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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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“The Lord is a refuge for His people.”
Joel 3:16

People in Israel take shelter during an Iranian missile attack. | Photo: Flash90

Tehran and Jerusalem

■ **Rev Henk Poot**
Christians for Israel Netherlands

Israel has a strong army. No one can deny that. But on the eve of the attack on Iran, the Prime Minister of tiny Israel stood at the Western Wall of the temple in Jerusalem and prayed to God. The *shofar* was blown and trumpets sounded.

That week, the Jewish people read *Numbers 10*: “When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, you shall blow the trumpets and be remembered before the Lord your God, so that you may be saved from your enemies” (verse 9). Only then did Israel dare to fight against the revolutionary regime in Tehran, trusting deeply in the Lord.

It is the time of the *Messiah*, say the Jews, and they are right. But in that time, darkness will also cover the earth and gloom the peoples. The ancient dragon is rising once more. The spirit of antisemitism is spreading throughout the world. It has been hidden for a long time, but now it is allowed to show itself again: unadulterated hatred of Jews in the form of anti-Zionism. Satan is a master in the use of words; he always has been. Time and again, he presents lies as truth. But the Word of God is so much more powerful, and all God's promises are sure and certain. And the end is the Light that breaks through above Jerusalem.

How relevant are the words of Joel: “The Lord roars from Zion and raises His voice from Jerusalem. (...) The Lord is a

refuge for His people. And you will know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells on Zion!” (Joel 3:16-17).

We live in a prophetic time and we take our stand in it: with persistent prayer and blessing, we form a circle of light around the Jewish people. Together with our sisters and brothers all over the world, together with Israel itself and together with all believers in Iran.

For let us not forget: the Lord is doing a great work in Tehran. Millions have come to faith and love Israel. How could it be otherwise? The two always go together. God is establishing His throne in Iran. In the last days, the Lord will do this (*Jeremiah 49:38-39*). He has promised it.

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Colourful Haifa



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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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Only God Can Solve Gaza Dilemma

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

In early July, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made his third visit to the White House since President Trump entered his second term as President. Despite the many speculations, the visit did not result—at least publicly—in major breakthroughs or announcements in respect of the many issues that were canvassed in the meetings between Netanyahu and Trump and their teams—such as the future of the Gaza conflict with Hamas, Abraham Accords, and relations with Syria, and Iran.

It had been expected that an agreement would be announced concerning the future of the war with Hamas, including a ceasefire and release of the remaining hostages (Hamas continues to hold around 50 hostages, of which probably only about twenty are still alive). Instead the two leaders announced that they 'hoped' that a ceasefire would be negotiated with Hamas in the coming days.

Israel has consistently stated that its dual war aims are to release all of the hostages and to eliminate Hamas. However, now almost two years since 7 October 2023, neither aim has been effectively achieved, and it appears that neither can be achieved.

Hamas has control in Gaza at three levels: as a military army, as a guerilla organisation, and as thugs using brute force to keep control of the Gaza civilian population. Israel's army has achieved success in destroying Hamas at the first level, but not at the second and third levels. Destroying Hamas' capabilities to fight guerilla warfare is almost impossible to achieve (ambushes on IDF soldiers in the north of Gaza show that Hamas is strongly armed, and still able to carry out effective guerilla



Hostage Square in Tel Aviv. | Photo: Miriam Alster/Flash90

operations). It is impossible to entirely remove Hamas' control of the Palestinian population through force.

All of which means that the IDF campaign in Gaza is suffering from the law of diminishing returns. As Israel is engaged increasingly in a guerilla war in Gaza, more soldiers are being killed, for fewer returns. There is growing pressure on Netanyahu—international and domestic—to 'cut his losses' and reach a deal with Hamas that would not see its total destruction or perhaps not even the return of all the hostages.

The situation on the ground in Gaza remains dire. As the IDF continues to destroy infrastructure (necessary, tragically, in order to eliminate Hamas' tunnels and military installations), the people are increasingly destitute.

Debate in Israel rages about how to proceed. Many demand that a deal be reached with Hamas under which the hostages are released. Others argue that

the IDF must change tactics, and impose a siege that will separate the Hamas operatives from Gaza's citizens.

In the international community, there are growing calls for the recognition of a Palestinian state—which is absurd, given the Palestinians have proven that they cannot (and are not willing) to establish a stable government that seeks to co-exist in peace with Israel.

As Christians, we must bring this seemingly hopeless situation in prayer before the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Let us pray for the hostages still held in Gaza. May they be protected and given miraculous strength to survive this horrendous ordeal. Pray for Israel's enemies, that their hearts may be turned. Pray for Israel's leaders, and for all the people of Israel. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for the release of the hostages who are still being held in Gaza. Pray that those who are still imprisoned will receive strength to persevere, and pray for comfort for the families and friends of the hostages.
- "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Pray that the time will soon come when Jesus will set His feet on the Mount of Olives and His kingdom of peace will come.

Israel and the Nations

- In the aftermath of Israel's pre-emptive strike on Iran, ongoing rocket attacks have caused widespread devastation. Families are grieving the loss of loved ones, people have been injured, and homes and infrastructure have been destroyed. Pray for comfort for those in mourning, for healing of all who have

suffered. Pray also for peace in the region.

- As the war in Gaza continues, more countries are distancing themselves from Israel, including some of its closest allies, who are growing increasingly critical. There is a growing lack of awareness or concern for the serious threats Israel continues to face. Pray that nations will recognise the complexity of the situation and renew their support for Israel. Pray also that countries currently hostile toward Israel will have a change of heart.

Christians for Israel

- Pray for God's blessing on the work of our *Aliyah* fieldworker Koen Carlier and his team in Ukraine. In recent months, numerous Russian attacks have created an urgent need for emergency aid. Pray that many people will receive the help they need, and that the *Aliyah* from Ukraine to Israel will continue without hindrance.

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

Israel Won this Round—but the War Against Iran is not Over

■ **Andrew Tucker**

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Within only 12 days, commencing on 13th June, in a highly sophisticated and complex operation that was Biblical in both its scope and effect, Israel succeeded to dismantle Iran's nuclear programme. For decades, the Iranian regime had been working on creating the ability to produce a nuclear bomb that would potentially be directed against Israel.

In the first hours of the operation which it named 'Rising Lion', Israel took out Iran's air force and air defences and killed a significant number of key Iranian military and IRGC leaders and nuclear scientists. In the succeeding days, Israeli fighter jets and drones swept Iranian airspace destroying many installations connected with the nuclear programme and wiping out most of Iran's ballistic missiles and launchers.

The most significant military leader killed was the chief of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' air force, Brig. General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, who was killed alongside the rest of the top brass of the IRGC Aerospace Force—responsible for Iran's ballistic missiles and drones—as they met in an underground command center to prepare Iran's retaliation.

While claiming victory, Israel has paid a huge price. Twenty nine people were killed and 3238 wounded.

Operation Rising Lion, involving not only the Israeli defense forces and security but also a large number of Israeli operatives and Iranians in Iran had been in preparation in secret for years.

The campaign reached its peak on 22 June, when—within just a few hours—United States B-2 bombers suddenly performed a 'surgical' operation dropping their massive 'bunker buster' bombs to destroy Iran's Fordo Uranium enrichment plant buried deep underground. Simultaneously, nuclear submarines stationed just outside the Persian Gulf fired 30 Tomahawk missiles at the already-damaged nuclear facilities of Natanz and Isfahan to finish their destruction.

The 'bunker buster' bombs used by the US were GBU-57 series MOP (Massive Ordnance Penetrator)—a 30,000-pound (14,000 kg) class, 20.5-foot-long (6.2 m) precision-guided missile developed by Boeing for the US Air force, composed of a BLU-127 bomb body and an



The scene where a missile fired from Iran hit and caused damage in Tel Aviv, 16 June 2025. | Photo: Flash90

integrated GPS/INS guidance package. Due to its size and weight, the GBU-57 MOP can only be carried by the Northrop B-2 Spirit strategic bomber.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), "The devastating US strike on Fordo destroyed the site's critical infrastructure and rendered the enrichment facility inoperable. We assess that the American strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, combined with

Israeli strikes on other elements of Iran's military nuclear programme, have set back Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons by many years."

While claiming victory, Israel has paid a huge price. In the following days, Iran intensively attacked Israeli civilian areas with missiles, causing massive damage. Twenty nine people were killed and 3238 wounded. The country has been in effective lockdown. The war cost tens of billions of *shekels*. 15,000 Israelis were forced to evacuate their homes, and hundreds face a housing crisis.

On Monday, 23 June, President Trump suddenly announced a ceasefire between Israel and Iran, apparently brokered by Qatar in close coordination with China. Both Israel and Iran breached the first hours of the ceasefire—Israel rained bombs on key Iranian installations, and Iran continued to pour missiles on Israeli civilians. Tragically, after the announcement of the ceasefire, an Iranian missile struck a building in Beersheba early Tuesday

morning, 24 June, killing an IDF soldier, his mother, and his partner. Cpl Eitan Zacks, 18, from Beersheba, was in combat training. His mother, Michal Zacks, was also killed, along with his partner, Noa Boguslavsky, from Arad. Two others were killed in the missile attack, and 20 people were injured as Iran fired three rounds of missiles into Beersheba between 4:45 and 7:10 am, past the time that the ceasefire was intended to begin at 7 am.

For the time being, hostilities between Israel and Iran have ceased. But the war is not over. The Iranian revolutionary regime is still in power. Ayatollah Khamenei is still alive and kicking. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been badly damaged but not destroyed. Furthermore, much of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium may already have been spirited out of the Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz sites before they were bombed.

President Trump has called for renewed negotiations with the Iranian regime, to reach a conclusive deal to end Iran's nuclear programme. So far, the Iranians have refused the offer. In fact, Ayatollah Khamenei has claimed victory in the war. He said that US President Donald Trump had 'exaggerated' the impact of strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, and threatened to repeat the 'slap' his country had dealt American forces in the region. The regime has declared its determination to rebuild their nuclear programme.

Israel has said it achieved all of its military objectives but will strike Iran again if necessary.

Short News

Israel Under Fire



Since the war broke out on 7 October 2023, nearly 30,000 projectiles have been fired at Israel—10,000 from Gaza, 17,150 from Lebanon, 45 from Syria and around 50 from Yemen. This excludes projectiles that fell outside Israeli territory (e.g. from Iran) and the many anti-tank missiles launched at northern Israel by Hezbollah. | Photo: Flash90

Person of the Year

Ukraine has declared the Israeli Ambassador Michael Brodsky 'Person of the Year 2024'. He recently received the award in Kyiv for his "important contribution to the development and support of the humanitarian, partnership, and friendly relations with Ukraine". The award was presented by the former Ukrainian Ambassador in Israel, Hennadij Nadolenko.

Unique Mosaic

A 1600-year-old mosaic in the South of Israel, discovered in 1990, can now be viewed permanently by audiences following restoration. The mosaic, once part of a convent from the Byzantine era, consists of 55 beautifully detailed medallions with hunting scenes, mythological creatures, fruit baskets and scenes of daily life. Experts believe that the convent flourished thanks to the production of wine. At excavations in the vicinity a large wine press and storage jars have been found.

Fewer Inhabitants



Be'er Sheva, in the South of Israel, has seen a slight population decline. By the end of 2023, it had 219,000 inhabitants, making it the 8th largest city in Israel—down from 5th in 1995. While cities near Tel Aviv are experiencing rapid growth, Be'er Sheva, also called the 'Capital of the Negev', remains the largest city of the South, although its status seems to be slightly eroding. According to the city's mayor previous governments lacked interest in the development of the city. | Photo: Shutterstock

“This is Our 7 October,” Golan Druze Say of Massacres in Syria

■ **Canaan Lidor**
Journalist | JNS

Israel's strikes in defense of the minority's communities across the border attest to a deepening bond, according to locals in the Druze village of Majdal Shams.

As millions of Israelis resumed routines and activities interrupted by the war with Iran, life ground to a halt last week in the Druze communities of the Golan Heights.

A massacre perpetrated on 13 July, in which hundreds of Druze Syrians were reportedly murdered, has shaken Majdal Shams, a picturesque town that's home to most of the Golan's 20,000-odd Druze residents, many of whom have relatives across the border.

“This is our 7 October,” Sari Halabi, whose home in Majdal Shams is situated 45 metres from the border fence, told JNS on 17 July. “Life froze. We keep watching the videos that the terrorists took of themselves butchering our families, feeling angry, anxious and completely destabilised.”

Alongside the grief and shock that has struck this community, many here feel proud of and grateful for Israel's robust intervention to stop the massacres—on 16 July, the Israel Air Force struck key regime targets in Damascus—and optimistic that the Druze of Syria and Israel would unite in the wake of the massacres.

Following the 13 July massacre in Sweida, a predominantly Druze city in southern Syria, hundreds of Druze living on the Israeli side of the border briefly crossed into Syria without permission out of concern for their families there, as dozens from that country entered Israel to seek safety and see relatives, though most were later returned.

Elsewhere in Israel, Druze citizens, of which Israel has about 150,000, declared a general strike, blocked roads and demonstrated, demanding Israel act to rescue their kin. The protest subsided after Israel struck Damascus on 16 July, prompting the Syrian authorities to announce a ceasefire as security forces were deployed to Sweida to end the violent clashes.

Still, the unrest underlined the deep impact that events in Syria have on Israel's Druze community—a minority that has distinguished itself with loyalty to the Jewish state, including via active and meaningful military service.

Despite the illegal border breach on 15 July and the protests, the Druze attachment to Syria “is an asset to Israel, not a liability,” said Halabi, a 38-year-old father of three. “This attachment opens the path to many things, which I think the terrible massacre has brought closer, including a Druze autonomy fighting and flourishing alongside Israel” on the Syrian side of the border, he said.

This is because “the massacre will help settle an internal debate within the Druze community in Syria, and it will lead to more support for autonomy and self-reliance,” said Halabi. Autonomy, he explained, means deepening the alliance with Israel, which is the only major power interested in a Druze-run buffer entity along its northeastern border.

These geopolitical calculations weren't Halabi's first reaction to the massacre.

“I was just sitting there watching the horror videos, one by one. Just like we all did on 7 October,” he said,



Druze residents protest near the Israeli-Syrian border in solidarity with their community in Syria, in Majdal Shams, 16 July 2025. | Photo: Flash90.

referencing the invasion into Israel by thousands of Hamas-led terrorists, who murdered some 1,200 people and abducted another 251, often while documenting their own war crimes with body cameras and cell phones.

Faced with a stream of images of similar atrocities coming out of Syria, hundreds of Golan Druze gather in the evenings on the eastern edge of Majdal Shams, near Halabi's home, where Syrian territory is a stone's throw away. There, they fly Druze flags, share impressions, talk to foreign and local media and survey with their own eyes their communities across the border.

On Thursday, Druze men, some of them wearing balaclavas, ejected *Al Jazeera* reporters from the town as Israeli troops and police officers guarding the border fence looked on.

“This is not news. This is reconnaissance. They're collecting information for the enemy,” one young Druze man told *JNS* of *Al Jazeera*, the Qatari anti-Israel network.

Security is a concern in Majdal Shams, especially after a Hezbollah rocket killed 12 children at a soccer field here last year. A nearby square commemorates the victims with a statue of a soccer ball adorned with a crown comprising 24 angel wings. Many here say Hezbollah targeted the field and timed the rocket to produce maximum effect.

During last year's state commemoration of the victims of the war that erupted on 7 October, a resident of Majdal Shams, Luna Rabbah, represented the town when she sang a verse in the memorial song “*Etzlenu Bagan*” (In Our Garden.)

On the border fence, her father, Abdullah, showed the video proudly to a reporter. “The past few terrible days followed a very difficult year,” said Abdulla Rabah. “But it led to an act of brotherly courage that, even though it came too late, will be remembered for generations and saved many lives,” he said of the Israeli strikes in Damascus, including on the Syrian army's general staff headquarters.

The Syrian regime, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former

al-Qaeda *jihadi* terrorist who rose to power in December, “sent an army south of Damascus, into the area that should be demilitarised, and it began to massacre the Druze. We could not accept this in any way,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement on 17 July about the strikes, which Syrian sources said killed dozens of people.

The strikes were out of character for Israel, which very rarely uses military force in defense of non-citizens. Some find the strikes puzzling. “I don't know what to make of it,” said Ilham, a Druze woman in her fifties who preferred not to give her last name. “Maybe it's some political plan involving Netanyahu, (US President Donald) Trump, al-Sharaa and the Saudis. I don't believe it was about the Druze,” she said.

Many Druze in Israel say they feel discriminated against or unheeded, especially following the passing of a law in 2018 that states that Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People, a formulation some Druze argue is discriminatory.

Rabah believes that the strikes in Damascus were indeed meant to protect the Druze in Syria, and as such were “an unprecedented act of solidarity that will usher in a new level of integration and fraternity between Jews and Druze.”

Israel's intervention “will turn a new leaf also for the Golan Druze,” he said, predicting a run on Israeli citizenship.

Most Golan Druze have to date declined citizenship, clinging to an official narrative of being Syrian citizens under occupation while de facto integrating into Israel and plugging enthusiastically into its economy. However, increasing numbers of Golan Druze have taken up Israeli citizenship in recent years as the prospect of being returned to Syria became increasingly unlikely.

“I'm optimistic,” said Rabah, who came to the border wearing a cap emblazoned with the Druze flag on the front and the Israeli one on the back. “Just like Israel emerged from 7 October much stronger than it was before, so too will the Druze—and their eternal alliance with Israel,” he added.

The Need to Acknowledge Muslim Antisemitism

■ **Melanie Phillips**

Journalist | JNS

Britain may be an outlier for now, but America is not far behind.

(3 July 2025) This week, Britain has been consumed by the appalling spectacle at the Glastonbury Festival, where the rap duo Bob Vylan led thousands in chanting “Death, death to the IDF,” alongside vicious remarks about Jews and Zionists.

While most politicians condemned the incitement to murder, many tempered their outrage by criticising Israel’s conduct. Labour minister Wes Streeting said that while violence couldn’t be justified, Israel’s actions had made it hard for allies to offer support, adding that the Israeli embassy should “get your own house in order.”

Yet it’s precisely that demonisation of Israel—fueled by an unrelenting stream of lies and distortions—that incites many to endorse the murder of Israelis.

Further evidence came this week when *Channel 4* screened a film about Gaza that the BBC had previously abandoned after it emerged that the narrator of an earlier version was the son of Hamas’s deputy agriculture minister. *Channel 4*’s version was pure Hamas propaganda, accusing the Israel Defence Forces of deliberately bombing Gaza hospitals—without noting that Hamas had turned those hospitals into terrorist hubs, making them legitimate military targets and examples of Hamas war crimes.

Not only did *Channel 4* air this travesty, but over 400 media and entertainment figures, including 111 BBC journalists, signed a letter to BBC management claiming its decision to drop the film “demonstrates, once again, that the BBC is not reporting ‘without fear or favour’ when it comes to Israel.” They even called for the removal of BBC board member Robbie Gibb, citing a “conflict of interest” because he had previously been on the board of *The Jewish Chronicle*.

Given the BBC’s long-standing hostility to Israel and distortion of its reporting, the signatories’ claim was Orwellian—evidence of the deranged discourse among obsessive Israel-haters.

To all this, many in Israel and America simply shake their heads and dismiss it as “bad things happening in other places.” There is a widespread belief in both countries that Britain is a lost cause and thus irrelevant.

Looking at the Labour government’s boycott and sanctions against Israel, the election of five MPs on a ‘Gaza-Palestine’ platform, or the British police’s failure to

act against those chanting “Globalise the intifada” while arresting critics of Islam online, many Americans believe Britain has collapsed under the pressure of radicalised elements within its growing Muslim population.

As for Israelis, their contempt is barely concealed. In the midst of a bitter war—where Israel feels it is fighting for existential stakes—many express frustration at the lack of a coherent, timely response to the tsunami of falsehoods shaping British discourse. Israel’s long-standing inability to mount a compelling counter-narrative has left its reputation vulnerable.

Some in Israel’s political class argue that British culture is so historically and ineradicably antisemitic that trying to shift public opinion is pointless. But this is a serious mistake.

While true antisemites are immune to facts, many ordinary Britons have absorbed lies about Israel simply because no one ever told them the truth. This vacuum of accurate information has even led some in Britain’s Jewish community—longstanding supporters of Israel—to now believe that Israel has ‘gone too far’, falling prey to relentless propaganda.

It’s also a mistake to assume that what happens in Britain stays in Britain. The UK remains a cultural leader across the English-speaking world. British trends have a habit of spreading to the US, Canada, and Australia.

The same ideological forces—what’s often called the ‘red-green alliance’ between the progressive left and radical Islam—that have reshaped Britain are also active in America. Just as that alliance overtook the Labour Party, it is increasingly dominant in the Democratic Party.

Recent events underscore this shift. Islamist and far-left figure Zohran Mamdani was selected as the official Democratic candidate for New York mayor. Meanwhile, at Columbia University, acting president Claire Shipman was forced to apologise after private texts showed she had questioned whether Jewish trustee Shoshana Shendelman was a ‘mole’ or a ‘fox in the henhouse’ during a debate about ending a pro-Palestinian encampment. Shipman also expressed a desire to add “somebody from the Middle East or who is Arab” to the board—raising troubling questions about identity politics and anti-Jewish suspicion in elite institutions.

