.

Shock

Marnix van Ede, who works for ZAKA: "I was in the area at the time. Just a few minutes later, it became clear how serious the situation was. The explosion struck an area near a synagogue and a bomb shelter, causing extensive damage. It was a huge shock to the community there. Our ZAKA volunteers were on the scene almost immediately. First and foremost to save lives and care for the victims, but also to treat the deceased with the utmost dignity, so that families could say their goodbyes."

Marnix: "One of our volunteers recently said, 'We always hope we won't be needed, but if a rocket strikes, we know we have to be there for the people who are most affected.' The recent period has once again shown how vulnerable daily life can be here."

At the same time, we also see tremendous resilience among the population. People try to continue with their lives while supporting and caring for one another. It is encouraging to know that people outside of Israel are praying for them and feel compassion for them."



ZAKA arrived quickly after the rocket attack to provide assistance.



Marnix van Ede (right) on the scene in Beit Shemesh. | Photos: ZAKA

Our partner organisations in Israel are ready to provide assistance wherever needed. Thanks to your support, we have already been able to provide a great deal of assistance. At the same time, the need remains great, and we are receiving many new requests for help from Israel. Your support makes a difference!

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel



CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL NZ MINISTRY

- My donation for ministry costs, print & post
- Emergency Campaign
- thinc. (countering anti-Israel 'lawfare')
- Speak Up (funding for speakers)
- 'Voices for Israel' Youth Project

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

- Meals on Wheels - \$10 each
- 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 (First Baptist Church in Bethlehem)
- For Zion's Sake
- Israel Alzheimer's Centre

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ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

- NEW: Christians for Israel 18-month Calendar Jan 2026–Jun 2027
- NEW: Zionism at the Ends of the Earth by Sheree Trotter
- NEW: 3D Wooden Map of Israel Puzzle
- Israel's Land and People in History and Prophecy by Dr Simon Smelt
- Behold He Comes by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Christians for Israel NZ Israeli & Friends Cookbook
- Two States for Two Peoples? Book (Full version)
- Two States for Two Peoples? Booklet (Condensed version)
- Why Israel? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why Jerusalem? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Why End Times? (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer
- Land Without Borders by Johannes Gerloff
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