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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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People at 'Hostage Square' in Tel Aviv, calling for the release of the hostages still held by Hamas, 15 November 2025. | Photo: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90

Hostages Home—But Will Peace Follow?

US President Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu announced on 29 September the closest thing to a realistic peace plan we have seen in the last two years. The proposal looked like a win-win for both Israel and the Palestinians. All Israeli hostages were to be released. Gaza would be deradicalised. Hamas would have no role in Gaza's future governance and would be disarmed. Israel would gradually withdraw from all of Gaza (except a buffer zone), and regional Arab and international forces would act as peacekeepers to ensure reform of the Palestinian Authority and facilitate reconstruction of Gaza.

The plan was supported by a wide group of regional and international nations, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Jordan—even Pakistan and Turkey. By late-November, all living hostages and the bodies of those who had been killed were returned to Israel—with

the exception of two: Israeli Ran Gvili, and Sudthisak Rinthalak, an agricultural worker from Thailand who had been employed at Kibbutz Be'eri.

On 18 November, the Trump-sponsored peace plan was approved in a Security Council resolution, giving UN authority to the establishment of an international force in Gaza.

The plan faces huge obstacles. Hamas not only refuses to hand over its weapons, it has launched a brutal campaign to reassert its control over the parts of the Strip it holds, including the heart of Gaza City. Moderate Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE refuse to contribute to an international coalition unless Hamas is already disarmed and a path to Palestinian statehood is agreed on with the Palestinian Authority in charge. Israel strongly opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state under the PA.

Moreover, the involvement of Turkey and Qatar is problematic. These regimes have always been on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist terror groups such as Hamas.

A fragile cease-fire is in place. Israel currently retains control of some 53% of Gaza, in the north, south and east, splitting the territory into two areas. Israel continues to eliminate Hamas's remaining fighters and destroy the tunnels in the area under its control.

For real peace we will have to wait. In *Chapter 6:14*, *Jeremiah* said: "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." Peace will only come when Jerusalem has been restored, the Messiah comes, and the word of the Lord will go forth from Zion. Then—and only then—will the nations train for war no more.

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

Colophon

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Mission

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

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Israel at a Crossroads

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

This edition of *Israel & Christians Today* is being published at a critical moment in Israel's history. Finally, after two agonising years, almost all of the hostages taken on the terrible day of 7 October 2023 have been returned to their loved ones. These included the bodies of men, women and children who were killed and whose bodies were brutally taken into Gaza to serve as bargaining chips in Hamas' cynical war of terror.

The bodies also included that of Hadar Goldin, a young Israeli soldier who was abducted and killed eleven years ago. For all those years, his family have pleaded with the world to force Hamas to release his body—without avail, until now.

On 18 November the UN Security Council adopted a resolution implementing the so-called Comprehensive Peace Plan that was brokered by the United States in the previous months, and which laid the foundation for the release of the hostages. This plan, and the resolution, envisage the demilitarisation of Hamas, the establishment of a new government, and the gradual rebuilding of Gaza. While impressive on paper, the plan is already proving to be unrealistic. The tragic fact is that Hamas has no intention to give up its weapons, to be demilitarised or to abandon its Islamist charter, which sees the Jewish people as pigs and requires the use of violence to destroy the Jewish nation.

President Trump's vision of peace in the region through Abraham Accords may potentially achieve a kind of ceasefire—a temporary cessation of hostilities. But it will not bring peace, because it fails to address the root cause of the conflict: Islamist rejection of the existence of a sovereign Jewish nation with Jerusalem



Some of the Christians for Israel family from around the world. | Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia

as its capital. The conflict is an existential one, that cannot be resolved through clever agreements based on self-interest of the parties.

At the end of the day, Israel and the Jewish people will stand alone, to fight against the forces of evil. And by the grace of God they will endure.

In the meantime, our calling as Gentile Christians around the world is to stand side-by-side with the Jewish people, and to accompany them on their difficult journey home—just as the Moabite Ruth accompanied her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Like Ruth, we declare, “Your God is our God; where you die we will die”.