The Palestinian cause has become a Trojan horse for radical Islam. It cloaks a death cult in the language of

humanitarianism and anti-colonialism, falsely portraying Israel as an oppressor.

This entire narrative is false, yet it has become the default view of the West’s progressive elites. It rests on ignorance—of history, of Zionism, of the region. The Jews are the indigenous people of the land; Zionism is a decolonisation movement. And it rests on a deeper ignorance of the real cause of this enduring hatred: Muslim antisemitism.

All polling shows that antisemitism is far more prevalent in Muslim communities than elsewhere. Yet this truth is almost never spoken. It remains the elephant in the room. Diaspora Jews are reluctant to talk about it, even though they are targeted by it. And broader society remains silent, cowed by accusations of ‘Islamophobia’.

But now, the situation is growing so dangerous that this taboo is beginning to break. A recent report by Britain’s Counter Extremism Group, titled *Islamist Antisemitism: A Neglected Hate*, attempts to tackle this issue. It rightly notes: “The issue of inter-minority prejudice is often regarded as too sensitive to address.”

The report acknowledges that hostility toward Jews in the Muslim world is rooted in Islamic religious texts. It notes that periods of Jewish security in Muslim lands were historically punctuated by times of oppression and pogroms.

It also highlights the disturbing historical links between Palestinian Arab leaders and the Nazis—connections that spawned the enduring lie of a Jewish genocide of Palestinian Arabs’. And it shows how Islamic extremists have weaponised the Palestinian cause to inflame hatred of Jews worldwide.

However, even this report falls short by focusing primarily on *jihadi* groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood. It avoids confronting the broader and more disturbing reality: antisemitism runs deep among many non-extremist, grassroots Muslims who may oppose violence but still hold toxic views about Jews.

Israel’s failure to counter libels has fueled the falsehood that Jews are uniquely violent, while obscuring the far more widespread antisemitism in the Muslim world.

Ignoring Muslim antisemitism has let a deadly falsehood spread, turning whole communities—not just extremists—against Jews. Unless Britain and America confront this openly, both may be lost.

Short News

Special Bible



The Shem Tov Bible, a monumental fourteenth-century manuscript, written by the *kabbalist* rabbi Shem Tov ben Abraham Ibn Gaon, is now on display in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. The codex, an artistic and scientific master piece, was revealed as part of the exhibition ‘A Treasury of Words’. The manuscript, that was completed in Soria, Spain in 1312, reflects the intellectual and spiritual vitality of the *Sephardic* Jews. | Photo: National Library of Israel

UN Accused of Mafia-like Practices

The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, accused the UN of ‘mafia-like’ attempts to check aid to the Gaza Strip. According to Danon the UN uses threats, intimidation and retaliation against NGO’s that choose to take part in the distribution of food via the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). The GHF was recently established in the United States and is supported by Israel. Danon: “Not only has the UN refused to condemn Hamas for its attempts to sabotage the new aid centres, but the UN is also actively joining Hamas to block that aid.”

Bizarre Collection



An alarming report has revealed that British officials knowingly transferred tens of millions of pounds to UNICEF-operations in Gaza, fully aware that Hamas would directly control the distribution of the funds. This is evidenced by documents held by the Israeli *Channel 12*. British civil servants explicitly acknowledge that their funding would be “executed by the Hamas-led Ministry of Social Development (MoSD)”, with UNICEF planning to “closely collaborate with the Ministry in distributing cash”. The revelations raise concerns about aid misuse and strengthening a terrorist organisation. | Photo: Shutterstock

Iran in the Bible

Iran has rich Biblical heritage. Iran, or Persia, is mentioned many times in the Bible, and features as a key component of God's plans for His people. We first hear of Persia in the Bible in 2 *Chronicles* 26 (King Cyrus) and then in *Esther* 1 (King Xerxes). There are mentions throughout the books of 2 *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Haggai* and *Zechariah*—as well as references through the New Testament. Their physical evidence can be seen with the tombs of Esther, Daniel, Habakkuk and Cyrus the Great.

One of the most profound promises for modern-day Iran appears in *Jeremiah's* prophecy concerning Elam, a region within ancient Persia. *Jeremiah* 49:39: "Yet I will restore the fortunes of Elam in days to come," declares the Lord. Elam was located in what is now Khuzestan and Ilam Provinces in southwestern Iran. This verse continues to inspire hope that God's redemptive plans for Iran are still unfolding today.

Iran was also home to the Biblical Kings of Persia who succeeded the Babylonian Empire (including the exiled Jewish people)—Cyrus the Great, Darius, Xerxes (Ahasuerus), Artaxerxes. Cyrus the Great, who established the Persian Empire in the 6th century BC, is named more than 20 times in the Bible and is uniquely referred to as

God's anointed, a term usually reserved for Israelite leaders. *Isaiah* 45:1: "This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him ..."

King Cyrus obeyed God's command to allow the return of the Jewish people to their homes in Judah 70 years after their exile under the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. His Edict of Restoration in 538 BC (*Ezra* 1:1–4) enabled and helped them to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This moment marks one of the clearest cases of God using a Gentile leader to fulfill His prophetic promises.

Daniel 6 also occurs under Persian rule, where Daniel serves under King Darius and survives the lions' den. These stories showcase God's sovereignty even under foreign empires.

In the New Testament, the Wise Men who came with their gifts to worship the baby Jesus were likely to have been Magi, Persian astronomers from Yazd, Southern Iran. These Magi would have been familiar with Old Testament prophecies and were known for studying the heavens to identify changes that would indicate significant events, such as a star! Their recognition of the *Messiah's* star fulfilled the prophecy in *Numbers* 24:17: "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel."



The traditional Tomb of Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan, Iran. | Photo: Shutterstock

In Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave utterance in the languages of '... devout men from every nation under heaven ... Parthians, Medes, Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia...' These groups were all from regions in modern-day Iran. This moment underscores the early inclusion of Iranians in the Gospel story and highlights Iran's foundational role in the spread of Christianity.

As the early Church grew, Iran continued to be part of Biblical history. Iran was part of the church expansion led by the Apostle Thomas, who was

identified as the 'apostle to the Parthians', as he was assigned to minister in Parthia, a region of northeast Iran. Church historian Origen wrote that "Thomas' allotted field of labour was Parthia" where he worked alongside Bartholomew, planting seeds of faith in Persian territories before continuing his mission to India.

Iran's Biblical legacy runs deep, from King Cyrus to the Magi to the early church. Could its God-given purpose be reawakening today?

Edited by Managing Editor. Originally published at: <https://transformiran.com/learn/iran-in-the-bible/>

What Role Does Iran Play in Biblical Prophecy?

Iran, in its ancient forms (Elam, Media-Persia, etc.), occupies a significant place in both Old and New Testament history: from the time of Abraham (Genesis includes references to eastern tribes) to the reigns of Persian kings such as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, whose policies influenced the lives of exiled Israelites. This historical and Biblical connection forms the basis for prophecies that involve the territory we now call Iran.

Throughout Biblical prophecy and history, Iran (as Elam-Persia) serves as a testament to God's sovereignty over all kingdoms. Its share of both judgment and blessing underscores a divine narrative in which every nation has meaning and relevance. In these references, Scripture remains consistent with historical and archaeological findings, affirming the Biblical record's accuracy. The role of Iran in prophecy—whether in times past or in the future—demonstrates that God continues to orchestrate His redemptive plan for humanity, using nations and empires to fulfill His purposes.

Elam is mentioned as early as *Genesis* 14:1, describing conflicts between regional kings. Later, the prophets *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel* deliver specific oracles against Elam. The territory of Elam encompassed part of what is now southwestern Iran.

- Jeremiah* 49:34–35 notes: "This is the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet about Elam... 'Behold, I will shatter the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might.'" Jeremiah's prophecy specifies judgment against Elam, reflecting themes of divine correction upon nations that acted in opposition to God's purposes.

- Ezekiel* 32:24 refers to Elam's fallen warriors in the grave, showing that God's hand reaches all nations— even those in modern-day Iran. Prophetic passages often use Elam as a covenantal sign that God rules over all peoples.

As time progressed into the sixth century BC, the Elamite identity merged into the rising Persian Empire. The name 'Persia,' from the Hebrew

'Paras,' features starting with the latter part of 2 *Chronicles* and extending through *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, *Daniel*, and other prophetic writings. In the *Book of Daniel*, visions highlight the dominance of the Medo-Persian Empire, emphasising the sovereignty of God over world events.

- Daniel* 7:5 refers to a beast described as 'like a bear,' often identified with Medo-Persia.
- Daniel* 8 details a vision of a ram with two horns, typically interpreted as Media and Persia (*Daniel* 8:20).
- Daniel* 10–12 outlines future political conflicts, revealing God's foreknowledge of Persian rule and beyond.

Here, Persia is not merely a historical footnote but an empire launched by God's design to facilitate a key juncture in Israel's restoration from exile.

Ezekiel 38:5 notes "Persia, Cush, and Put will accompany them," referring to a confederation of nations in an end-times context. Many interpreters see this as indicating that Persia (modern

Iran) joins a coalition set against Israel in a climactic battle. This perspective, often found in conservative eschatological frameworks, places Iran (Persia) in a pivotal role against the people of God just prior to divine intervention.

Though interpretations differ, the text places Persia among Israel's historic adversaries in Ezekiel's end-time prophecy—highlighting Iran's potential role in a major future conflict.

Another notable passage with eschatological ramifications is *Jeremiah* 49:34–39. Verse 39 concludes, "But in the last days I will restore Elam," declares the Lord." Scholars highlight the dual component: judgment (breaking the bow) followed by eventual restoration. This suggests that while the Persian Empire era holds historical fulfillment, a latter-day aspect of God's plan may still be unfolding—possibly tied to end-times restoration, revival, or judgment in that region.

Edited by Managing Editor. https://biblehub.com/q/iran's_role_in_Biblical_prophecy.htm

The Revolutionary Regime in Tehran

On 1 February 1979, exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Tehran in triumph. By December, Iran had adopted a new constitution, establishing a Shiite theocracy with a supporting parliamentary democracy. On 7 December, Khomeini was declared Supreme Leader—Rahbar—becoming the highest spiritual and political authority, as well as Commander-in-Chief of the military and head of Iran’s security services. He alone can declare war. The Rahbar’s powers include appointing ministers, judges, police and media heads, shaping foreign and domestic policy, naming ambassadors via the Quds Corps, overseeing finances, amending laws, and selecting half of the influential 12-member Guardian Council. Though officially appointed and overseen by the 88-member Assembly of Experts, in practice his authority goes largely unchallenged, and the Assembly functions mostly as a ceremonial body. The life and legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini—now honoured with the title ‘Imam’—have been widely studied and remain deeply polarising. To some, he is still seen as the face of Shia Islam in Western popular culture. His defiance of the West, notably branding the US the ‘Great Satan’ during the 444-day embassy siege (1979–81), issuing a deadly ‘fatwa’ against author

Salman Rushdie in 1988, and leading Shia forces in the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88), cemented his status as both a spiritual icon and a symbol of anti-Western resistance in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini’s successor, the former 3rd President (1981–89), and 2nd ‘Supreme Leader’, Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei (b. 1939), is also a ‘Twelver Shia’ marja’ (Lit. ‘source to follow’). Khamenei has continued both in style and content the 1979 Islamic Revolution, in which 98% of Iranian voters backed a radical shift from the pro-Western/pro-US orientation of the last Shah to a new, ultra-conservative Islamic Republic. Though many in Iran today chafe at its radical Islamism few question the rationale for the Revolution. Monarchists are few and far between. The Iranian regime’s theocratic vision is rooted in ‘*Velayat-e Faqih*’—‘Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist’—which combines Shia authoritarianism with a militant drive to dominate the Arab world, destroy Israel, and oppose Western influence. To outsiders—including many Muslims—the oppressive theological and socio-political ethos of the Iranian regime remains an opaque, elitist, dangerous ideology intolerant of dissent and confident of its own rectitude. Critics condemn themselves for heresy.



Map of Iran. | Photo: Shutterstock

Mapping the mind and spirit of Iran is made more difficult by powerful crosscurrents in its on-going internal ‘Culture War’. The country’s ethnically diverse, globalised youth present the country’s ageing, authoritarian, clerical leadership with a significant challenge. Strict controls on the media and access to the internet by the country’s hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC; also known as Sepah and Pasdaran) and attentive ‘Morality Police’ fight an uphill battle against populist aversion to religio-ideological diktats and domestic intrusion. With an estimated ca. 200,000 inmates

in Iran’s 250+ prisons (including the infamous Evin Prison north of Tehran), a system commonly associated with fear, torture, intimidation, mutilation, and execution, assumes it can bend or bludgeon the mind, body and will of even the most resilient dissidents. The significant civil unrest after the death in police custody of Mahsa (or Jina) Amini (8 October 2000–16 September 2022), who publicly opposed the mandatory *hijab*, had dwindled by the Spring of 2023. But youthful opposition to the regime has not ended. Edited by Managing Editor. This article is an excerpt from: Oxford House/Sallux, *Making Sense of Iran* (2025). Reproduced with permission.

Modern Iran—Restless Quest for National Coherence

Iran lies east of Iraq and southeast of Turkey, with Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan to the north. It borders the Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf to the south. Its strategic location and natural resources shape its regional influence and global profile. Iran spans 1.65 million km² with a population of around 91.5 million (2025). Its GDP is \$1.698 trillion, with a per capita income of \$19,607. Despite ranking 17th in land and population and 23rd in total wealth, its average income ranks just 95th—well below most Gulf States. After Alexander’s victory over Darius III in 334 BCE, Persia was ruled by the Seleucids (from 312 BCE), followed by the Parthians, Sasanians (241–651 CE), and Arab Caliphates (632–1258 CE). Persian cohesion in politics, language, and culture remained limited until Arab rule gave way to regional dynasties, sparking a 10th–11th century ‘Persian Golden Age’. From the 14th to 18th

centuries, Persia was ruled by the Timurid, Safavid, Afsharid, and Zand dynasties, followed by the pro-Russian Qajars (1789–1925). The Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979) modernised Iran until the Islamic Revolution ousted the last Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in 1979. Understanding and interpreting the mind and spirit of this ancient Persian land has never been easy. The ancient city of Persepolis is a symbol of Iran’s fractured historic identity, its unity contingent on centralised ideological power and on forces sufficient to counter internal and external threats. The authoritarianism of the present regime, and its imposition of a restrictive Islamic worldview, aren’t new—nor, indeed, is its on-going attempt to suppress dissent and enforce national unity. Iran today is a composite construct on a restless quest for national coherence. Geography and history contribute to the conflicted, composite nature of Iranian culture and society. Vast geographically, Iran is home to multiple cultures and

languages, its central desert plateau ringed by (often) snow-clad peaks, its new cities and ancient monuments evoking its Persian roots and modern aspirations in a cacophonous ‘culture war’. In the early 21st century, 80% of Iranians have an Indo-European ethno-linguistic identity, with two-thirds having Persian as their first language and a third as their second. Many belong to the country’s (often regionally defined) minority communities. Among these are Persians (who are ethnically Mazenderanis, Gilaks or Talys), and Azerbaijanis (16–24%), Kurds (7–10%), Lurs (6%), Baluchis (2%), Turkic tribals (1%; incl. Qashqai and Turkmen), or from a (<3%) non-Turkic group (viz. Armenian, Georgian, Assyrian, Circassian and Arab). In addition, there are between 6–8m. Ahwazi Arabs in al-Ahwaz (viz. Khuzestan), with a further 2m. dispersed across Iran. Approximately 10% of Iranians are Arabs. While 99.98% of Iranians are officially listed as Muslims, there is an increasing disparity between Iranians’

public religious profile and their private opinions. Some recent studies reveal that in private only 32.2% of Iranians self-identify now as *Shia*, with 22% calling themselves ‘non-religious, atheist, agnostic, spiritual or secular humanist’. About 50% of Iranians are either religiously uncommitted, intellectually unpersuaded, or politically opposed to the style or content of the government’s directives on religion. Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism officially recognised and protected (with seats in the Iranian Parliament). Iran’s leaders know they can no longer assume popular support for their Islamist political ideology. Iranian diversity finds expression today in the country’s globalised youth and socio-intellectual elite who are as culturally, religiously, and morally ‘inclusive’ as their Western counterparts; albeit lacking their freedom, mobility, and socio-economic opportunities. Edited by Managing Editor. This article is an excerpt from: Oxford House/Sallux, *Making Sense of Iran* (2025). Reproduced with permission.

Bar Avraham Kupershtein

A Hero Who Saved Many Lives and Risked His Own

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

Bar is the eldest of five brothers and sisters, the supporter of his family and a hero. On 7 October 2023, Bar was abducted to Gaza, 21 years old at the time. He has since been held in captivity by the terrorist organisation Hamas.

On the dark day of 7 October 2023, Bar was working as a security guard at the Nova Music Festival to generate extra income to support his family. Bar's father, Tal, who worked as a volunteer paramedic for many years, had been called out for an emergency three years earlier. On the way there, he had an accident on his motorcycle. His leg was so badly injured that several operations were necessary as a result. During one of them, he suffered a stroke. Since then, he has been unable to walk and can barely speak. In this situation, son Bar, who had just turned 18, stepped in to help his mother Julie, becoming the *de facto* family breadwinner. He felt responsible for the family, lovingly taking care of his four younger siblings and working various jobs.

Before he was brutally abducted into Gaza from the site of the Nova Music Festival, Bar spoke on the phone with his grandmother, Faina, and his mother, Julie, about the sirens and missiles. At that point, he still believed that it was a 'usual rocket attack', as Israel had experienced many times. He assured his mum and grandmother that all would be good; he would make sure that all visitors would leave the site of the festival, pack his things and make his way home. Half an hour later, at 7am, he stopped answering his phone.

Being the leader of the security team, Bar felt responsible to stay and help.

Eyewitnesses reported that Bar stayed behind to assist the injured during the brutal assault until he was taken captive. In a video released by Hamas following his abduction, Bar was seen crammed in the back of a pickup truck, lying on his stomach with his hands cuffed behind his back.

At around 12 noon on that day, the family received a video on Telegram, live from Gaza, showing Bar lying on the floor, completely bound from head to toe, together with four other young men, looking terrified.

On 5 April 2025, another video was sent to the family showing Bar and a fellow-hostage, Maxim Herkin, begging to bring them home, talking about having no fresh air, starvation and losing hope being in a tunnel 30 metres under street level.

Heroic Deeds

In Israel, Bar is seen as a hero. His best friend Din, who worked alongside Bar as a security guard, witnessed his heroic deeds. Din miraculously escaped from the site after a few hours and was the last person to see Bar. He told the family that Bar had initially tried to regulate traffic. After the first car returned to the site with a bleeding girl who had been shot, they understood that something was wrong. Hamas was blocking the cars on the road and shot everybody who tried to escape. More and more wounded appeared, and shots were heard

everywhere. Bar tried to help them, bandaging the wounds with T-shirts and other clothing lying around, taking all that he could find. He also tried to hide the wounded and did not want to leave them. Not for a second did he think of fleeing or saving his own life.

One father reported that he was talking on the phone to his daughter after she had been shot in her leg. Bar was busy nursing her wounds. When offering to drive to the Nova site, Bar shouted to him over the phone, "Do not come here, it is far too dangerous." While the shooting was still going on, Din and Bar managed to open the emergency exit in the direction of the village of Patisch. Most of the young people who could save their lives had fled in this direction. When the situation became more dangerous, Bar told Din to get himself to safety. Being the leader of the security team, Bar felt responsible to stay and help others. He saved many lives on that day. In photos, one can see that Bar also joined the police officers who were in the vicinity, hoping that they would have a chance to prevent the worst. 364 people were massacred at the site of the Nova Music Festival on that day.

Dvir, Bar's brother, remarks: "Bar is not just another hostage; he's my brother, he's a hero. He's the one who evacuated the injured under fire, saving lives at the Nova Music Festival. He's the one who kept going back to save just one more person, and when he needed help, there was no one there to save him."

On 1 April 2025, Bar turned 23—his second birthday as a hostage in Hamas captivity. Tal Kupershtein, Bar's father, who has been working hard to improve his impaired speech, invited the public to mark the occasion with the Kupershtein family.

"Bar, we love you and are proud of you. Hang in there—you're never alone. We will celebrate your birthday at Hostages Square, and I invite everyone to come and mark your birthday with me," he said on television. "He doesn't know I can speak, I hope he hears me", he added.

Birthday Wishes from Vienna

Bar's aunt, Marianne G, who lives in Vienna, wrote Bar a beautiful letter for his 23rd birthday, which she will give to him as soon as he is freed.

"Bar, my dear Bar, today is your 23rd birthday, but instead of seeing you laughing and celebrating, you are not here. Sorry for what you must endure and go through..., sorry that we haven't managed to get you out of this hell yet..."

I would like to tell you that your dream is coming true, and I wish you could see your father, how great he already speaks, how he is already taking his first steps with a lot of effort and motivation to make you proud. How he, your whole family and many friends are tirelessly fighting for you...

Bar, I promise you with God's help we will get you out of this, I firmly believe in it. I want to promise you for your birthday that we will never give up, if you only knew how many people miss you and want to get to know you. We are fighting and praying with all our strength!"

Together with Bar Kupershtein's family and all the other families, we hope and pray for the return of all the hostages!



Bar Kupershtein. | Photos: Private



Bar Kupershtein's father Tal and his aunt.



Tal Kupershtein at Hostage Square.



The Nova Music Festival site with a photo of Bar Kupershtein.



From Warfare to Lawfare

■ Prof Gregory Rose & Anthony Bergin
thinc. | www.thinc.org

The ongoing Iran-Israel war has transitioned into international lawfare. The Security Council held a high-level open debate on peace and security on 22 July, chaired by Pakistan, hardly a neutral choice.

Political campaigning by various state funded news and current affairs programmes will continue to cherry-pick legal commentary that asserts Zionist criminality for striking the Iranian war machine. Agenda-driven academic pundits produced arguments to constrain and delegitimise Israel and called for prosecutions in the International Criminal Court against Israelis for committing the crime of aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Assessment of the legal legitimacy of Israel's military strikes against Iran rests largely upon the reliability of covert intelligence that informed these actions. This can make it difficult to collect legal proofs and form a legal judgment.

As in counter-terrorism, governments must act before the terrorist carries out the deed. Tehran considers Israel a tumour in the body of regional Islam.

However, the US and Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure appear to have been informed by accurate intelligence and well-executed. All the evidence suggests that they hit and severely damaged important targets. And when the likely costs are higher for military inaction than for action, even when intelligence is undisclosed, then it might be more prudent to act than not.

To cast doubt upon the prudence of the Israeli strikes, journalists speculated that loads of highly enriched uranium were evacuated by trucks photographed at Fordow facility before the bombing, but it's puzzling that the reports assumed the Israelis failed to follow those trucks. Others questioned the effectiveness of killing Iran's top nuclear weapons scientists because their knowledge could have been passed on, but they ignored



People take cover as siren warns of incoming missiles fired from Iran, on Road number 1 between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 15 June 2025. | Photo: Flash90

the likely impact of suddenly eliminating Iranian scientists who had worked for decades on Tehran's nuclear programme. It was the equivalent of wiping out all the scientists in the Manhattan Project, the US-led research and development project during the

Second World War that created the first nuclear weapons.

It has been disappointing to read the legal views that definitively condemn the strikes as illegal because, amongst other reasons, the UN Security Council didn't approve them. The legal accusations allege that Israel had no right of self-defence under Section 51 of the UN Charter in the circumstances it faced. But these allegations are totally disengaged from factual assessments and from generally prevailing realities.

They disregard, for example, the continuing war conducted by Iran against the existence of the state of Israel. There can be no dispute that Iran and Israel have been in an armed conflict for well over a year. Iran's concerted attacks reached a fever pitch in the military campaign from 7 October

2023. Iran was responsible for them and also attacked Israel directly with ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and long-distance drones in 2024.

It was apparent on the ground that Iran had formed a ring of fire in the form of proxies, including Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups. The Islamic Republic of Iran provided finance, training, weaponry, intelligence and instruction for these non-state actors surrounding Israel to destroy the Jewish state. They were puppets in a Persian play. Academic conjectures published in Australia ignored this factual context of ongoing Iranian state-directed attacks against Israel, despite its obvious fundamental relevance. In that context alone, Israel's targets were entirely lawful.

To negate the legality of Israel's strikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure, legal pundits focused instead on arguments about pre-emptive self-defence, even though it was not necessary. Moreover, they failed to articulate evolution in this doctrine to contemporary international legal practice.

The pre-emptive self-defence doctrine, formulated in 1837 for the Caroline case between Britain and the US, required that a threat be imminent. But military practice concerning the threshold for imminence has evolved since then. Nuclear destruction is an existential threat that doesn't allow dilatory

options to wait and see if we are being destroyed.

As in counter-terrorism, governments must act before the terrorist carries out the deed. Tehran considers Israel a tumour in the body of regional Islam. The suggestion that, if Iran didn't have a bomb about to drop that day, then the military strikes were illegal, is wrong. Israel didn't need to wait till that moment. Whether posed directly by ballistic missiles or by delivery through proxies, the probability threshold today is lower for taking preventative action against an existential nuclear threat than in the nineteenth century.

In the end, the Israeli intelligence that underpinned the strikes tells us that the twenty-first century is a lot more complicated than was the nineteenth. The point at which intelligence inferences cross a threshold into actionable information has shifted. It isn't constrained by factually uninformed, arcane or antiquated legal arguments.

This brand of lawfare is just one of many manifestations of antagonism to the lone Jewish state. It's a barometer reading of the pressure of modern iterations of an old hatred.

Greg Rose is honorary professor of international law at the University of Wollongong and Senior Fellow at The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation.

Anthony Bergin is a senior fellow at Strategic Analysis Australia.



Israel—False Narratives

■ John Carstensen

There are many false narratives in the international media concerning Israel and the conflict in the Middle East, in many cases inversions of what is actually happening, with Israel being accused of what it has been a victim of.

Israel is Accused of Rejecting the Two-State Solution, that Would Cede Territory to Create a Palestinian State

That may be true now, while Israel is at war, but historically Israel has agreed on a number of occasions to accept Palestinian demands for a separate Palestinian state. The sticking point has always been the Palestinian refusal to recognise Israel as a sovereign state. In the 2000 Camp David meeting, Israel offered to cede 95% of West Bank, all of Gaza and East Jerusalem as an autonomous Palestinian state. PLO leader Arafat rejected the peace deal brokered by US President Clinton and walked away to launch the Al Aqsa Intifada terrorist attacks. In 2008 Israeli PM Olmert offered even more sweeping concessions than the 2000 deal and Palestinian President Abbas rejected the offer. The subtext, presumably is, “No, we want all of Israel.”

Israel is Accused of Being a Coloniser of Palestinian Land and is Illegally Occupying the West Bank

Israel is the homeland of Jews who, notwithstanding the diaspora, have had a continuous presence in the land for 3,500 years. The so called occupied territories of the West Bank (of the Jordan River) the Jewish heartland of Judea and Samaria. When the alliance of Arab countries declared war on Israel in 1948, 700,000 Arabs (who would now call themselves Palestinians) left Israel in anticipation of returning to a Palestine ethnically cleansed of Jews, as promised by the Arab Brotherhood. At the same time 600,000 Jews fled to Israel from the Arab countries in which they had been living, with no right of return.

Israel is Accused of Being an Apartheid State

Israel society bears no genuine comparison with South Africa of the apartheid era, where non-whites were discriminated against, disenfranchised and marginalised. Arab and Moslem Palestinians are represented in the Israeli parliament and are represented in high positions throughout Israeli society, e.g. as judges, including a supreme court judge, as diplomats, university professors and doctors. Jews, on the other hand are not permitted to live in areas of the so



Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, on 3 July 2025. | Photo: Flash90

The land of present day Israel was covenanted by God as an everlasting possession for the Jews, more land, in fact than they presently occupy, before it was partitioned by the UN.

called West Bank which are controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

Israel Accused of Genocidal War Against Palestinians

It is Hamas which is waging a genocidal war against Israel. Their charter states their intention to annihilate Israel, to kill all Jews in Israel and anywhere in the world. Hamas has vowed to repeat their attacks of 7 October on Israeli civilians.

Unlike Hamas, the IDF does not deliberately target civilians. Some civilian casualties are inevitable in warfare but the IDF take extensive measures to avoid civilian casualties, a task made difficult by the Hamas tactic of using their own people as human shields and embedding themselves in schools, hospitals, mosques and refugee centres. The IDF give advanced warning for civilians to evacuate before striking military targets. *World Israel News* on 28 January 2024 reported, “IDF soldiers were assisting children, the sick and elderly to evacuate, while civilians complained that Hamas was preventing them from leaving combat areas.” There are even reports of Hamas moving civilians, including children into the targeted areas. Israel has been described by British Colonel, Richard Kemp, as “the world’s most moral army, going above and beyond in its efforts to protect the lives of civilians.”

Independent American military experts have also confirmed that the IDF take

unprecedented efforts to avoid civilian casualties.

International media are depicting Israel as the aggressor and accusing Israel of genocide. The UN upheld a charge of genocide against Israel, brought by South Africa (but initiated by Iran). Israel was consequently ordered not to harm Gazans (with no distinction made between Hamas terrorists and civilians). Israel has continued to prosecute the war against Hamas and in November 2024 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes, with the arrest warrants classified as ‘secret’, in order to protect witnesses and to safeguard the conduct of the investigations. The ICC decision is currently under review, at the time of writing.

During the conflict Hamas has been stealing humanitarian aid coming into Gaza and selling it on the black market. The media are reporting Hamas’ accusations that Israel is blocking aid and starving the people of Gaza. The Hamas Ministry of Health publishes reports on numbers of civilian casualties, which independent investigations have shown to be false, but are still reported as factual in the media.

Pope Francis remarked that Israel’s operations in Gaza “is not a war. It’s cruelty,” and he accused the Jewish state

of “bombing children and mowing them down with machine guns.” He also claimed that “what is happening in Gaza has characteristics of genocide.” It’s the age old blood libel of Jews killing children.

The Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres, responded to news of the 7 October attack and the atrocities by stating, “They did not occur in a vacuum,” implying Israel brought it on themselves.

Hostages held by Hamas have been mistreated and some murdered. Hamas handed over dead bodies of some hostages. Of the Bibas family, the mother and two young children, Ariel and Kfir, were strangled and their bodies were mutilated to mimic the injuries of a missile strike. Hamas claimed they were killed in an Israeli attack and reported as such in the media. In February 2025, NBC referred to Hamas terrorists in Israeli jails as hostages and the BBC referred to Israeli hostages as prisoners.

I am often surprised by how willing people are to make excuses for Hamas. Some claim that claims of atrocities committed by Hamas on 7 October have all pretty much been debunked. Really? Despite eye witness testimonies, photos and videos and Hamas themselves boasting of the atrocities they committed? This sounds like Holocaust denial. In a conversation I had with a pro-Palestinian apologist, I referred to the Palestinian charter which states the aim of annihilating all the Jews of Israel, of ethnically cleansing Israel and the Middle East. No, I was told, they changed that. Really? When did they change it?

It is hard to find a rational explanation for all these irrational accusations against Israel, without looking to the Bible for spiritual causes, and concluding that there is a demonic/satanic dynamic at play. Satan has been defeated by Jesus, who was and is a Jew, and Satan has a particular hatred of Jews. The Jews, despite whatever failings historically, are irrevocably God’s chosen people. Satan, “the accuser” (*Revelation 12:10*) and “the father of lies” (*John 8:44*) and master of deception, cannot attack God directly, so attacks the Jews. The land of present day Israel was covenanted by God as an everlasting possession for the Jews, more land, in fact than they presently occupy. Recourse to the Bible has no currency in secular society but even on purely historical and political grounds Israel has a right to exist as a sovereign state as a Jewish homeland, and to defend itself from its enemies who seek to destroy it.



Necessity: *Haredi* Draft—Part 5

■ Joanna Moss

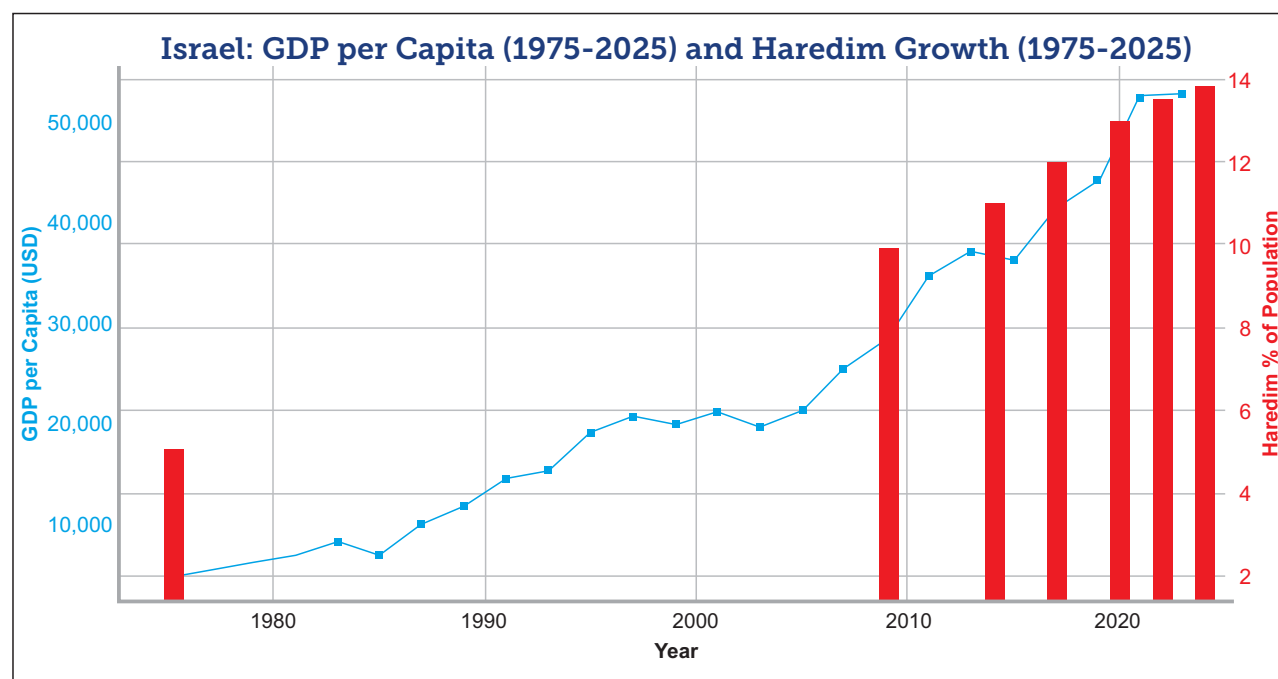
In the last edition, we examined the issue of Equity. It is not only *Haredi* males who do not serve in the IDF, but other sectors of society such as Arabs, Bedouin, *Haredi* women *et al.* We examined the fact that many *Haredim* do not even receive a basic education and are therefore ill-equipped to join the workforce, let alone the IDF. Problematically, they are increasingly being left behind.

In this article the topic is Necessity. Israel is at war. In plain terms, Israel needs more soldiers and more money for the war effort. There isn't another Jewish pool to tap other than the *Haredim*. In the mid 1970s, 60-70% of them served. So it is not as if they never served. From the 1977 Begin administration onwards they stopped serving. Israelis were willing to tolerate *Haredim* not serving when there was no pressing need and times were good, but no longer. 7 October has changed everything, including the social contract. Those serving are 'paying' too high a price in multiple areas.

The issue of Necessity is three-fold: the rising *Haredi* share of the population, manpower shortages and financial contributions. Not only do the *Haredim* not serve in the IDF or in any form of substitute social services, but they do not contribute much economically. Yet they receive generous contributions from the taxpayer. These grants stem from the ruling coalition when PM Netanyahu's Likud joined with two *Haredi* parties, United Torah Judaism-UTJ (*Ashkenazi*) and Shas (*Sephardic*). Over time these leaders have leveraged their political power to provide generous benefits and allowances for their *Haredi* constituents. The greater the numbers, the more votes. Such targeted privileges annoy many Israelis. In the current climate these benefits are not sustainable.

Haredi Population Share

When Israel became a state there were about 400 *Haredim* who were set aside for full-time *Torah* study. They were treated like museum artifacts that needed to be preserved. Over time their numbers grew in an attempt to reclaim the numbers lost during the Holocaust. In 1977 there were 212,000 (5.6%). That number climbed to 750,000 by 2009, constituting 10% of the population. By 2015 it was over 900,000. It jumped over the million mark in 2017 representing 12% staggering growth. Although their birthrate was



Israel's stellar rise in GDP per capita has occurred despite sectors like *Haredim* restricting growth.

enormous, the rate has come down in the last few years. Currently, *Haredim* comprise 14% of the population (1.395 million+), but 25% of kindergarten students, a harbinger of future problems. It's not just the sheer numbers and overall percentage, but the power they can wield as a voting block. Given this fact, non-*Haredim* see this era as the time for radical change. Soon, the *Haredi* percentage will make it impossible to form a right-wing government without them. In addition, the social contract is being sorely tested.

Manpower Shortage

IDF needs at least 7,000 combat soldiers urgently. Currently there are 80,000 *Haredi* males aged 18-26 not serving. About 50% of *Haredi* males work, but mostly in low skill jobs based on their limited education. Less than 10% serve in the IDF. Past recruiting efforts have failed to increase numbers significantly. Something had to change, hence the court case challenging the legal status of their exemption. If *Haredim* served, there would be less need for reserve soldier call ups, thus supporting IDF personnel, marriages, families and secular businesses, and the economy overall. In July the IDF will issue 54,000 draft notices with enlistment appointments across the 2025 draft year following the Supreme Court ruling mandating their conscription. The carrot failed, now it's time for the stick.

Financial Contributions

Israel's stellar rise in GDP per capita funded the *Haredim* in good times. War puts an incredible strain on people and resources. Israel is vulnerable to losing its best brains and 'rainmakers' who drive economic growth. Some people may say the burden is too great and move offshore. *Haredim* receive funding from the state and private donors; primarily in the US. These donors often felt guilty for prospering in America when the Orthodox in Europe suffered or were killed in the Holocaust. They also saw it as a means of strengthening *Judaism* in Israel and helping out the needy Jews. Many of the *Haredim* Yeshiva buildings bear the names of foreign donors and donor relations is a key part of their activities. Put simply, *Haredim* had children without the means to pay for them; which is why their levels of overcrowding and poverty are high. The war has caused a budget review and some overseas donors are increasingly looking at more constructive ways to give to Israel, leaving *Haredim* vulnerable. A recent study showed they contribute only 4% of general taxation. The average non-*Haredi* family pays NIS 7,000 in taxes whereas the average *Haredi* family receives NIS 5,000 in benefits, that is a net 12,000 gap. Naturally, other Israelis have had enough. Watch this space!

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Levin Delights in Hosting

Ebenezer's Richard and France Brader arranged a welcome event for the Ambassador in the Horowhenua in early June. Supporters came from as far afield as Palmerston North, rural Manawatu and the Kapiti Coast, many of whom had missed an earlier Palmerston event. Lifechangers Church proved an excellent venue for the evening with Pastors Richard and Jo Brons as admirable hosts.

The evening began with a short video on the work of Ebenezer Operation Exodus (EOENZ), followed by signing of national anthems and formal welcomes of various group leaders including Philip Johnson from Ebenezer and Ps Paul White representing the local pastors. The Ambassador, Alon Roth-Snir recounted his family's Holocaust story of rescue, then making *Aliyah* to Israel arriving there as *olim* in 1950. He commented that *Aliyah* remains a vital source of energy to modern Israel.

The war was on most people's minds and so much more so for an Ambassador with relatives serving. He spoke about the impact of the war on Israeli society and how remote the media coverage in NZ is from a



(Left to right): Anne Higgins, Abbey and Philip Johnson, Ambassador Alon Roth-Snir, Richard and France Brader.

comprehensive understanding of the realities of the Middle East and the resultant issues facing NZ. But it was the issue of truth that most concerns him here. He urged supporters to stand up for truth where falsehoods are presented. He cited the example of Jesus being portrayed as a Palestinian and no one calling it out.

Levin is probably the most Israel-friendly place in NZ thanks to the prayers and special efforts by Israel supporters in local churches. It is an example to supporters around the country of what can be done. The Ambassador took the time to meet all the supporters who approached him with information about their local efforts.

Tribute to Yaron

Yaron Lischinsky was the first Israeli staff member of an Israeli Embassy killed. He was murdered alongside his American girlfriend also an Israeli Embassy staffer, in Washington DC. It is a painful reminder of the risks diplomats face. They had gone to an event at the Capital Jewish museum and were gunned down as they left. What made their death more tragic was that they were due to travel together to Israel a few days later where Yaron was going to propose to Sarah Milgrim. They had their whole lives ahead of them, lives that were brutally cut short.

What made Yaron so unique was that Yaron believed in Jesus as *Messiah*. Yaron loved the Lord and he was passionate about Israel and bridging cultural and religious divides. His father was an Argentine Jew and his mother a German Christian. That already made him somewhat unique. But it was his employment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that made him stand out. Few believers could even imagine an entrée to these hallowed halls, let alone a position at the prestigious Embassy in Washington DC. Yet Yaron was the first one murdered in cold blood.



A memorial event in Israel for Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Lynn Milgrim. | Photo: Flash90

What does this all mean?

"Truly, truly I tell you unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed, but if it dies it bears much fruit." John 12:24

Far away in NZ, lives a believer who knew Yaron well. The news hit hard. It was very personal. Below lies her tribute to Yaron.

"Yaron was a kind, gentle and reserved young man whom I was blessed to know within the young adults community in Jerusalem.

His life here on earth was cut short but his gentleness and kindness will always be remembered.

We will continue the work he did, advocating and standing up for Israel. God bless, fellow Jerusalemite"

Anzac Horses

■ Warren Dawson

Co-chair | New Zealand Israel Friendship Association

The Doc Edge Film Festival's *Devils on Horses* is a must-see documentary for every New Zealander. It depicts very significant New Zealand history, largely forgotten or untold, occurring during WWI and centred in that part of the Middle East, which is now modern-day Israel. It portrays the strong bond which the soldiers formed with their horses. Directors Edward Sampson and Terry Kingi have done a fantastic job in pulling together archive footage and interviews with a number of professional people and relatives to provide an accurate assessment of the life and times in this particular theatre of war.

The Sinai Peninsula and Palestine campaign is largely an untold story, as there was no New Zealand war correspondent assigned to that particular battlefield. Also, many of the soldiers who fought in this campaign stayed on as peacekeepers in Egypt. At the end of the war, when they finally arrived home, they were just expected to slot into civilian life. Many of the soldiers carried psychological wounds that were

never identified, which burdened them for the remainder of their lives.

The documentary portrays an important part of New Zealand's history which helped change much in the region. The New Zealanders assisted in liberating many Jewish settlements that had been under Ottoman control for some 400 years. A wonderful backstory to the documentary is the fact that Terry Kingi has created a safe haven for rescue horses, with many of them being used in filming reenactment scenes for the documentary. Alongside these horses, the soldiers who played roles in the film were ex-servicemen who are now adjusting to life after time in the forces, something that can be very difficult to adjust to at times. Produced with limited finances, they have done a wonderful job and should be commended for a work that preserves important New Zealand history.

I write with a little bit of authority on the matter as my grandfather went through this campaign and sent or brought home newspapers, 174 letters and a well-written field diary that parallels this documentary.

DCC: Misuse of Public Office

■ Yana Greenman

Last month, the Dunedin City Council (DCC) narrowly voted to support the Green Party's Unlawful Occupation of Palestine Sanctions Bill, calling on the Government to impose sanctions on Israel. After more than three hours of debate, time that could have been spent on the real challenges facing Dunedin, the vote was tied 7-7 and passed only after the committee chair used her casting vote.

This event raises serious concerns. Local councils are elected to manage local services, not foreign affairs. Councillors are not international relations experts, and while they currently have the legal mandate to pass such motions, it is widely acknowledged that this constitutes an inappropriate use of local authority power. Hopefully a new law will formally prohibit this type of overreach.

The Mayor, who opposed the motion, fulfilled his obligation to send a letter to the Government and included the names of those for and against, ensuring transparency and accountability. Ironically, he faced criticism for his honesty.

Of 13 public submissions, three spoke up for Israel, including brave contributions from Pastors Nigel Woodley and Roly Van Noppen. Their courage in defending truth and moral clarity should be commended.

Let's be clear: New Zealanders rightly value free speech, and councillors are entitled to personal views. But ratepayer funded council time should be used to serve the public interest, not spent on symbolic motions with no real world impact and actions far from city council mandates.

Even more troubling is the double standard. Has the DCC condemned the war in Syria, the oppression of women in Iran, or actions by Afghanistan and Turkey? No. But when it comes to the only Jewish state defending itself from radical Islamists, the council suddenly speaks out, without context, balance, or regard for the facts.

Dunedin's elected officials should focus on what truly matters to their residents. Otherwise, let's face it, this is pure populism ahead of the upcoming elections, promoting division and fueling hate within the community.

Sean Plunket: An Unlikely Ally

■ Heather Moore

New Zealand's Jewish and Israeli community has found an unlikely ally in outspoken radio host Sean Plunket.

Invited by the Jewish National Fund to speak of his trip to Israel in March, Mr Plunket encouraged members of the Jewish community not to hide in the shadows. He said while there was an "underbelly of intolerance" (towards Jewish people) spreading in New Zealand they would be surprised by how many people would stand with them. Mr Plunket said for New Zealanders as a whole there was more support for Israel than for the Palestinian supporters "Antisemitism is a social contagion," he said "but I believe that right does win. You've got to have faith. Give decent New Zealanders a chance."

Mr Plunket spent six days in Israel in March at the invitation of Australia Israel and Jewish Affairs Council describing it as "one of the most marvellous opportunities in my journalistic career". He visited Be'eri *kibbutz* near the Gaza border where many were taken hostage, the Nova Music Festival site, as well as travel to the north of Israel to the Golan Heights, speaking with survivors, Israeli

and Arab soldiers fighting in the IDF, journalists and even Palestinian leaders about the war. He said New Zealanders, through mainstream media, were only seeing the United Nations and globalist version of the war in Israel. They were not getting the truth.

Since January 2024, Mr Plunket has spoken out for Israel after viewing a documentary with graphic footage from the 7 October attacks. He questioned then Human Rights Commissioner Paul Hunt's silence after the screening and was surprised by his reluctance to speak out. "Having seen what I saw and Hunt's reaction I realised this was a thing I would have to take a position on," he said, knowing he was on a different side to most of his colleagues.

He said the documentary drew global media interest—except in New Zealand—highlighting the challenges with local media. He noted several TV journalists here had previously worked for Al Jazeera, which is partially funded by the Qatari government.

Having prided himself on presenting unbiased news coverage for 40 years Mr Plunket said nothing had happened since (January 2024) to convince him his stand

for Israel was not the right decision.

Mr Plunket said in the days after 7 October he could immediately perceive the world's reaction and mainstream media were not supportive of Israel and took sides almost immediately.

He said the last time he took a side was during the 1990's against apartheid. But he said back then there was no moral quibbling or media equivalence. He said it "beggars belief" that we have a debate about right and wrong over this issue.

He also said it was good to see MP Chris Bishop taking a stand for Israel, but it had disappointed him that Winston Peters, despite saying he would attend, was a 'no show' at Israel's 77th anniversary celebration. "Aren't you supposed to stand by your friends?"

Mr Plunket is known for political commentary for TV3 and talkback radio, and more recently as founder of online radio station *The Platform*, which promotes itself as an alternative to 'taxpayer-funded media.'

Mr Plunket said he would return to Israel "in a heartbeat." Full coverage of his stories and encounters during his time in Israel are still available to view on *The Platform* and *You Tube* channels.

Australia Acts NZ: "Us Too"

■ J-Wire

New Zealand's Jewish leadership is urging the Government to adopt a national strategy to combat antisemitism, following Australia's bold new plan and the re-confirmation of a neo-Nazi group on NZ's terrorism watchlist.

The NZ Jewish Council and Holocaust Centre cited a "marked rise in antisemitic incidents," especially at universities, urging urgent action.

Australia's strategy, launched by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, takes a 'zero-tolerance' approach across education, media, and public service. In contrast, NZ's Government has remained silent.

"This is not theoretical—it's Jew-hate," said NZ Jewish Council spokesperson Ben Kepes.

Jewish leaders welcomed *The Base's* ongoing terrorist designation but warned that symbolic actions alone aren't enough.

"Australia has acted. We urge our leaders to do the same."

COMS



Coalition of Ministers Supporting Israel

The Coalition of Ministers Supporting Israel – COMS Israel – is a confidential list of Church ministers in New Zealand whose collective voice empowers them to speak publicly into issues that defend the right of the State of Israel to protect its homeland and keep its identity as a Jewish State. COMS-Israel respects God's everlasting covenant to Abraham and therefore defends the right of the Jewish people to live on their historical, indigenous, and Biblical homeland (*Gen. 13:14-15; 17:8; 48:3-4, Gal.3:17-18*).

COMS-Israel consists of Church ministers and pastors from Pentecostal, Baptist, Brethren, Polynesian, Presbyterian, Anglican and other churches who feel it is time to add a united Christian voice to speak into the controversy over Zion.

The group was formed after 7 October 2023 when outrageous public statements were being published by the NZ Council of Imams and the Federation of Islamic Associations NZ (FIANZ) accusing Israel wrongfully and calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from New Zealand. Since that time our group has grown to over one hundred ministers and it continues to grow.

If you are a New Zealand Church minister and have an affinity with the people of Israel and desire for your voice to be counted, then please use the QR codes that follow to get more information and to access the opportunity to register your name to this confidential list of pastors and ministers. There are no hidden charges – it is free!



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Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity—Part 2

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

This article is the second in a four-part series in which Dr Sheree Trotter responds to claims made by Tina Ngata, highlighting the fundamental flaws and dangers of the settler colonialist model.

Ngata's reference to 'Euro-Christianity' fails to understand that while the message came via European vessels, it was the Bible itself and its story that impacted our people. The original languages of the book, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, affirm its origin in or near the land of Israel. It tells a Middle Eastern story, not a European one. The writers of the book, the prophets, apostles and the one recognised as *Messiah* were all Jewish. As a Māori friend states, "the Bible changed us". To deny this fact dishonours our *tupuna* by despising the choices they made.

Many Māori identified particularly with the Israelite history of the Old Testament, leading to the development of several Māori prophetic movements including *Ringatū*, *Iharaira* faith and *Pai Marire*. Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana, became known as a healer and founded a religion based on Christian ideas. He was also an indigenous activist who attempted to take the case of Treaty breaches to King George in London and to the League of Nations in Geneva. He later formed the Rātana party. He is said to have held the Treaty in one hand and the Bible in the other.

The Kiingitanga movement, arguably the most powerful Māori body in Aotearoa, had a Christian foundation, and also honoured the Queen. When Pōtatau was declared the king at Ngāruawāhia in 1858, Iwikau Te Heuheu spoke: "Potatau, this day I create you King of the Maori people. You and Queen Victoria shall be bound together to be one (*paiheretia kia kotahi*). The religion of Christ shall be the mantle of your protection; the law shall be the *whariki* mat for your feet, for ever and ever onward (*ake, ake tonu atu*)."

The following year Pōtatau was confirmed as king at Ngāruawāhia and anointed by Wiremu Tāmihana Tarapipipi Te Waharoa who held a Bible over Pōtatau's head in the *whakawahinga* ceremony. This ceremony continues to this day.

Ngata claims Indigenous people recognise each other in the forums that matter, at Indigenous conferences and hui. Does she recognise the Rātana, Ringatū, Iharaira faiths and the many thousands of Evangelical and Pentecostal Māori who turn up to hui and meetings up and down the country? Or does she summarily dismiss all these and deny them their *whakapapa*, their



Sheree Trotter. | Photo: Perry Trotter

heritage, because they don't fit her narrow politicised worldview?

Unsurprisingly, many Māori Christians support Israel. In 2024, the Indigenous Coalition for Israel led the establishment of an Indigenous Embassy in Jerusalem, as a platform for expression of indigenous solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people. The IEJ is non-sectarian and offers representation to all Indigenous peoples who support Israel, regardless of their belief system. We soon discovered that such an embassy had been a desire of Indigenous peoples for decades, and that in 1999, one hundred Native American chiefs and leaders went to Israel's Knesset and expressed their desire for an embassy. The aforementioned Monte Ohia played a significant role encouraging Indigenous peoples to worship in their uniquely Indigenous ways; for Māori, with *haka*, *poi* and *Te Reo Māori*, and for the First Nations of Turtle Island, by taking up their drums and wearing their traditional regalia. Ohia had a massive impact on the Indigenous peoples of that network. This was an example of decolonisation without the totalising, harmful ideology of settler colonialism. It allowed for change and the embrace of new ideas, while affirming the historic identity of Indigenous peoples.

Settler colonialism is a political construct which fails to deal with the reality of complex histories, histories which do not fit within its binary modalities, whose necessary implication casts all settlers as oppressors and all Māori as victims. There are usually oppressors and victims on both sides. Ngata's blanket statement "Western colonialism... is the source of all Indigenous oppression around the world" allows no room for agency and implies there was no oppression prior to colonisation. History tells us otherwise. *Te Ao Māori* was certainly no utopia prior to colonisation and our own *Iwi*

histories sometimes shock us. Settler colonialism fails to take into account the numerous factors that contribute to oppression. It's simply intellectually lazy to blame colonisation for all the ills experienced today.

In the 19th century, many Māori chose to engage with the Westminster parliamentary system. In 1867 Māori seats were created, one of the longest-standing examples of Indigenous representation in a modern national parliament. Our *tupuna* engaged with new and novel ideas, techniques, practices and were successful entrepreneurs. They did not all see themselves as victims. Settler colonialism's blanket generalisations fail to deal with lived reality, the psychological forces at play and the ways in which cultures change and develop. Such an ideology must keep Indigenous peoples trapped in a mentality of grievance and victimism, otherwise it will collapse. The system lumps factors such as modernity and urbanisation under the one rubric of colonisation. It fails to acknowledge the benefits of these developments and the ways in which many Māori have embraced and exploited modernity and achieved great success internationally in multiple fields—arts, business, sport, music—all the while affirming their indigenous identity. Ngata rejects the 'colonial economy' leaving no room for Māori business leaders like Jamie Tuuta, Rukumoana Schaahausen, Tukuroirangi Morgan and Justin Tipa who at the recent Infrastructure Investment Summit advocated for foreign investors to partner with Māori.

Another stream of the political lineage Ngata espouses has a dominant Marxist foundation. It looks to the likes of Cuban leader Fidel Castro and PLO leader Yasser Arafat, two men responsible for the murder of thousands. These ideas were elaborated

upon by Donna Awatere in her 1984 book *Māori Sovereignty*. Awatere created a platform for Māori sovereignty, modelled on the ideas of the terrorist group Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF). The founding document of the PLP designated Israel, Zionism, world imperialism and Arab reaction as the enemy. Awatere took this idea but identified the enemy as *Pākehā* New Zealand, Christianity, Britain, and colonial Maori.

These were the forces Awatere saw as obstructions to the possibility of establishing New Zealand as a Māori Nation State. Ngata builds on this activist heritage which sees 'western civilisation' as the source of all evil. Ironically, it is that same western culture, of freedom and open enquiry, that enables academics like Awatere and Ngata to develop and disseminate their views. In seeking to undermine the West, they threaten the very liberties they enjoy.

Te Pāti Māori also declares itself an activist party and claims that Māori did not cede sovereignty. Using the privilege, power and wealth afforded by their position as tax-paid servants of the state, Te Pāti Māori leaders are pushing for the overthrow of the system in which they operate, in the establishment of a separate Māori parliament.

Settler colonialism demands hatred of 'western values' and that the many structures of western society, including politics, education, media and church, be dismantled. However, it's seldom made clear what would arise from the ash heap as a replacement. Herein lie the seeds of its downfall. The decolonisation movements of the 20th century often led to bloody conflict. The ideologically driven pursuit of an idealised future, in the manner exemplified by Ngata's rhetoric, frequently leads to totalitarianism and destruction.

Not only does the decolonisation narrative leave no room for those Indigenous peoples who hold a different perspective, it is brutal for non-Indigenous who do not toe the line. Ironically, most Māori, including me, have *Pākehā whakapapa*, and yet we are expected to dishonour our *Pākehā* ancestors by adopting this hateful perspective. Non-Māori are held guilty for the crimes of a subset in the past. There's no room for *Pākehā* who had been sold the lie propagated by the New Zealand Company, of a *bucolic arcadia* on the other side of the world where opportunity and wealth awaited them, who instead found themselves in a rugged land, living in makeshift shanties with limited access to the outside world and little chance of return to life and family back home.

Continued on page 13

What Happens After Iran?

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President of CFOIC Heartland

On 13 June, Israel attacked Iran, ushering in 11 very difficult days in Israel. Powerful ballistic missiles were launched at Israel and despite the IDF's success in shooting down most of the missiles, the damage was huge. Twenty-nine people were killed and more than 3,000 people injured by Iranian attacks. More than 10,000 people were left homeless.

We spent 11 sleepless nights running to our shelters and praying for God's provision. And then the US bombed the main nuclear facilities and shortly after that achieved a cease-fire. We were all thrilled that we could sleep through the night but none of us was sure what would happen next. Ever since, there have been speculations from Israel, Europe and the US as to how much damage we actually inflicted on the Iranian nuclear programme.

What is crystal clear however are two salient facts: 1. Khamenei is still alive and functioning as the Supreme Leader of Iran and 2. The Iranian leadership is as steeped in antisemitism as ever before and vows to relaunch their nuclear programme to destroy Israel.

President Trump has issued varying statements regarding his belief in a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Iran while reassuring us that there will be zero tolerance for a nuclear Iran. Is Trump naïve when he expresses optimism about a deal, or is he a very clever, cunning businessman, setting the stage for further attacks should Iran refuse to come to the table. In any case, no one in Israel is naïve, and I do believe that we will continue to monitor the situation in Iran very closely and if they start regrouping in any way, whether their nuclear or ballistic missile capabilities, our air force will be out there doing their job. And they have already proven that they know how to do the job.

The main issue we are dealing with today, is the war in Gaza. While we have successfully defeated Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and while the Assad regime in Syria fell as a direct result of our successful attacks against Hezbollah, we have not yet managed to defeat Hamas.

There is no question that the might of the Israeli Army could quash the Hamas easily and quickly. But there are two main sticking points here: 1. The Israeli hostages and 2. The humanitarian aid.

As of the writing of this article there are 50 Israeli hostages still in the hands of Hamas, of whom 20 are presumed to be alive. The IDF knows where most of these hostages are being held, at least the general area. As a result, there are vast stretches of Gaza, where a large number of Hamas terrorists are located, that the IDF will not attack for fear of endangering the lives of the hostages. Israel is often portrayed as a tough country, and accused of horrific crimes of violence, including war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. These accusations, however, could not be further from the truth.

Israel is actually a real softie. We care deeply about our people and will go out of our way to protect them and save them. Soldiers regularly endanger their own lives to bring wounded and fallen soldiers to safety. That is just part of the ethos of the IDF and of Israel. A well-known journalist in Israel, Amit Segal, recently told a story. Some years ago he was a student at a London university and wrote a paper on Israel's policy on prisoner and hostage exchanges. He noted that Israel



In 2021, Sondra Oster Baras and other leaders from Judea and Samaria were hosted in the Hebron home of Ashraf Jabari one of the Arab leaders who have now signed a letter recognising Israel as the Jewish homeland and calling for real peace with Israel. | Photo: CFOIC

will generally trade 1000 terrorists for one IDF soldier. The paper was returned to him with a note that he must have made an error and added a few too many zeros. Segal explained that the number was correct, to the amazement of his professor.

It is truly amazing how much Israel is willing to sacrifice for the lives of our soldiers and citizens alike. Which is why Hamas has us over a barrel. And this was part of their strategy from day one. That is why they kidnapped so many of our civilians—they assumed they could easily demand whatever they wanted because we would be so desperate to get our hostages back. And we are that desperate. Each night, thousands demonstrate in Israel for the immediate cessation of the war and the return of our hostages. But the government of Israel understands that by submitting to Hamas demands, we endanger the lives of the people who are so desperate to see the hostages come home. It is a terrible situation.

And we are also softies when it comes to the humanitarian needs of others, including our enemies. We are being accused of targeting civilians and starving the civilian population of Gaza. In fact, since the beginning of the war, Israel has allowed more food and essential supplies into Gaza than was ever sent into Gaza before the war. And if there are indeed people who are starving, it is because Hamas has been stealing most of the aid, distributing it only to Hamas terrorists or selling it at exorbitant prices to civilians, which in turn provides ongoing income for Hamas terrorism. No country has ever been pressured to provide humanitarian aid to its enemy. And the ongoing provision of this aid is actually harming the civilians—they are not getting the food and it is actually prolonging the war.

So in the end, this war continues because we are not starving Hamas and we are not levelling Gaza. Despite the stories the media tells. Wouldn't it have been better to force Gazans out of Gaza into a safe zone, say in Egypt? They could have received all of their needs, away from the war. Access to this safe zone would have been for civilians only, effectively separating the innocent from the terrorists. And then the IDF would have finished Hamas, levelling Gaza in a very short time. And chances are, we would have had our hostages home by now as well.

In any normal area of the world, given the enormous

success of Israeli attacks against Iran and the strong backing of the US, Hamas would have realised they have no chance and would have surrendered. But Hamas is not normal and neither are many players in the Middle East.

The suicidal Islamist ideology is very strong here and it is not easy for a humanist, life-loving, God-fearing society like Israel to respond to this death-oriented ideology effectively.

But there are some rays of hope. Just recently a group of Arab Sheikhs from the Hebron area penned a letter calling for the separation of Hebron from the Palestinian Authority to join the Abraham Accords. These *sheikhs* have positive relationships with the Jews of Hebron and the Hebron Hills and recognise Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. There are more than half a million Jews living in Judea and Samaria.

Anyone who still calls for a Palestinian State is not only naïve, but like those who advocate the ongoing entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza, they actually pose greater harm to the Palestinian Arabs in the area. These *sheikhs* understand better than anyone how corrupt and cruel the Palestinian Authority really is to their own people! There are opportunities for peace and

cooperation but it can only happen from the ground up and only with those Arabs who truly want to live with Jews in peace in the State of Israel.

Israel is indeed a softie and that is not always the most expedient way to get things done. But it reflects a moral understanding, a belief in the value of every human being, who are created in

God's image. Let us hope that our way of life will serve as a beacon to people throughout the Middle East, who will begin to understand that their leaders are corrupt and treat their own people

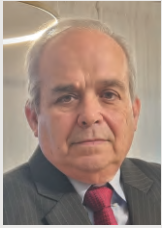
as expendable. And that the Jewish people are the only people in the Middle East who have built a society on the basis of justice, love and human kindness, despite what the international media wants you to believe. Let us pray for the fulfillment of Isaiah's words: "From Jerusalem shall go forth the Word of God." (Isaiah 2:3)

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).



From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



Combatting Evil

In late June 2025, our nation was thrust into a renewed struggle for survival. The Israeli offensive against Iranian nuclear

facilities marked a decisive moment in our effort to safeguard our people. This operation was not aimed at the Iranian people, but at the extremist regime in Tehran and its proxies that have long threatened our existence.

Let me be clear: Israel has never sought conflict with the Iranian people. I remember a time when our countries maintained diplomatic relations—when El Al flights connected Tel Aviv to Tehran and there was mutual respect. Sadly, that era gave way to one dominated by a regime that has repeatedly declared its intent to destroy Israel. For years, we warned the international community that a nuclear Iran posed a critical threat. And when the danger could no longer be ignored—Israel acted.

The days that followed were among the most difficult many of us have lived through. Our apartment, like many others, had a secure room where we sought refuge again and again as sirens blared, often in the middle of the night. Despite our sophisticated defence systems, several Iranian missiles managed to get through, striking residential areas and infrastructure.

The human cost was devastating. Twenty-four Israelis were killed, around 800 were injured, and hundreds lost their homes. The Iranian assault was not limited to military targets—it deliberately struck civilian areas, including apartment buildings, public streets, and even hospitals.

On 19 June, Soroka Medical Centre in Be'er Sheva was hit by a missile. Miraculously, there were no fatalities, but the facility sustained extensive damage and was forced to operate at reduced capacity during a time of national emergency.

This crisis tested our people deeply. Yet, as history has shown, we are a resilient nation. In the face of trauma and destruction, communities rallied, emergency services performed heroically, and ordinary citizens showed extraordinary courage.

While this chapter was painful, it also reaffirmed who we are. Israel will always act to defend itself. We long for peace—but we will never gamble with our survival. The memory of those days will stay with us, a sobering reminder of the threats we face and the strength we possess when we stand together.

Chapter One and Chapter Two: *A Call to Rediscover the Whole Word of God*

■ Dennis McLeod

Representative | Christian Friends of
Israel NZ

On a recent trip to the Christian Friends of Israel conference in the United States, I sat beside a young secular Jewish man during one of the flights. As we spoke about faith and Scripture, he casually referred to the Old and New Testaments as 'Chapter One' and 'Chapter Two.' Though simply stated, his comment struck a profound chord. Who begins a book at Chapter Two and expects to understand the full story?

Yet this is precisely what much of the modern Church has done—disregarding the Old Testament as outdated or irrelevant. I've met numerous individuals, particularly at protests against Israel, who identify as Christians. Many of these demonstrations occur on Saturdays—ironically, just one day before these same individuals attend church on Sunday. This contradiction prompted a deeper reflection on the Church's relationship with the Jewish people and the Hebrew Scriptures.

Many survivors have recounted how their tormentors sang Christmas carols one day and committed atrocities the next, all under the guise of Christian tradition.

History, tragically, echoes similar patterns. Eighty years ago, anti-Jewish sentiment among self-professed Christians led to some of the darkest chapters of the 20th century. At a public gathering, a woman once remarked, "The Jewish people have been persecuted by Christians since the time of Jesus." As painful as it is, this statement cannot be easily dismissed.

One example is the story of a survivor of the Sobibor death camp, who escaped the horrors of the Holocaust only to be murdered later by the Polish Underground—simply because he was Jewish. On my first visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, I overheard a young guide speaking to a group of Israeli youth. His message centred on the role Christians played during the Holocaust. He spoke with conviction—and sadly, the historical record supports his words. Many survivors have recounted how their tormentors sang Christmas carols one day and committed atrocities the next, all under the guise of Christian tradition.

These tragedies are not merely historical. They reflect a failure of the



| Photo: Unsplash

Church to fully teach the Word of God. Rather than grounding believers in Scripture, many churches today promote a diluted message: "Live a good life," with little reference to what defines goodness. But morality requires a standard—and for believers, that

covenant with Israel is as enduring as the fixed order of the sun and stars.

This theological neglect has real-world consequences. It fuels not only antisemitism but also apathy toward the roots of our faith. Within parts of the Church today, voices are rising that echo the ancient hatred of Haman in the book of Esther—calling not just for criticism, but for the eradication of an entire people.

We must remember: the entire Bible is God's Word. As *2 Timothy 3:16* affirms, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching." If we want to confront evil in the world, we must stand on the whole truth. *Psalms 119:105* tells us, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." We need the full armour of God, not just fragments (*Ephesians 6:10–18*).

In parts of the Islamic world, a chilling phrase is often heard: "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people." Jew and Gentile alike are called "people of the Book." Yasser Arafat once declared that the PLO flag would fly over every synagogue and church. In response, we must lift high the Word of God—for all the world to see. United as "one new man" in Christ (*Ephesians 2:15–16*), we can stand against division. Divided, we fall. But walking arm in arm toward the Messiah, we find strength to finish the race and claim the prize (*1 Corinthians 9:24*).

The Bible is one story. It begins with promise and ends in fulfilment. Let us embrace both chapters—Old and New—so we may truly understand God's plan and prepare for what is to come. Amen.

standard is Jesus. Unfortunately, contemporary culture often encourages blame over personal responsibility. Rather than lifting our eyes to Christ's example, we are taught to cast blame outward. This mindset has led to devastating outcomes—Rwanda and Cambodia being two sobering reminders.

We are indeed saved by grace, but grace does not negate the call to discipleship. Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me" (*Luke 9:62*), and He warned against looking back—just as Lot's wife fatally did (*Genesis 19:26*).

Ignoring the Old Testament undermines the integrity of the entire Bible. Chapter One lays the foundation—the law, the covenants, the prophetic promises—while Chapter Two reveals their fulfilment in Christ. Yet many in the Church have been led to believe that the Old Testament is obsolete, even harmful. Some have gone so far as to portray the Jewish people as enemies of God, citing their supposed role in Jesus' death. This is a grave misrepresentation, directly contradicted by Scripture. As God declares in *Jeremiah 31:35–36*, His

Tisha B'Av: A Day of National Grief

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

Each year, on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av—*Tisha B'Av*—Jews around the world gather to fast, mourn, and reflect. It is a day steeped in sorrow, not for a single event, but for a long catalogue of calamities that have befallen the Jewish people across centuries. *Tisha B'Av* is not simply a memorial to the destruction of ancient buildings. It is a living reminder of exile, loss, and resilience—a day that confronts us with the tragedies of the past while urging us to look ahead with purpose.

The Historical Layering of Catastrophe

The origin of *Tisha B'Av* lies in the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, which occurred, remarkably, on the same Hebrew date—the Ninth of Av—first in 586 BCE by the Babylonians, and again in 70 CE by the Romans. These events not only shattered physical structures but also symbolised the severing of Jewish sovereignty, the dislocation of communal life, and the beginning of long, painful exiles.

But the significance of the day did not end with the loss of the Temples. Over time, *Tisha B'Av* became a memorial marker for other national traumas. According to Jewish tradition and historical reckoning:

- In 135 CE, the Bar Kokhba revolt was crushed by the Romans, leading to mass killings and the desolation of Judea.
- In 1290, England expelled its Jewish population on *Tisha B'Av*.
- In 1492, the expulsion of Jews from Spain—a community that had flourished for centuries—took effect on this same date.
- In 1914, World War I broke out, unleashing a chain of geopolitical shifts that culminated in the Holocaust.
- During the Holocaust itself, the Nazis often timed actions to coincide with *Tisha B'Av*—including the start of mass deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942.

This layering of tragedy gives *Tisha B'Av* its unique emotional weight uniting centuries of exile, destruction, hatred, and loss—not in abstraction, but with deep historical memory.

Rituals of Mourning

Observance of *Tisha B'Av* follows the *halakhic* model of mourning. It is one of only two full fast days in the Jewish calendar (the other being *Yom Kippur*), lasting from sunset to sunset. But unlike *Yom Kippur*, which is solemn yet redemptive, *Tisha B'Av* is raw and grieving.



Jewish men pray during Tisha B'Av, at the Wall Western, in the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

Traditional prohibitions include:

- No eating or drinking
- No bathing or anointing
- No wearing leather shoes
- No marital relations
- No greetings or pleasantries
- No studying of the *Torah*, except for texts related to destruction and mourning.

Communal prayers are marked by subdued lighting. Worshippers often sit on the floor or low stools, as mourners do. The *Book of Eicha* (*Lamentations*) is read aloud, often in a haunting chant. *Kinot*—elegies composed across centuries—are recited, each one commemorating a different tragedy in Jewish history.

These practices are not rituals for ritual's sake. They are designed to break through our modern tendency to insulate ourselves from grief. In a world driven by distraction and productivity, *Tisha B'Av* demands that we stop. That we sit with sorrow. That we remember.

Why Remember?

The question arises: Why continue to mark a day of destruction that began thousands of years ago? In an era of Jewish sovereignty—with a rebuilt Jerusalem, a vibrant Diaspora, and the existence of the modern State of Israel—should we still mourn?

The answer, for many, is yes—not out of nostalgia, but out of awareness. The traumas of the past still echo in the present. Antisemitism has not disappeared. Exile may have shifted form, but many Jews still live in societies where their belonging is precarious. And even in Israel, conflict and insecurity persist.

Tisha B'Av reminds us that history is not neat or resolved. It cautions against

complacency. It insists that we remember the cost of division, disunity, and hatred—both external and internal. Rabbinic tradition teaches that the Second Temple was destroyed not because of foreign armies alone, but because of *sinat chinam*—baseless hatred—among Jews themselves. That charge still resonates today.

At the same time, remembering is not only about grief. It is about resilience. The Jewish people have endured centuries of catastrophe, yet have never allowed mourning to become despair. *Tisha B'Av* does not end with lamentations—it ends with the hope of rebuilding.

From Destruction to Redemption

A profound feature of Jewish tradition is the belief that destruction is never the final word. The same prophet Jeremiah who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem also proclaimed the possibility of renewal: “There is hope for your future” (*Jeremiah 31:17*).

According to *midrashic* tradition, the *Messiah*—the figure of ultimate redemption—will be born on *Tisha B'Av*. Whether understood literally or symbolically, the message is clear: Even in the deepest darkness, the seeds of healing are present.

This dynamic is reflected in the liturgical calendar itself. The weeks leading up to *Tisha B'Av* are marked by readings of rebuke and sorrow—the Three Weeks and the Nine Days. But immediately after the fast, the mood begins to shift. The next *Shabbat* is called *Shabbat Nachamu*—the *Sabbath of Comfort*—based on the words of *Isaiah*: “Comfort, comfort My people.”

Seven weeks of consolation follow, leading up to *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year. This rhythm—from

destruction to comfort to renewal—is not incidental. It models a path forward for individuals and communities alike.

Contemporary Relevance

For Jews today, *Tisha B'Av* can feel distant or difficult. Many live in relative safety and freedom. Some are disconnected from traditional observance. Others feel that the day's focus on Jerusalem and the Temple is foreign to their spiritual experience.

Yet *Tisha B'Av* need not be confined to ancient memory. It can serve as a day of reflection on the state of Jewish peoplehood today. It invites us to ask:

- How do we respond to rising antisemitism globally?
- What is the relationship between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora?
- Are we truly unified, or are we still plagued by *sinat chinam*?
- What can be done to repair rifts between different Jewish denominations, political views, or cultural backgrounds?

Beyond the Jewish community, *Tisha B'Av* speaks to universal themes. It teaches the importance of historical memory in an age of forgetting. It models how mourning can be both personal and collective. And it offers a template for grief that is honest but not immobilising—grief that insists on building again.

In recent years, some have used *Tisha B'Av* as a moment to remember contemporary tragedies: genocides, mass shootings, the plight of refugees. While this can be controversial, it points to the ethical impulse embedded in the day—a refusal to turn away from suffering, wherever it occurs.

A Day That Lives in the Jewish Soul

Tisha B'Av is not a holiday in the celebratory sense. There are no feasts, no gifts, no songs of joy. But it is a day that lives in the Jewish soul—because it speaks to our experience across time. To be Jewish is, in some sense, to carry memory. Not as a burden, but as a trust.

We mourn on *Tisha B'Av* because we remember what was lost—temples, homes, families, dreams. We mourn because we still live in a fractured world. And yet we also remember that Jewish history did not end in exile. It continued—and continues—with strength, creativity, and a yearning for redemption.

Perhaps that is the real message of *Tisha B'Av*: that the people who have known so much loss have never stopped hoping. That even amid ruins, we prepare to rebuild. *Am Yisrael Chai*.



Hebraic Prayer Secrets—Part 3: *Praying as a Community*

■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

"Lord, bless me and my wife, my son, and his wife, us four, no more, Amen"

Modern Christian prayers can easily slide into the trap of becoming all about me and my needs, rather than about God, or about the community in which He has placed us.

In sharp contrast, *Hebraic* prayer focuses on the wider community over and above the individual.

The Disciples Prayed as One

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word..." Acts 4:29

In this teaching series, we have noted how the disciples in Acts 4:23-31 followed a very Jewish style of prayer. Facing threats and persecution, they none-the-less started their prayer by focusing their attention on God's greatness. Next, we found that they prayed the Scriptures and specifically the Psalms about their situation, following classic *Hebraic* patterns for prayer.

In this third part of our series, we can notice that the disciple's prayer is not so much about them as individuals, as it was about the whole group of believers together. This is a common feature of *Hebraic* prayer—in fact most Hebrew prayers are written in the plural and typically require the presence of at least ten men (in what is called a 'minyan'). We similarly see this corporate pattern of prayer represented in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father...", "give us this day our daily bread...", "forgive us our sins..." (Matthew 6:13-19)

By praying in the plural, the disciples remind themselves that they are part of a wider community and avoid being consumed by their own private problems.

Beneath this concept of corporate prayer, lies a traditional Jewish understanding that believers are not only responsible for their own personal walk of faith, but are also responsible for each other within the community. Being part of a community and looking out for each other therefore becomes an integral, non-negotiable part of life as a believer.

Sadly, many believers today struggle to find their place in a congregation. Many have been hurt by fellow Christians, while others have become isolated by divisions over doctrines. In his classic book *"The Final Quest"*, Rick Joyner paints a picture of a group of Christian prisoners of the enemy. He writes:

"Occasionally a weak prisoner would stumble and fall. As soon as he or she hit the ground, the other prisoners would begin stabbing them with their swords, scorning them as they did so". Sadly, this has often been the response of Christians to the apparent shortcomings of fellow believers. Instead of seeing the welfare of our fellow believers as in part our responsibility, we have on many occasions been too quick to condemn and attack fellow believers for their mistakes.

Desiring the Power of God

"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." Acts 4:31



After the disciples prayed together, corporately, in unity and as one, the power of the Holy Spirit fell afresh on their group. Many of us today desire the same power encounters with God, but it all begins as we as believers gather in unity, seeking Him together as a body. In order for this to happen, we need to value the importance of being together as a community, and secondly we may need to work on our relationships to overcome past issues.

In our next and final instalment on this series on *Hebraic* prayer, we are going to look at conforming to God's will. | Photo: Shutterstock

Ps Enoch and his family are doing an Australia-wide ministry trip for 2025. To see more of his itinerary or to enquire about having Enoch and his family come to speak, go to www.olivetreeministries.org.au



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Gone Home: Tikva, the Baby in the Suitcase

■ Derek Prince Ministries (DPM)

On 27 June 2025, at the age of 97, Tikva Morrissey, the once-dying baby adopted by Lydia Prince, went to be with the Lord. Until the end, Tikva had a sound mind and strong faith. “I’m hoping to live to a hundred,” she often said, “but if God wants to take me home, I am ready to join all my family in glory.” Now, she is Home.

A Living Hope

Tikva, born 4 December 1927, lived in Queensland, Australia, in a home for the elderly where she welcomed visitors and often autographed *Appointment in Jerusalem* books. Ever since Lydia Prince’s story was published, many have wondered what became of Tikva, the once-dying baby. This is her testimony, recently shared with DPM.

The Baby in the Wicker Suitcase

My name is Tikva, meaning ‘hope’. I love my name because it reminds me of God’s faithfulness. I was born into a Jewish family in Petah Tikva, near Tel Aviv. Our family name, Cohen, indicates our descent from the Kohanim, the priestly tribe of Levi.

One day, my father, Chaim Cohen, came to Lydia’s door and said, “My wife and I have a baby daughter who is dying. Her twin has already died. We prayed, and God showed us what to do. Will you take her?”

Lydia prayed and later came to our home. She had no crib, so she made a bed for me in her wicker trunk. She lined it with her underclothes and covered me with a woollen sweater from her mother. Then she anointed me with olive oil and prayed.

The House of Prayer

I was the first child Lydia took in. Over time, she adopted eight daughters, including me, and cared for over a hundred children. Some stayed briefly,

but eight of us remained. Our home was called the House of Prayer. Every morning, we prayed together before school. My mother also gave us cod liver oil daily—we hated it!

We lived in a beautiful house in Jerusalem. Despite unrest around us, God always provided. When we had no food, we prayed, and in the morning, a basket would appear at the door. God never failed us.

At age seven, I told my mother I wanted to be baptised. I said, “I believe in Jesus. He lives in my heart, and I want to obey Him.” After baptism, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

As I grew, I experienced God’s protection. Once, during shootings in Jerusalem, I had to make my way home through dangerous streets. Bullets flew, but God kept me safe. Another time, my sister and I missed a bus. Later, we learned it had been bombed. God spared us.

A Man in the House

Derek Prince came into our lives while serving in the British Army. He visited often. One day, Lydia told us, “Derek has asked me to marry him.” We were shocked. But she explained that one day, we would leave, and she did not want to be alone. In time, we accepted Derek as our father and loved him deeply. He was humble, often scrubbing the floors and polishing our shoes.

A Dangerous Threat

One night, Arab soldiers planned to attack our home. My sister overheard their plan. Instead of panicking, our mother gathered us to pray. We dressed quietly and escaped into the night, carrying our Bibles.

Our dog Toby, who had died weeks earlier, would have barked and given us away. In hindsight, we saw God’s wisdom.

We reached Shemariah, an American mission surrounded by barbed wire.



Tikva Morrissey. | Photo: Derek Prince Ministries

After some time, we were allowed in. The next morning, a threat came: “If you keep the girls, we’ll blow up the building.” We moved to another mission, where we were welcomed.

A week later, the Americans offered us their home before returning to the US. God provided a 22-room house where we could live in peace.

A New Journey

In 1948, when Israel became a nation, we were caught in the middle. As Messianic Jews, we were rejected by both Jewish and Muslim communities. We had no safe place.

An opportunity arose for some of us to leave. My three younger sisters and I travelled on a troop ship, the *Georgic*, to England. We were placed with officers, not in the lower decks. I was seasick the entire eight days!

My sisters stayed with our grandparents. I went to the Midlands to train as a nurse. I had never lived away from home before, but God cared for me.

God’s Provision in England

In August, Derek, Lydia, and the others arrived in England. They opened a home in Kensington and started the ‘Upper Room’ church in Westbourne Grove.

Every Sunday, we went to Hyde Park’s Speaker’s Corner, sang hymns, and invited people to church. Many gave their lives to Jesus. It was a wonderful time.

In April 1951, I met John Morrissey, a Welshman recently discharged from the army. He was a believer. That August, we married.

Five years later, John and I emigrated to Australia, encouraged by my sister Peninah. We both worked at a hospital, I as a nurse, John in medical records. We led a youth group and ministered to many.

A Life of Trust

Looking back, I am filled with gratitude. I am so glad I belong to Jesus. God protected me in war, provided when we had nothing, and gave me a wonderful husband and two children who love the Lord.

A verse came to me recently: “*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*” (Jeremiah 33:3)

Whatever your troubles, Jesus will see you through. He is never early, never late, but always right on time. He is faithful.

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Lydia and her girls.



Sanitising the Words of Jesus

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Director | Beth Melekh International

When a modern Christian reads the words of Jesus spoken to the Canaanite woman, as recorded in *Matthew 15:26* [*Mark 7:27*]: “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs,” the initial response is to conclude that the metaphor Jesus employees must not mean what it appears to mean.

Imagine how the legacy media might report such an incident today: “*Alt-Right Rabbi Calls Palestinian Woman a ‘Dog’*”.

Riots and bombings would ensue, Jews would be attacked globally, Synagogues desecrated, and missiles launched at the nation of Israel. It would also be reported that the alt-right rabbi *Yeshua* is an ardent Zionist, a Nationalist like Hitler, who has allegedly said that He only cares about “the lost sheep of Israel.” The UN would issue a statement condemning such a man and his followers. The New Zealand and Australian governments would refuse him an entry visa, while the ICC convene to issue an arrest warrant for rabbi *Yeshua Ben Yosef*. What is it about this that sounds so chillingly familiar?

I’ve heard many a sermon from well-meaning pastors and theologians who seek to defend these words of Jesus as a misunderstood attempt at endearment. They jump through linguistic hoops, avoid context and try to reframe this seemingly harsh statement as a loving retort. They take it on themselves to reassure the modern Christian that Jesus is not at all an angry person, nor is he a Zionist, but is merely referring to Gentiles as pets (as if being called a pet dog is any less demeaning than simply being called a dog). The context of these words of Jesus, far from supporting this positive spin, to the contrary, proves the opposite and exposes the vice of niceness on the tongues of our apostate theologians and pastors.

It seems that it’s become of great importance to the modern Church to ensure that Jesus is portrayed as being politically correct in all His ways. Therefore, we sanitise the harsh words of Jesus. Why? Because we worship a false Jesus of our own making, a *Messiah* who is nice, inoffensive, always polite, a pacifist, and an archetype for the purist expression of humanity. We deny the importance of His ethnicity and religious expression, and the wealth of Biblical evidence to the contrary, and in doing so disregard the cultural and religious concerns of the first-century Jewish context.

There is a well-known truism, “*The Devil puts a little bit of truth in every lie.*” Many Christian teachers of the Scriptures have developed a habit of being truth-



Canaanite dog running in a park. | Photo: Shutterstock

We deny the importance of His ethnicity and religious expression, and the wealth of Biblical evidence to the contrary, and in doing so disregard the cultural and religious concerns of the first-century Jewish context.

adjacent; they often include a truth, or part of a truth, in their pursuit of tolerant inaccuracies.

With *Matthew 15:21-28* and *Mark 7:24-30* in mind, let’s take a contextual look at the meaning of the *Messiah’s* harsh words to the Canaanite woman:

Prior to this account, Jesus had challenged some of the Judean religious leaders regarding their hypocrisy and now journeys to Tyre and Sidon, which were ancient Phoenician cities located in the region of Canaan, along the coast of modern-day Lebanon. This is why the Gentile woman is referred to in each account respectively as ‘a woman from Canaan’ and a ‘Syro-Phoenician’ (Syrian of Phoenicia). The woman is also called a ‘Greek’, meaning that she was a citizen of the Hellenised Greek world, a Gentile (not Jewish). The apostle Paul uses the noun ‘Greek’ in the same way throughout his letters to the churches.

The woman pesters Jesus, asking him repeatedly to set her daughter free from a demon. In Mark’s account, Jesus responds to her request by saying, “*Let the children be filled first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.*” The Biblical Greek text uses the noun *κυνάρῖοις* (*kynariois*) ‘little dog’, not ‘pet’ but ‘puppy’.

‘Children’ is without doubt a reference to the people of Israel. There are few that dispute this. There is, however, a great deal of debate over what ‘little

dogs’ means. This is because rather than looking to Scripture in order to glean the meaning of the Biblical use of this metaphor, modern pastors and theologians look to their emotions and pseudo-moral, post-enlightenment humanism to form the foundation for their understanding. They then impose their false paradigm onto the text, often distorting context and misappropriating obscure extrabiblical texts in support of their flawed presuppositions.

The metaphor ‘dog’ is used in Scripture to represent the enemies of God and of the chosen people Israel (Jews, ethnic descendants of Jacob). This is an irrefutable fact. Please take the time to read the following scriptures: *Deuteronomy 14:21* and *23:18*; *1 Kings 14:11*; *Psalms 22:16* and *20, 59:5-6, 14-15*; *Matthew 15:26-27*; *Mark 7:27-28*; *Philippians 3:2*; *2 Peter 2:22*; *Revelation 22:15*.

The Biblical Greek root *κύων* (*kuón*) is the basis for the various forms of the word ‘dog’ as used in both the *Septuagint* (Greek version of parts of the *TaNaKh* [OT]) and the New Testament. In the present case, the more specific noun *κυνάρῖοις* (*kynariois*) ‘little dog’, ‘puppy’ does not reflect a different core metaphorical meaning but rather denotes a vulnerable enemy. Therefore, according to Biblical Hebrew thought, a puppy is not yet a fully grown or weakened enemy. From a first century Jewish perspective, the Romans, who occupied the land of Judea at that time,

would have been considered *κύνες* dogs (full grown—strong enemies), whereas the Canaanites, who like the Israelites, were under Roman rule, would be considered *κυνάρῖοις* (puppies—powerless little dogs). Jesus is adamant that it’s not right to give the food (Jesus Person, Gospel, Miracles) of Israel to their enemies, be they strong or weak.

Both prior to and during the first century, and even throughout the following millennia, observant Jews rarely kept unclean animals as pets. In fact, in the first century, as testified to by Jewish tradition, dogs were allowed to be kept only as working animals. According to the *Talmud Baba Kama*, it’s permissible to keep certain breeds of dog for protection against vermin. It adds that these dogs must be kept chained and that those who raise them are to be considered cursed. Note that Jesus says of the bread that it’s not right to “throw it to the little dogs,” meaning that he considers dogs (in a first-century Jewish context) to be outside animals that receive food scraps and not indoor pets. The Jewish mystics see dogs as symbols of demons¹ and the *Zohar* (Jewish mystic text) likens evil in this world to a vicious dog on a leash. Therefore, the wider context of this account does not allow for a reading that translates ‘little dog’ as ‘pet’.

When the Canaanite woman responds in humility and repentance, saying, “*Yes, Adonai, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.*” She is not claiming to be a pet but a vulnerable puppy born to a working dog. She admits that she is of a people who are enemies to Israel and that she is not therefore worthy of receiving the children’s (Israel’s) food, but asks as one who acknowledges her need to submit to the Master of Israel, Jesus (*Imanu*—with us, *El*—God), and humbles herself under the table of the children of Israel as a servant of God, His *Messiah* Jesus, and of the Jewish people (Israel). By doing this, she shows true repentance. Her godly response to Jesus now lives as an example to the stubborn lack of faith of those particular Jewish religious leaders whom Jesus had recently rebuked. Jesus willingly receives this repentant enemy and ministers freedom to her possessed daughter.¹ Therefore, the modern application of this account of Jesus sees Him refusing to heal the enemies of Israel, vulnerable or not, until such a time as they humbly repent of their hatred for Israel and her God. Jesus still says today, “*It is not right to take the children’s (Israel’s) bread and throw it to the little dogs!*”

¹www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-dogs/

Tribute to Professor Dani Gold

Joanna Moss

Sometimes you click with people. That was how it was with Professor Daniel Gold. It began when he was invited to New Zealand to speak to groups as a Holocaust survivor in 2014. I was assisting with the Wellington-Kapiti school visit programme and providing some local touring. It was an eventful day with a major storm brewing. I told him he was shaking up the heavens!

As we were about to enter a high school, he asked for any instructions or points to highlight from his story which I had read. I commented that most kids will have never met a Jew in their lives and may not know what one is. It was hard for him to imagine that because during his childhood kids called out ‘Christ Killer’ as he walked along the road. Next I quipped that here in NZ we don’t know about the Baltic states so you would be better to say that Lithuania was across the water from Scandinavia to enable children to visualise that country on a map. He was stunned. I suggested that he speak hope and to emphasise that having arrived in Israel with nothing, it was possible for each child to overcome any challenges they might face. As he left the rostrum, I noticed all the boys watching him closely. Such is the state of NZ fatherlessness. Many there will remember his story for the rest of their lives. They met a real Holocaust survivor.

Dani’s Holocaust story is like many, one of sequential critical decisions, links in a chain in which had one gone wrong, the error would be fatal. He had been born into a prosperous family in Siauliai, Lithuania, home to a thriving Jewish community, now extinct. He was a tiny child when they moved into the ghetto. Together with his cousins, he got out just in time and they were hidden underground by a farmer until the Russians came. He never saw his mother again, despite years of searching. As the



Professor Dani Gold. | Photo: Joanna Moss

Iron Curtain came down, they moved across Europe to Poland. After the war he found his father alive in Dachau concentration camp in Germany. There he became a displaced person awaiting passage to Israel. Dani was determined to go to Israel. In his mind this was the only safe place for Jews to go and build a new country, a Jewish country. It wasn’t easy. There he enlisted in the Air Force and became a pilot fighting in five wars. He could have chosen a career as an El Al pilot, but chose academia instead.

When he heard about my ANZAC Israel and bilateral relations work, things got interesting. It turned out he lived in Rishon le Zion. “I’ve been there”, I said, and we talked about history and local landmarks. He didn’t know that Rishon had been liberated by the Kiwis in 1917. “You support us”, he said, “So please come and stay in my house whenever you come to Israel. The top floor is available for you”. It was an offer too good to turn down, especially as there were no hotels in Rishon making my research work with the museum and municipality more difficult. From then onwards landing at Ben Gurion became

extra special. Dani was waiting for me and I was embraced by his family too. They became mine.

We remained in regular contact by email including research questions. Always a true teacher, he encouraged me as if I were his student. He was so proud of Israel’s achievements. Dani had done sabbaticals in the US and Germany, so we talked about American and European matters too. His knowledge was vast and deep. As an Emeritus Professor, Dani never retired and continued to teach in the medical school and conduct research into his 80’s. His specialty area was medical microbiology. Finding cures for diseases and improving African health inspired him, *Tikkun olam*. He raised snails and conducted many trials. As his teaching workload decreased he was able to devote time to Holocaust matters, often being asked to speak at *Yom Ha’Shoah*, *Yom HaZikaron*, military graduations and on bases. He also joined the *Yad Vashem* school survivor programme representing the Lithuanian story in Hebrew, English and German. It was here he encountered other Kiwis. Many teachers saw this programme as

the highlight of the course.

He made the most out of life despite part of his family dying in the Holocaust, as have so many other Jewish survivors. Some call it survivor guilt, others call it motivation. Dani was determined to serve Israel, to be a proud Jew and Israeli. His IDF service played a key part in his life. Fellow IDF pilots were in regular contact and he enjoyed the group outings. He rode his beloved, blue BMW motorbike everywhere, gloriously beating traffic jams. He served one day a week as a volunteer highway patrolman because Israeli driving was so perilous. Imagine if the drivers he stopped knew he was really a professor!

In 2017 I put together questions that probed beyond the Holocaust legacy with a view to recording an interview. It was my contribution to his legacy. Dani changed his mind over filming, but noted the calibre of the questions. Over covid we re-visited the topic, but couldn’t find the right people to film and record it. Meantime *Yad Vashem* had commissioned him to record his story in Hebrew. He wanted it in English as he knew it would reach a wider audience, but had to settle with English sub-titles (see link below). Later they recorded a Q&A about his life to insert into AI for posterity and interactive questioning. That amused him. Thankfully Sheree and Perry Trotter filmed him speaking in NZ. Sadly Dani died before we could fulfill our dream. I think of him whenever I have yoghurt. He was adamant everyone needed fermented products for a healthy gut—three tablespoons per day. Dani is survived by his cousin Simcha, also a survivor, his lovely wife, four children and grandchildren. One of his daughters was the Israeli advisor for the *Christians for Israel Israeli & Friends Cookbook*. Thank you Dani for being a special friend. I will always love you.

Dani Gold’s story, *Like a Sparrow in the Sky—The Story of Daniel Gold*, is available to watch on YouTube.

<https://youtu.be/lynHhJ05Nz4?si=EMvYpD29Ju391UeJ>

Continued from page 6

Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity—Part 2

Meanwhile the New Zealand Company railed against all who stood in the way of their goals: British Colonial Office, successive governors of New Zealand, the Church Missionary Society and the missionary Reverend Henry Williams. It also vehemently and stridently opposed the Treaty of Waitangi. Settler colonialism homogenises all settlers as rapacious and greedy, when many were simple migrant

labourers looking for a better life.

There are many flaws in settler colonialism. It’s an extremely judgemental and divisive view of the world, seeks the overthrow of the current system, and bears the seeds of violence and ultimately its own destruction. While the democratic system that has dominated the western world for the past 200 to 300 years has many flaws, it remains one of the most stable systems of government.

Is there racism in this country? Yes.

Are there structural failures? Yes.

However, settler colonialism offers no solution. It promotes hatred of the other, resentment and bitterness. We would do well instead to cultivate concepts of grace, mercy, forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation and respect. The totalising lens of settler colonialism should be rejected. It keeps Māori locked in a grievance culture and provides no vision of a future where Māori flourish as Māori, in relative harmony with non-indigenous New Zealanders.

There is no denying the wrongs of the past or difficulties of the present, but there is a better way than the myopic bitterness of settler colonialism. With respect and gratitude, we can forge a better path.

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Defining ‘Biblical Israel’—Part 5

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

This article is the fifth of a seven-part series based on the e-book *Modern Israel is Still Biblical Israel* by Ps Nigel Woodley.

Peter Walker, a co-editor of *The Gospel and the Land of Promise: Christian approaches to the Land of the Bible* had asked: “If Israel has been returning to the land, why are we not seeing the parallel movement of a ‘returning’ to the Lord?” (Church 9)

I had answered him from Ezekiel 36:24-27 and Ezekiel 11:17-20 stating that a natural restoration precedes a spiritual renewal and awakening of Israel. Another passage states:

“When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. [28] Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. [29] I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.” Ezekiel 39:27-29 NIV

Again, Ezekiel prophesies first a natural restoration, and second, a spiritual restoration. We are not told the time frame between the first in verses 27 and 28, and the second of these restorations in verse 29. However, the fulfilling of the first should be proof enough that the second at some stage will follow.

As far as the point that Walker raised about Zionism: “Why was nineteenth-century Zionism principally espoused by secular Jews?” (Church 9). Secular Jews were involved in great numbers, but the initiative that set modern Zionism in motion came first from Christian ‘restorationists’ in the nineteenth century. We would now refer to these people as Christian Zionists. They had been anticipating a Jewish return to their ancient homeland in fulfilment of the Scriptures before there was any sign of it happening, as a prelude to the second coming of Christ. Among these ‘restorationists’ was Lord Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury was a student of Edward Bickersteth and together they became early advocates of Christian Zionism in Britain. Shaftesbury was an early proponent of the Restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land, providing the first proposal by a major politician to resettle Jews in Palestine. Later in 1839 he published an article in the *Times* under the title ‘The State and the rebirth of the Jews’ (Ashley-Cooper).

Another early Christian Zionist was Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892). The great



| Photo: Unsplash

Let the nation which is without sin cast the first stone. God is not restoring Israel on her merits, but based on his predetermined, prophetic word and promises to do this.

nineteenth century theologian declared: “I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the Children of Israel...For when the Jews are restored, the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion with his ancients gloriously ...They shall be gathered in; Messiah shall come!” (Spurgeon).

Some of the other early Christian Zionists were John and Charles Wesley of the Methodist movement, the Rev JC Ryle mentioned in the previous article, and the Christian businessman and Church layman William Blackstone (1841-1935). He initiated a petition calling for the return of the Jewish people to Palestine—seeking international support from America and other states. His ‘Blackstone Memorial’ gained important signatures from US leaders in 1891, six years prior to the formal birth of the Jewish Zionist movement in Basle, Switzerland in 1897.

The Rev William Hechler (1845-1931) is also worth mentioning. He was an Anglican clergyman and one of the ‘restorationists’. As Chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna he was able to set up a meeting between Theodore Herzl, Jewish father of the Zionist movement, and the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, in 1898. This gave Herzl’s movement an air of legitimacy and respectability that propelled it eventually into a Jewish State. Without the help and influence of the Rev Hechler it is likely that Herzl’s Zionist

movement may have remained stunted from infancy. But it was not, and the rest is history. (William Hechler).

Christians played an important role in supporting the right of the Jewish people to seek self-determination in their historical and biblical homeland. But even if they did not, and if it was only ‘secular Jews’ (Church 9) who propelled the movement, Scriptural precedents defend the idea that God can do anything. Cyrus was used mightily by God to fulfil His purpose for the Jews even though he did not even acknowledge the Lord (*Isaiah 45:4*). God used the secular Cyrus to fulfil His plan for Israel, as He used the secular pharaohs and the Roman emperors.

This leads to another point Walker had raised: “And what are we to make of this secular atheism continuing to be the majority position within contemporary Israeli society?” (Church 9). Remember, God can do anything. He can even use secular atheism to accomplish his purpose. Let’s not forget that in the days when ‘historical Israel’ was turning to the Baal’s and sacrificing their own children in the fire, they were still Biblical Israel and God’s chosen covenant people, even though they needed great redemption. Modern Israel, although largely secular and in need of redemption, is certainly no worse than her forbears. This should not stop her being classified as ‘Biblical Israel’, any less than ancient Israel was. The spiritual renewal of Israel at some point is going to follow the natural

restoration taking place. That is the promise of the prophetic scriptures which make the modern State of Israel, Biblical Israel. If Christians understand the principle that modern Israel is still Biblical Israel, then this point demands the Church’s respect of the Jewish State.

Israel is Now Being Shown Great Mercy

One of Peter Walker’s contemporaries, Alistair Donaldson, writes “It is equally true that Israel’s gift of land was conditional on covenant fidelity; failure to live according to God’s law would see her expelled from that land” (Church 66). True, the Israelites were ruthlessly expelled from their land because of their sins, as well as their rejection of the sent Messiah, yet God in his mercy is now regathering them. He is gathering the Jewish people into their land for what will become the greatest altar call in history. He declares in *Isaiah 54:7-8*, “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. [8] In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord your Redeemer.

The prophet also states in *Isaiah 14:1* NIV, “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.”

The Psalmist prophesied: “You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come”. *Psalm 102:13* NIV

God is restoring Israel because of his mercy, and not on the merits of what Israel deserves. I think if God is espousing such mercy to Zion, then we should too. If we choose to point the finger toward Israel let’s remember there are several fingers on our hand pointing back at us. Let the nation which is without sin cast the first stone. God is not restoring Israel on her merits, but based on his predetermined, prophetic word and promises to do this. He “shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” in his perfect time and “all Israel will be saved” (*Romans 11: 26*).

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In Search of the Palestinians—Part I

■ Dr Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

Who are the Palestinians; what is their history? The radical narrative about Israel casts the Palestinian people as an ancient people, oppressed by waves of European Jews who, supported by colonial powers, seize their land. Here is Zionism: settler colonialism, imperialism, violence, expulsion, and theft combined together. Maybe genocide too, and all wielded against the indigenous, Palestinian people. Such a narrative fulfils the 11th century prediction of the famous Jewish sage Rashi on what the nations of the world would say to the people of Israel when they regain their heritage: “You are robbers because you stole the land.” It throws into question Israel’s right to exist and casts Jews as robbers. It is also false.

The two thousand years from the beginning of Roman rule in 63BC until the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 see no period of self government for the Land. The first and second Jewish revolts against Rome (66-70AD and 132-135AD) are catastrophic for the Jewish people, with a death toll of perhaps one million and the Jerusalem Temple destroyed in 70AD. After the second revolt, the Roman Emperor Hadrian bars Jews from Jerusalem and renames the land ‘Palestina,’ a deliberate insult for it revives the name of their ancient enemies, the Philistines. Nonetheless, Jews remain a major element of the population throughout the Roman, Byzantine and early Moslem eras.

For two millennia, through many political changes, the Land is subject to occupation and foreign rule, always part of somebody else’s Empire or Kingdom. The Land is tossed back and forth between warring—mainly Islamic—dynasties. Each brings their own armies and camp followers, bureaucracies, clerics, and labour gangs. This continual moving and mingling of peoples produces a racially mixed population. The Jews are less prone to such mixing because they hold themselves apart as a people under the requirements of the Mosaic law and of tradition: a people united by their history in the homeland of their patriarchs, kings and prophets.

The name Palestine sticks until the Crusaders take Jerusalem in 1099. They institute the Kingdom of Jerusalem. With a two month exception in 1872, the name Filastin or Palestine will not be applied again to an administrative unit at any level until the British Mandate for Palestine, formally instituted in 1922. This does not stop well-known writer Raashid Khalid, author of a book on Palestinian identity, from claiming a vilayet of ‘Filastin.’

The Jewish attachment to the Land and their continuous presence in it will be discussed in a future article. For Arab inhabitants of the Land, motivations and attachments are different. The Qur’an and associated *hadith* do not refer at all to the Land and Jerusalem is mentioned once, indirectly. The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are built in the late 7th century, when the Ummayid Caliphate loses control of Mecca and Medina. It is from this period that the identification of Jerusalem as Al Quds (the Holy) emerges. Subsequent interest in the city and the two buildings waxes and wanes; the buildings are sometimes in disrepair, sometimes refurbished. Saladin, who seizes Jerusalem from the Crusaders, emphasises the importance of his conquest. But for Sunni Muslims, Mecca and Medina are of greater

importance; for Shia, the devotional focus is Karbala, Najaf and Mashdad.

So, where are the Palestinians in all this? A Jerusalem inhabitant, Al-Maqdisi, in the late 10th century refers to himself as a ‘Palestinian.’ After that, no report for eight centuries until 1898 when a translation of a Russian document mentions the ‘Palestinian peasant.’ What fills the eight centuries of silence? Aside from scholarly sources using the classical term Palestina, there are occasional references to Filastin in religious and legal documents. Today, these have somehow become evidence, as one writer puts it, of the deep roots of “the concept of Palestine ... in the collective consciousness of the indigenous people of Palestine.”

Yet most non-Jewish inhabitants of the Land would have little concept of the world beyond village or clan during Ottoman rule (1517-1917.) The growing weakness of the Ottomans and then the triumph of the nationalistic Young Turk Revolution (1908) in Constantinople change this. Together with the impact of European concepts of nationalism, this causes the Arab elite to shift focus away from celebrating Arabic language and culture towards politically active Arab nationalism.

Because of its classical roots, European education retains the Roman usage of ‘Palestine’ to name the Land. Western visitors, in their increasing numbers during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, refer to ‘Palestine;’ Christian schools in the Land teach the ancient history of Palestine; Zionists set up the Anglo-Palestine Bank; etc. The term is taken up by the locals. Salim Qub’ayn in a 1902 article ‘A Palestinian Describes Palestinian Towns’, describes both ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-Jewish’ inhabitants of the towns. Palestinian is used to indicate an individual’s residence rather than ethnic group.

However, Zionism and Jewish immigration raise increasing concern. The newspaper Filastin begins publication in 1911. Initially neutral, by 1914 it opposes Zionism and uses terms such as the ‘Palestine community’ and ‘Palestinians’ for those under threat. Post-war the position of Filastin and other commentators develop a broader pan-Arab nationalism—much to the irritation of later progressive writers.

In February 1919 the Arab Delegation from Palestine to the Versailles Peace Conference submits a petition: “We consider Palestine nothing but part of Arab Syria and it has never been separated from it at any stage. We are tied to it by national, religious, linguistic, moral, economic, and geographic bounds.” Emir Feisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, writes to the Zionist organisation “We will wish the Jews a hearty welcome home ... our two movements complete one another. The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist. Our movement is national and not imperialist.”

The 1919 King-Crane Commission on Ottoman territories asks local Arabs: “What do you want the mandate to be for Palestine?” The answer is nearly unanimous: “We want no separation of Palestine from Syria... We are Syrians. Palestine is Southern Syria.” In 1920, protestors fill the streets of Jerusalem with pro-Syrian chants.

Part 2 brings this study into the 21st century.

Based on excerpts from “From the River to the Sea: the Land in History and Prophecy from the 1st to the 20th Century.” (See advert and back page.) Extensive footnotes for the above are provided there.



Portrait of 11th century Jewish sage Rashi.
[Photo: Wikimedia Commons]

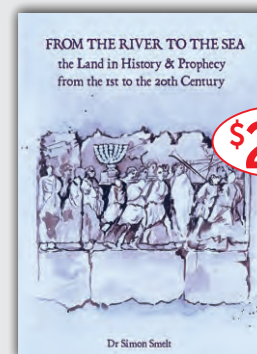
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“There is Only One Country for Us”



(Left) Gita Koifman with C4I team member Anemone Rüger. Gita Koifman, herself a survivor, serves as the chairwoman of a Russian-speaking association of Holocaust Survivors in Israel. (Middle) Gita Koifman with Itay and his grandfather Grigory, who survived the Shoah. (Right) Itay and his grandfather Grigory. | Photos: C4I

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

Gita Koifman has lived in three countries. She feels at home in only one—*Eretz Israel*. “Even as a child I wanted to get out of the Soviet Union. I had no idea where Tel Aviv was, but I wanted to go there; it was somehow imprinted in my genetic memory,” says Koifman, who leads a large association of Russian-speaking Holocaust survivors in Israel and is supported by Christians for Israel.

Gita’s life began in a Jewish *shtetl*, Briceni, in the north of Moldova. Of the 5600 inhabitants, 5400 spoke *Yiddish* as their mother tongue. Today there is a dash next to ‘Jewish’ on the population list. After the German-Romanian invasion in the summer of 1941, Gita’s extended family and thousands of Bessarabian Jews were herded on foot across the Dniester River to the Osarinzy ghetto near Mogilow-Podolski. Gita and her parents barely survived. “Mom’s three brothers and their families, Dad’s three sisters and their families and his parents died.”

When they returned, everything had been destroyed. They found shelter with Aunt Hannah Schuster in Sovietskaya Street. Gita’s grandfather found refuge for his soul in the *Torah*. “I remember how he always went to the synagogue,” says Gita. “Dad, on the other hand, lost his faith in the war.” Like so many. Perhaps one of the worst German war crimes.

Arriving at Last

The post-war years brought Gita’s family, along with hundreds of thousands of refugees, to the undestroyed

Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi. But she never really arrived here either. Together with her husband, Gita took advantage of the political thaw in the early 1970s to emigrate to Israel. At the time, this meant unimaginable hardship and reprisals. And it was a farewell forever. “We had to leave everything behind,” says Gita.

Gita and her husband Mikhail arrived in Haifa in June 1973, not knowing anyone in the country or anything about Jewish traditions. Their neighbours, Sara and Menachem Perel, invited them over for *Shabbat*. “I noticed that Sara had a number on her arm,” Gita recalls. “We didn’t have anything like that in the ghetto.” A few months later, the Yom Kippur War broke out. As both families sat in the bunker, Sara told her story.

The Number on Sara’s Arm

“She was the only member of her family to survive Auschwitz,” says Gita. “She was 16 or 17 when she was liberated, but she was so sick and emaciated that she couldn’t stand up. In her delirium, she saw a Soviet soldier bending over her, waiting for a reaction. “Leave me alone. Just let me die,” she told him.

“Then he suddenly spoke to her in *Yiddish*. “Listen,” he said. “I am from Vinnitsa. There’s a concentration camp there too. I have no idea if any of my family are still alive. You are my family now. I won’t leave you here.” And so he took her up on his arms and carried her out.

Months later, as Sara wandered aimlessly through the deserted streets of her hometown of Budapest, where none of her relatives had survived, the soldier’s words came back to her mind. “Your home is in Palestine. There are people from there who are looking for people like you, and they will help you get to Palestine. Our

home is there and only there.”

She met Menachem on the ship to British-Mandate Palestine, and the two of them began a new life. So did Gita and Mikhail, three decades later. “It was the best decision of our lives,” says Gita. “There were a thousand reasons for it not to happen. But God made it possible, He alone!”

Grieving Together and Finding Hope

Gita says this even after 7 October. In tears. “It hurts so much! These are our children, our grandchildren!” She commemorates Auschwitz liberation day with survivors her own age—and with Itay, who explains how he survived the Hamas massacre. Together with nine good friends, he went to the Nova Festival to celebrate *Sukkot* in a relaxed atmosphere. The first alarm in the morning didn’t worry them too much—they had all done their military service and were used to constant danger. Then suddenly they were on the run. When a girl screamed for help, Itay ran back until he himself came under fire. He hid for six hours before being rescued by Israeli police. None of his friends survived the massacre.

How does he cope with these terrible memories? “My grandpa. My grandpa helps me. He survived the Holocaust. I only had one day of Holocaust, he had years. He was a child back then; it was much worse for him. He built a new life in Israel, he raised up a family. His story gives me strength to live on.”

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President | Christians for Israel International

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44).

The origin of all lies is the Devil. The Bible starts with it—in paradise. Highly sophisticated, as the angel of light ('Lucifer' means 'light-bearer') he sows, with half-truths (in fact complete lies), doubts as to God's good intentions in the heart of man, resulting in death. Death in the life of man. Death in the universe. Death in nature. The fruit of the lies is the separation between God and man, resulting in death. The great decline, the entropy in the world and in the universe become reality. Not e-volution but de-evolution. Also the shedding of blood. Soon human blood flows upon the earth. Cain murders his brother Abel. The principle of decline and of spiritual darkness set in. Century after century. What is truth? After so many lies people don't know anymore.

On the contrary, the lie rules. Especially as far as information about Israel is concerned. Half-truths—quite often complete lies—fill the media. If you look how the reports about Gaza are presented, you discover that the cooked-up lies from Hamas are eagerly believed, and the information from Israel is presented with grave doubts, or 'can't be confirmed'. How does one find the truth? How does one know what is fake news? How can you distinguish between what is good and what is wrong, and even is evil? You can't rely on the news messages in the media in general. You need more sources. Certainly, including Israeli sources of information, such as Israeli websites.

What information should churches and Christian communities and political leaders and opinion leaders give to the general public? As counterbalance? Just to be fair and even-handed? Do we sometimes ever ask ourselves and wonder: What is the opinion of the Most High? How does He feel? To get to know His point of view one has to turn to His Word, the Bible. What He thinks, He has revealed as it is written in the Bible. There it says: *"All Your words are true..."* followed by *"all Your righteous laws are eternal..."* (Psalm 119:160).

The Apostle Paul says: *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes*



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visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light." (Ephesians 5:11-13).

In 2 *Thessalonians 2:11* Paul says about the 'antichrist', whom He calls the 'lawless one' and who is called by John in *Revelation 13* the 'beast': *"For this reason God sends them [to mankind] a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie."* The Apostle Peter writes in 2 *Peter 3:5* about knowingly believing the fallacy that *"... they deliberately forget..."* They say: *"We don't want to know the truth, so don't bother us with the facts."*

The Western world has rapidly abandoned the Judeo-Christian way of thinking and ethics and Judeo-Christian values. The result of that long process of rationalism and higher Bible-criticism is that a spiritual vacuum has been created in the Western world which fills the vacuum by embracing more and more new ways of thinking, new philosophies of man and new religions, one of them being Islam. Both Jews and Christians have become an increasingly less tolerated and fast shrinking minority.

The lies rule. When one repeats blatant lies intensively and long enough, people will start thinking that they are true. The minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels in the Third Reich of Adolph Hitler knew how to do it. *'Der Stürmer'*, a weekly magazine published by the Nazi's 1923-1945, systematically paved the way using all kinds of lies to change the minds and the hearts of the German people and nation, with all its gruesome consequences.

But one day in the future truth will come to light. One day every man will face his or her Creator. One day he or she will be held accountable for every act he or she performed. Jesus says in *Luke 8:17*: *"For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open."*

From the Bible we can look at the world around us in a true perspective. We can see and understand the daily news and current affairs from a Biblical and prophetic perspective. Suddenly we understand: Israel is the focal point of world history.

In *Numbers 23:19* we read: *"God is not human, that He should lie, not a human being, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfil?"* And *Psalms 105:8-11* says: *"He remembers His covenant forever, the promise He made, for a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham, the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.'" "And Jerusalem will continue to exist in its own place, in Jerusalem", says *Zechariah 12:6*. And Israel will never again be uprooted from their country. The Highest One the Creator of heaven and earth personally guarantees this. Just read *Jeremiah 31:35-37*, *Amos 9:14-15* and *Ezekiel 37:15-28*!*

Forgiveness

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

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Forgiveness has, you could say, a vertical and a horizontal aspect. It is not only about your relationship with God, but also with your fellow man or woman. In your relationship with God, your relationship with your fellow man or woman is also at stake, and vice versa.

What kind of debts are meant? The Greek word can literally mean material debt. The Bible and rabbinic law give many directions on how to deal with debt. One of the most striking is the remission of debts once every seven years with the

Sabbath year (Deuteronomy 15).

The word can also denote moral debt and sin. Sin, biblically speaking, is the transgression of God's commandments. This can also be in the ritual sphere. But here and in similar other Jewish sources, it is about the relationship to God and fellow human beings. The Aramaic word *chova* that probably lies behind this has the same double meaning. For the rabbis, 'guilt' is a failure in obligations to God.

In Jewish liturgy, the Day of Atonement is obviously about forgiveness of debt. But the prayer for forgiveness also has a place in the regular daily prayers: *"Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; grant us forgiveness, our King, for we have transgressed. Blessed be Thou, Eternal One, who is*

merciful and very willing to forgive." This prayer is preceded by a prayer for return to *Torah*. There is no forgiveness without renewal.

The book of *Sirach* says: *"Forgive your neighbour the injustice he did, then, if you pray, your sins will also be forgiven you" (28:2).* Jesus says the same and also emphasises its importance by also reversing it: if you do not forgive men, your Father will not forgive your transgressions either. Earlier, He had said: if you are on your way to the altar and you realise that your brother has something against you, go and reconcile with him first. That is the essence of the Atonement Day as it is lived in Judaism. In fact, the entire Sermon on the Mount is dominated by the core values of that period of the Jewish year: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

“To the Jews First”

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

Paul recognised that he had been called by the risen Lord to be an ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’. As a *Torah*-observant Jew and rabbinically-trained scholar, however, he also was aware of the fact that he could not just simply claim this on his own. A vision, an experience or even a ‘Damascus encounter’ could not simply override God’s order. Paul had to prove that the time set by God had come. For that reason, he always preached the gospel ‘to the Jews first’. Wherever the ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’ went, he always visited the synagogue or the Jews in the area first. This procedure was not just a tactical decision for missionary purposes neither was it a ‘bad trait,’ which the old rabbi was unable to shed. Paul wanted to prove through this order of priorities that the time for the salvation of the Gentiles had actually come.

In Antioch in Pisidia for example, he went to the synagogue on several consecutive *Sabbaths* in order to teach there. Only after the Jews openly rejected the message of Paul and Barnabas, was he able to proclaim: “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you. But since you are rejecting it, and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are now free, to turn to the non-Jews” (Acts 13:46). As proof, Paul explicitly referred to the words of Isaiah mentioned above (Isaiah 49:6), words well-known to orthodox Jews: “For so has the Lord commanded us, ‘I have set you

to be a light to the Gentiles, in order to bring salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47).

The active rejection of the Jewish people drove Paul out of the synagogue in Thessalonica, through Berea, to the Areopagus in Athens—the very center of ancient Gentile philosophy (Acts 17:1). Only after the Jews in Corinth resisted and ridiculed the preaching of ‘Jesus as Messiah’ (Acts 18:5), did Paul shake out his clothes and say to them: “Your blood be upon your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.” (verses 6-7).

“Through their fall, salvation comes to the Gentiles”—that is the theme of the *Book of Acts*. It is not by coincidence that the question: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom for Israel?” appears in the first chapter (1:6). This book, written by the only (possibly) non-Jewish author of New Testament Scriptures, ends with a resume of the Apostle Paul and a well-known quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10: “Properly the Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, ‘Go to



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this [elected] people, and say, hearing you hear, but do not understand; seeing you see, but you do not perceive. For the heart of this nation has been hardened. They have difficulties to hear with their ears. Their eyes are closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them. Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of the [only] God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen” (Acts 28:25-28).

Israel had to fall, so that salvation could come to us Gentiles. God Himself closed their eyes and ears and gave them a non-understanding heart so we, the Gentile nations, would accept Jesus Christ as savior. This is a ‘salvation- historical’ legality, which is not unique in the New Testament. For example, in a similar way, Yeshua explained to His disciples: “It is useful for you if I go away. For if I would not go away, the Comforter would not come to you. But if I leave you, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement” (John 16:7-8). Jesus’ physical absence was the salvation-historical precondition for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In a similar vein, the Jewish people had to ignore its *Messiah Yeshua*, so that salvation could reach the non-Jewish nations—for a very specific purpose, namely, **for the very purpose to make them jealous.** (Romans 11:11d)

Paul reminds us again, of what he had already explained in the second part of the preceding chapter. A concrete calling and function emerges out of the salvation-historical context for those Gentiles who believe in Israel’s *Messiah*: to provoke Israel to jealousy.

The Jewish-Christian philologist Friedrich Adolph Philippi (393) summarised this already in the 19th century: “The acceptance of the Gentiles is not the final purpose, but the historical means by which salvation will come to Israel in the end.” And the German theologian Adolf Schlatter knew even before the most horrible persecution that the Jewish people ever suffered: “In the Gentile, the Jew should see what Christ gives, how rich His mercy is. Through their example of living faith, he should be drawn to God— not driven to envy of others or opposition to God— but rather to a living desire to personally partake in such salvation. A salvation that was primarily intended for him in the first place.”

The Bible Speaks

Isaiah 61:1-5

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.



As Christians, we stand in prayer and witness around Israel. Each time we open God’s Word and reflect on His promises, we are reminded that our prayers are not in vain. God is not a distant observer—He is actively at work in the world and among His people. Even now, we see glimpses of His promises being fulfilled. And how much greater will it be when all is fulfilled in His perfect time! | Photo: Flashgo

Have we Turned a Corner?

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

After years of debate, negotiations, threats and risks, the inevitable finally came: military action. Israel pre-emptively struck Iran's nuclear programme, targeting nuclear facilities, scientists, and top military personnel. There was the Six-Day War of June 1967; now, the Twelve-Day War of June 2025. The combatants: Israel, Iran, and briefly, the United States. Despite the gravity of events, have we turned a corner?

The roots of this conflict stretch back to 1979, when Iran's monarchy was overthrown and replaced by the Islamic Republic, a theocratic regime led by a Supreme Leader with sweeping powers. This Shia clerical leadership has, from day one, declared eternal hostility toward the United States (the 'Great Satan') and Israel (the 'Little Satan'). For decades, Iran has waged proxy wars through groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, backed cyber attacks, and routinely called for the destruction of Israel. But not until June 2025 did the battle move from shadow warfare to open conflict—entirely fought in the air, with no boots on the ground.

A Few Observations

1. Global consensus: Few issues gain broad agreement in the West, as does Iran and nuclear weapons. The US, UN, and EU have consistently declared: Iran must not obtain nuclear arms. A nuclear Iran could destabilise the region, spark a Middle Eastern arms race, and make the actual use of a nuclear weapon—something unseen since 1945—a very real threat. Some critics warn Iran's clerical leadership awaits the Mahdi (Twelfth Imam) and believes a global apocalypse will precede his return. To them, nuclear war is not just acceptable—it's desirable. That's why so many view this regime as uniquely dangerous.

2. Israel has raised the alarm for years: The Jewish state considers an atomic Iran a grave existential threat. There is no doubt in their minds that Israel would be the first target of an Iranian nuclear attack. The Sunni Arabs consider Iran a grave threat to their nation, too.

3. A well-planned and executed military operation: Operation Rising Lion, a name based on *Numbers 23:24*, has been planned by Israel for many years. The precision and effectiveness of their campaign are a testament to its effectiveness. They have a lot of local operatives in Iran; planted drone launchers near key Iranian targets; and knew where everything and everyone was located; quickly gained control of



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Iran's airspace and bombed Iran's multi-site nuclear facilities, with total impunity. Despite the large number of sorties, not one plane or pilot was lost.

4. American involvement: American presidents, both Democrat and Republican, have been declaring that Iran will not be allowed to possess a nuclear weapon. Bill Clinton first made this declaration in 1995, and it has been regularly repeated for the last thirty years. So, like Israel, America's military operation, called Operation Midnight Hammer, had been planned for many years. Under the current US President Donald Trump, the ultimate deal maker who hates war, there was a big emphasis on negotiations. When that failed, and with an urgency that Iran was about to have a nuclear breakout and be able to produce a few bombs, Trump decided to attack. Regardless of what one thinks about Trump, the US, and Iran, from a military perspective, it was a grand and flawless operation. From an airbase in Missouri, 125 aircraft made a staggering thirty-seven-hour non-stop round-trip flight, refuelling several times in the air. They entered Iranian airspace around 2am and spent a total of 25 minutes from the air, while submarines offshore, bombed Iran's three key nuclear sites: Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Fordow was the key uranium enrichment site considered impregnable because it is buried deep in a mountain (perhaps half a kilometre down). For the first time ever, America dropped fourteen of its legendary 30,000-pound (13,600 kilos) bunker-busting bombs. The aircraft returned to Missouri safe and sound without being detected by Iran, and not one shot was fired.

5. Not a forever war: The Trump Administration went to great lengths to explain that their involvement was not

about regime change or a war against Iran. The goal was strictly limited to destroying Iran's nuclear capability.

War Over

Operation Midnight Hammer occurred early Sunday morning, 22 June 2025. On Monday, 23 June, Iran did a face-saving token counterattack on the US military base in Qatar (Iran warned the Qataris ahead of time), and on Tuesday, 24 June, the two sworn enemies Iran and Israel agreed to a Trump-brokered ceasefire. The Twelve-Day War was over.

Israel declared victory because its main military objectives had been met. The Jewish state incurred damage from Iranian retaliatory drone and ballistic missile attacks. Unlike Israel, which only attacked nuclear targets, Iran used its firepower against civilians. Several thousand apartments were badly damaged, and there were at least two dozen deaths.

What's Next?

As of this writing, the ceasefire is fragile but holding. Whether the ceasefire continues to be honoured or the fighting flares up again, we have definitely turned a corner, and things will not be the same. We are at a pivot of history.

Trump insists everyone go back to the negotiation table. The topics: Iran must give up its uranium enrichment programme, and it must renounce its death to America and Israel mantra. Considering that these two issues are not just part of public policy—they claim it's part of their (Shia) theology, it will be difficult for a cleric-run regime to backtrack on its aims.

Then again, the Middle East is where you can expect the unexpected and also a place of miracles. Could the footsteps of the *Messiah* be at the door (*James 5:9*)?

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Does My Existence Bother You?

When we consider the Ten Commandments, given to a newly freed nation trekking through a desert, it might seem odd. Why would a people who already understood the basics of right and wrong—like “Don’t steal” or “Don’t murder”—need a dramatic, divine revelation for these seemingly obvious rules? Their own history, from the *Book of Genesis*, already illustrated the dire consequences of such actions.

As people of faith, we typically view the Commandments through a **vertical lens**, outlining our relationship with God (the first five), and our interactions with one another (the remaining five). But there's a deeper, more interconnected flow between these two sets of divine pronouncements. I call this the **horizontal lens**.

Let's focus on the profound link between “I am the Lord” and “Don’t murder.” The opening of the Ten Commandments isn't just a statement of God's existence; it's educating a nation to embrace Him as Redeemer. The vertical lens of “I am the Lord” asks Israel to go beyond merely accepting God as Creator. The Lord directs them to internalise the notion that He is involved in every aspect of their lives.

The horizontal interconnectedness between “I am the Lord” with the Sixth Saying, “Don’t Murder,” may shock you. Of course, we can't literally murder God. However, the human act most akin to spiritual homicide is deliberately choosing to ignore Him—to completely disengage from His open invitation for relationship. For the nation or individual for whom God's existence is such an issue, there is an active quest to remove the very idea of Him from the world. This is no different than a murderer perceiving their victim as such a threat that eliminating him or her seems the only option for their own life to move forward. This, of course, is an extreme parallel, but it highlights the gravity of deliberately disengaging spiritually from “I am the Lord” through actions akin to “Don’t Murder.”

At the same time, God has woven a network of people into a believer's life. This is so we can uplift God's image in others and draw them closer to Him. What happens right outside our door every day is an opportunity to put His redemptive will into action by serving one another. Deliberately disengaging from others, even when their existence genuinely bothers us, misses the point of our divine purpose in this world.

The Ten Commandments are far more than just a list of “Do's and Don'ts.” The revelation at Sinai fundamentally reshaped how we view relationships. The Ten Commandments aren't merely about governing a society; they're about impacting and transforming people under His sovereignty and power.

Tisha B'Av

Mourning for the Destruction of the Temple

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

It is a day that receives great attention in Jewish tradition but is unknown in Christian tradition, the 9th (Hebrew: *Tisha*) of the Hebrew month of *Av*. Christians do not commemorate the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Because that is what 9 *Av* is about. It is the day commemorating the destruction of both the first and second temples. This is done by fasting for a day (like *Yom Kippur* from evening to evening). In the synagogue, the book of Lamentations is read, which sings of Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians. On 9 *Av* in 70 AD, the Romans set fire to the temple. On the same day almost six hundred years earlier, in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's troops had breached the city wall, heralding the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first temple. These were the most traumatic events in Jewish history. But disasters that befell the Jews later are also associated with that day, for example the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. *Tisha B'Av* has therefore become a symbol for all the calamities that have befallen the Jewish people in their history.

Renewal
Joy cannot be complete until Jerusalem



Jews gather at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, at the end of Tisha B'Av fast, on 13 August 2024. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

and the temple are rebuilt. At the same time, this day marks a renewal in Judaism. The temple had fallen away as the centre of worship. How was it to continue? The early rabbis took over spiritual leadership of the Jewish people from the priests (*Matthew 21:43*). Thus the Jewish people, who had been torn apart, were reunited. Christians could not or would not go along with that. Early in Christian tradition, the destruction of the temple was seen as evidence of God's final judgement on Israel. The temple service

had come to its end. The role of the Jewish people was over. The church took its place. Had not Jesus himself foretold it when the disciples pointed out the magnificent temple complex to Him? *"Not one stone will be left on another"* (*Matthew 24:2*).

Jesus and the Temple
Could Jesus really have meant it that way? It is remarkable with how much esteem Jesus speaks of the temple. When He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of the pigeon sellers, He did so to bring the

morning of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-2*). Even when the letter to the Hebrews talks about the transient nature of the first covenant (*Hebrews 8:13*), it does not necessarily mean that the temple is no longer significant. The temple service is renewed, but not abolished. Jesus identified Himself with the temple: *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"* (*John 2:19*, *Matthew 26:61*). So does His resurrection on the third day also guarantee the rebuilding of the temple in the Messianic kingdom? The seer John,

Facts Speak

ISRAEL-IRAN

WAR IN NUMBERS

JUNE 13 – JUNE 24, 2025

 550 MISSILES AND 1,000+ DRONES FIRED FROM IRAN	 28 ISRAELIS KILLED	 3,238 INJURED	 9,000 DISPLACED ISRAELIS
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Source: Times of Israel

Joy cannot be complete until Jerusalem and the temple are rebuilt. At the same time, this day marks a renewal in Judaism. The temple had fallen away as the centre of worship. How was it to continue?

temple back to its purpose: *"It is written, He said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers'"* (*Matthew 21:13*), quoting the prophets Isaiah (56:7) and Jeremiah (7:11). In the rendering of John's gospel, Jesus even spoke about the 'House of My Father'. The temple is His Father's House. That is where the Son is a child at home, where even as a twelve year old boy, He Himself was already engaged in the things of His Father (*Luke 2:49*).

First Disciples
The temple also played an important role in the lives of Jesus' first followers. We read of Peter and John going to the temple together for afternoon prayer (*Acts 3:1*). It is quite conceivable that the disciples were also together in a room in the temple complex in that early

when he saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, heard the words: *"God's dwelling place is now among the people"* (*Revelation 21:3*). Is it the temple? But then he received a second vision of the holy city, or maybe he was looking even closer. And then it says: *"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"* (*Revelation 21:22*). So the temple holds a promise: God will be with mankind. So when we now remember together with Israel, the destruction of the temples, it is no longer in opposition to Israel, but sharing in the expectation, given to Israel, of the coming of that Messianic kingdom.

Short News

University in the Ranking



A recently published report about the quality of universities ranks the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 65th, on a list of two thousand universities. The Weizman Institute of Science ranks 70th. The ranking of other Israeli educational institutes has fallen compared to last year. The well-known American Harvard University ranks first again. The investigation examined twenty thousand educational institutions. | Photo: Flashgo.

Rising Gas Export

The export of Israeli gas has increased in 2024 to 13.2 billion m³, compared to 11.6 billion m³ in 2023. This increase continues the upward trend of recent years. Production started in the offshore Leviathan gas field in December 2019 and in the Karish gas field in October 2022. Since 2021 Israeli gas exports have increased by 86%. This means that 49% of Israeli gas production is exported momentarily, while 51% is for inland use. The biggest buyers are Egypt and Jordan.

Economic Growth

According to the latest estimate of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics the Israeli economy grew in the first quarter of 2025 by 3.4% on an annual basis. The private consumption per capita however increased by 6.1% on an annual basis. This increase meant a reversal compared to last year, when in the fourth quarter of 2024 a rise of 4.1% was noted. A decrease of private consumption is often considered as an indication of declining consumer confidence.

Modern Invention

Salim Al-Zre'i, a former employee of PLO and PA-chairman Yasser Arafat, recently made a remarkable statement. The experienced terrorist admitted that "The Palestinian people arrived in Israel not before four hundred years after the Ottoman occupation (i.e. 15th century) in the Land of Israel." The Ottoman rule over Israel ended in 1917 during WW1. When the Palestinians, according to Salim Al-Zre'i arrived after that period, he unwittingly acknowledged the historical fact that the 'Palestinian people' are a modern invention.

A Tale of Two Cyruses

The Inimitable Eddie Jacobsen—Part 2

■ Christopher J Archer

Co-chair | New Zealand Israel Friendship Association Inc.

Following the return of the exiles in the time of the Persian kings, the inhabitants of Judah remained in their own land until the Roman general Pompey's conquest of Judea in 63 BCE. The first Jewish War (66-73 CE) resulted in the destruction of the Temple. The Bar Kokhba revolt (133-135 CE) resulted in a great expulsion of Jews from Judea and initiated a second Diaspora, which scattered Jews among the nations even into the twentieth century.

Through the intervening centuries, Jews remembered the words of their prophets like Ezekiel, who prophesied before the destruction of the first temple, "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land... You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I will be your God." In the eighth century BCE Isaiah had prophesied, "the Lord will extend His hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of His people... from the four corners of the earth."ⁱ The re-gatherings referred to in these prophecies presupposed a far wider dispersion than that which followed their first exile.

The closing years of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of the Zionist movement. In the face of European antisemitism, Theodor Herzl published a book which advocated for a Jewish State. Chaim Weizmann, who became president of the World Zionist Organisation, was a friend of Lord Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary in the British War Cabinet. This contact led to the formulation of the 'Balfour Declaration' on 31 October 1917, which declared British support for a Jewish homeland in the post-war years.

Following the end of WW1, the victorious powers established the League of Nations and gave control of Palestine to Britain. This was known as the British Mandate. Arab uprisings in Palestine from 1936-1939 resulted in a 'White Paper' in which the government repudiated the intentions of the Balfour declaration, fearing the loss of support of the Arab nations. Even as the Jews of Europe were facing extermination in Nazi Concentration camps, the 'White Paper' restricted emigration to Palestine to 75,000 Jews over five years.

The British Government advised the UN that it would end its mandate at midnight on 14 May 1948. If there were



Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Elath presents President Truman with a silver ark for the Scrolls of the Law, a gift from President Weizmann. | Photo: Harry S Truman Library & Museum

to be a Jewish homeland, it would not be the result of British intervention. Resolution 181 was presented to the newly constituted United Nations on 29 November 1947, proposing the partitioning of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab homeland. The American State Department and then Secretary of State, George C Marshall, opposed partitioning and advocated extending the UN mandate. Marshall warned President Harry S Truman against offending the Arab oil states. Despite these misgivings, Truman instructed his ambassador to support the resolution. Thirty-three nations voted in favour of Partition, and all the Arab states opposed it.

Violence in Palestine continued to grow, and Zionist lobbyists aggressively attacked Marshall's position. Truman was a great admirer and friend of George C Marshall, a hero of post-WW2 reconstruction, so he refused to meet with the Zionists. Impasse! Enter Eddie Jacobsen.

Born in 1891 in New York City to immigrant Jewish parents, Eddie's life took a significant turn when he enlisted in the US Army in 1917. He was recruited by a young lieutenant, Harry S Truman, to help run the unit canteen. Their enterprise was a financial success, and after the war, they became partners in a men's clothing business. The business failed, and Eddie spent the rest of his working life as a travelling salesman. Harry Truman went on to become the 33rd President of the United States of America,

The two men remained lifelong friends. Eddie was the only Jew who had open access to the White House, with the proviso that he never raised the subject

of Palestine. Because of his relationship with Truman, Eddie Jacobsen was approached by the Zionist lobby to request that the President receive Chaim Weizmann. Eddie Jacobsen agreed, and on 15 March 1948, he met with Truman immediately, broaching the forbidden subject. A long silence ensued before the President agreed. After meeting Weizmann in secret five days later, he was won over to support the resolution calling for a Jewish homeland.

Truman upheld his pledge, and on the night of 14 May 1948, America became the first country to recognise the State of Israel, with Truman responding just eleven minutes after Ben Gurion's declaration. On 25 May, in a ceremony at the White House, Harry Truman was presented with a magnificent *Torah* Scroll sent by Weizmann, who was now President of Israel, in appreciation of America's support.

In 1953, shortly after retiring from the presidency, Truman was introduced to a Jewish audience in New York by Eddie Jacobson as the man who helped bring the State of Israel into existence. "What do you mean, helped?" Truman interjected. "I am Cyrus! I am Cyrus!"

Eddie Jacobsen died in 1955, having refused to exploit his part in influencing Truman's decision. Heros come in all sizes and in all ages and, just as Cyrus the Persian was moved by the God of Israel to facilitate the return of the Jewish exiles in the sixth century BCE, so also was an American 'Cyrus' moved to facilitate the return of Jewish exiles nearly two and a half millenia later.

ⁱEzekiel 36:24-28 (ESV), ⁱⁱIsaiah 11:1-12 (ESV)

Colourful Haifa

■ Simon Soesan

Columnist and Writer

When we decided to move to Haifa in 1982, it was after only brief consideration. Our eldest child was on the way, and we wanted to raise our family in a multicultural environment—one where tolerance wasn't just an ideal but a way of life.

Joe Bennett, the father of our former (and hopefully future) prime minister, was the estate agent who showed us our first flat. Since then, we have lived in the same neighbourhood, moving three times but never far. Our neighbourhood is known for the fact that seventy percent of children raised here return to live here as adults. In our case, two of our three children live just down the street, which means we have seven of our ten grandchildren living nearby.

All Israelis

Our children went to a public school alongside Muslim, Druze, Christian, and Baha'i classmates. They learned English as well as Arabic. What united them all was that they are all Israelis. And this was important to us, because we believe prejudice can be prevented when you invest in the future—and children are the future.

A Multicultural City

Haifa is a multicultural city woven together by the threads the new Israeli culture. At its port, ships are loaded and unloaded during the day, and at night dozens of trucks with heavy containers leave for Jordan and even Saudi Arabia.



View on Haifa. | Photos: Flash90

During the month of December, we celebrate the 'Feast of Feasts' in Haifa for four weeks. This is widely known. Christmas, *Hanukkah*, New Year's Eve and sometimes *Ramadan* are celebrated together in the old city down by the port. Half a million visitors come from across Israel and abroad to experience this unique spectacle. Ben Gurion Boulevard, stretching from the harbour to the foot of the fairytale Baha'i Gardens, is at its busiest, while in the middle of the street stands a large Christmas tree next to a *Chanukiah* (eight-branched candelabra). Once a year, we have an 'open day of religion', when mosques, synagogues and churches are open to visitors and explanations are provided. This is a great way to learn about other cultures.

Conversations

After 43 years in this city, I have developed a circle of friends as diverse as the city itself. This was not intentional, it is just a reflection of life in Haifa. Tragically, some terrorist attacks have underscored our diversity: the victims, like the city, came from many different backgrounds. Haifa isn't perfect. We have problems, but we solve them through conversation, not conflict.

Tolerance

A few years ago, our daughter decided to get married on Independence Day. It was a deliberate decision. Among the guests was Wassim, a friend of our son, a Muslim and an outspoken supporter of the Palestinian cause. He's been a close friend of our son since childhood and a

regular visitor to our home since he was five. Though we don't share his views, we respect him, and he respects us. On the day of the wedding, Wassim arrived just before the ceremony—straight from a *Nakba* demonstration, still wearing his 'Free Palestine' T-shirt. I looked at him and he gestured that he would change, which he did immediately. That tolerance is characteristic of Haifa.

Different opinions are good for discussion, but it is not a competition to see who is right. When we look out from the Louis Boulevard onto our beautiful bay and the mountains of Lebanon, we hear Hebrew, as well as Arabic and Russian. Some of the Russians who have come to live here are Christian and go to church down in the old town. No one minds. Many doctors, nurses and pharmacists are Arab. There is nothing unusual about that in our city. By the way: you can only taste the best hummus in the world in Haifa.

Home

No, this is not a promotional pitch for Haifa—although you are more than welcome to visit! It is simply a description of the city that has become my home over the years. The endless beaches, museums, parks and seaside boulevards are a delight to walk along—which is necessary after a delicious oriental meal in one of our restaurants. Unfortunately, I cannot recommend a specific restaurant: I have been to many restaurants and still don't know which one is the best. You'll just have to come and decide for yourself.

Slain Israeli Embassy Staffer's Father: "Sarah Molded Us"

■ JNS Staff

The father of slain Israeli embassy staffer Sarah Milgrim described his daughter as a source of strength and courage in the family's first network TV interview since her murder in Washington, DC on 21 May.

"Usually a parent tries to mold their child; Sarah molded us," a grieving and emotionally shaken Robert Milgrim told CBS News' Jonah Kaplan. "She was a stronger person than I ever was."

Sarah's mother, Nancy, and her older brother, Jacob, joined the interview, which aired on 4 June.

"I told Nancy after this happened that I'm a different person now than before—sadly—from learning so much about what Sarah did and her courage." He then affirmed Kaplan's addition, saying, "And her striving for peace, yes."

Sarah Lynn Milgrim, 26, and fellow embassy staffer and her Israeli partner, Yaron Lischinsky, 30, were gunned down after attending an event centered on improving humanitarian aid to the Middle East.

The shooter, identified as Elias Rodriguez, apparently wanted to kill Israelis or Jews at the American Jewish

Committee event hosted by the Capital Jewish Museum. He shouted "Free, free, Palestine" and claimed he "did it for Gaza."

Milgrim's funeral was held at Congregation Beth Torah in Overland Park, Kansas, on 27 May. She was brought up in Kansas City's small Jewish community.

The shooting happened days before Milgrim and Lischinsky were to fly to Israel, where he intended to propose, said Yechiel Leiter, Israel's ambassador to the United States. Instead, their funerals were held a day apart—Milgrim's in Kansas and Lischinsky's in Israel. She was a graduate student at American University's School of International Service and worked tirelessly to promote peace between Israel and its neighbours before she joined the Israeli embassy.



Sarah Lynn Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky were murdered in Washington in May. | Photo: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The double murder in DC was followed 11 days later by an attack on a Boulder, Colorado, rally for Israeli hostages held by Hamas terrorists in Gaza, further intensifying concerns over escalating antisemitic violence in the United States.

Difficult is also Possible

■ **Koen Carlier**
Aliyah Fieldworker | Christians for Israel
Ukraine

When something does not go smoothly, you quite often hear people say, “It was an uphill battle”. Now that the war has been going on for almost forty months, we have experienced what it means to be in an uphill battle on a regular basis!

Take 87-year-old Marat from the small town of Kryzopol. He did not want to leave for Israel. He kept saying no to his daughter and granddaughter who had emigrated to Israel years earlier and now live in Ashdod. “We don’t want you and Mom to wither away,” his daughter pleaded. “You have no one left in Ukraine— your whole family is already in Israel.” After much persuasion, Marat finally agreed. We were asked to accompany him and his wife, Lusia, to the Israeli embassy in Kiev for an interview and to apply for exit visas.

A Long Trip

Twice, the trip had to be postponed due to illness. Marat is a Holocaust survivor and carries this past with him. The third time it all went well. They received their exit visas the same day and we brought them and others to Kishenov for their flight to Israel. The 420-kilometre trip took more than twelve hours. At the border, we endured hours of delays, barely moving. When an air raid siren went off, we came to a complete standstill. But eventually, we crossed into Moldova. Marat was calm and once we passed the border he smiled! We wished him and the others a blessed journey to the land of their forefathers.

Aliyah During Wartime

On Wednesday, 11 June, we brought a group of Ukrainian immigrants (*olim*) to Moldova. Their departure for Israel, scheduled for Thursday evening, 12 June, went ahead as planned. But the very next day, 13 June, Israel launched an attack on Iran. For the *olim*, who had only just arrived in their new homeland, the



Marat and his wife Lusia on their way to Israel. | Photo: C4I Ukraine

homecoming was not easy. They spent their first days in bomb shelters. Everyone had prepared for a difficult integration, but few had expected to begin their new life in the midst of a war with Iran.

On 13 June, Israel’s airspace was closed, forcing the next trips for *olim* from Sumy and other cities in Ukraine to be postponed. It was a major setback for many. While Ukraine’s airspace had already been closed for over forty months, we had never before experienced Israel’s airspace being closed indefinitely as well.

After twelve days of war, Israeli airspace reopened and *Aliyah* efforts resumed. Just one day after the ceasefire, a scheduled flight carrying 110 Jews from Western Europe was able to proceed—a miracle if you ask me. We are living in Biblical times and see *Isaiah 43:6* being fulfilled even in this time of war and hardship: “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back! Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth.’”

Moving Forward

Drone and rocket attacks in Ukraine continue unabated—more than a thousand drones and dozens of rockets have been fired in recent days. Still, immigration via Moldova is resuming.

It is crucial to continue praying for the safety of all drivers and *olim*, and that every journey—however difficult—will end in safe arrival.

My Grandmother is Praying for Iran

■ **Danielle Mor**
Jewish Agency for Israel

16 June 2025. My *Safta* (grandmother), an iconic mother of 12, grandmother of 60 and great-grandmother to a number she is unwilling to disclose, has been weeping for Israel for nearly two years now.

For the past few weeks, at the Jerusalem home she has lived in since 1952, which has no shelter, she has taken cover in an inner room with her care cover, a loving Muslim, Farsi speaking woman from Uzbekistan. During the sirens, they embrace, weep and pray.

My *Safta* weeps for the destruction in Israel, for the already 24 lives stolen, among them an 94 year old woman pulled from the rubble and two brothers, just eight and ten years old.

My *Safta* weeps for the many hundreds of homes destroyed, for the some 200 wounded and in hospitals, for the ‘survivor-refugees’ in the central cities of Israel who must build their lives anew.

My *Safta* weeps for the over 300,000 reservist soldiers who have been fighting for four and even five

terms of service, away from home. At the same time, she prays that Iran—the country of her youth, Teheran—the beautiful city of her birth, with its nearby snow capped mountains she used to, would all be freed from the murderous, hateful regime of the Ayatollahs and be returned to the people she once and perhaps still, feels such a part of. Serving at The Jewish Agency, the same organisation through which my *Safta* came from Iran, the same organisation that provided her first home and her current home, always reminds me of the strength we have as a people.

As my *Safta* weeps, we can arise, perhaps even like lions, to give comfort and strength to wipe away the tears.



Our Projects Overview

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

Aliyah

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



Hineni Soup Kitchen

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



Holocaust Survivors

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



Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

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



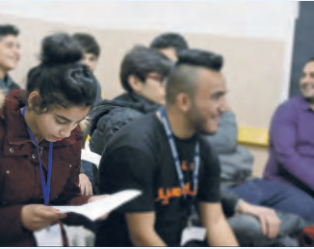
Food Parcel Campaign Ukraine

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



Arab Christians

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



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