By the time you read this newspaper, over 20 young people from 11 countries will have returned to their home countries after participating in the inaugural Christians for Israel *Voices for Israel* international youth tour—a project we have been excited about for some time now. The programme was initiated and implemented by the C4I International team, together with our national affiliates and in partnership with the Israeli government. Over ten days, this group toured the country, met

and spoke with a wide range of people and organisations, to catch a sense of the miracle that is the State of Israel. They have returned home inspired and equipped to be ambassadors for the Jewish people and Israel in their nations. This inaugural programme will hopefully set the standard for many more such tours to come.

Just prior to the *Voices of Israel* programme, almost one hundred Christians for Israel leaders from over 25 nations came together in Jerusalem for the C4I International Forum. The countries represented included: Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Ukraine, Ivory Coast, Netherlands, United States, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and last, but definitely not least, Fiji. In what felt like a family reunion, these representatives of the nations shared experiences and knowledge. As they travelled the country they were able, not only to learn more about the joys and pain, but also to bless the people of Israel. You can read more about this event on page 8.

Prayer Points

Looking Forward to the Light

- From December 14–22, the Jewish people celebrate *Hanukkah*, the festival of light overcoming darkness. Give thanks that during this season, all living hostages have been reunited with their families. Pray for a blessed *Hanukkah* for the entire Jewish people.
- “When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy” (*Psalms 94:19*). Pray for Israelis who feel the renewed pain of loss during the *Hanukkah* celebrations. Ask that they experience God as the Comforter of all who mourn.
- During Advent, we celebrate *Messiah's* first coming and reflect on our longing for His return. Pray for Jesus to come soon and take His place on the throne of His father David.

Israel

- Although there is a ceasefire at present, the war has left deep scars on Israeli society. Many residents of the attacked *kibbutzim* are unsure whether to return

home. Pray for wisdom in their decisions and for healing from trauma.

- “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (*Isaiah 49:6*). Pray that the nations will once again see Israel as a sign of hope. Pray that people's eyes will be opened to God's plan with Israel and how He continues to carry out His plan despite everything.
- Pray for Israel's protection in the legal arena—that decisions by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court will not harm Israel, and that these institutions will become less anti-Israel.

Christians for Israel

- Pray that Christians gain deeper insight into the spiritual battle surrounding Israel. Pray that they recognise the reality of the kingdom of darkness seeking to destroy God's people, and understand the vital role of prayer as a weapon against it.

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

Building for a Nonexistent Force

■ Yaakov Lappin

JNS

The United States is planning to establish a large, \$500 million military base in Israel near the Gaza border, intended to house an international force tasked with monitoring the fragile ceasefire, according to a report published jointly by *Ynet* and the *Shomrim* website.

However, this plan is emerging amid a total deadlock in negotiations over the next phase of the truce, known as stage two, as Washington seeks to put together a tangible International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for the stated mission of disarming Hamas in the parts of Gaza that the terrorist organisation still controls.

This impasse has, according to a *Channel 13* report, led the US to suggest moving directly to reconstruction stages in the parts of Gaza that Israel controls (53%), a proposal Israel has reportedly rejected. Meanwhile, with no one to stop it, Hamas has begun significantly re-entrenching itself in the 47% of Gaza it controls, setting up checkpoints and collecting taxes, while also collecting unexploded IDF ammunition for its rearmament effort.

Gaza Base Not Strategic

Blaise Misztal, the vice president for policy at the Washington DC-based Jewish Institute for National Security of America, told *JNS*: “The United States should absolutely have a base in Israel. But it should be an air base aimed at giving US forces greater freedom of action and easier access to multiple theaters in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa than they get from any of their current bases in Arab states.

“Such a US base makes sense both because of the strategic benefit to both Israel and the United States and—since a suitable base already exists and wouldn’t have to be built—the low cost.”

Misztal contrasted that strategic concept with the current Gaza-centric plan, which he argued misses a fundamental problem. “Constructing a massive, expensive base for the purpose of administering the Gaza ceasefire, on the other hand, makes much less strategic sense, at least right now,” he cautioned.

While the United States is right to focus on the need to secure the Gaza Strip, he added, unless Hamas is disarmed and Gaza is demilitarised, “as President Trump’s 20-point peace plan calls for, there can be no peace. Each day that goes by without demilitarisation, Hamas grows stronger and bolder.”

The core issue, Misztal explained, is “the lack of clarity—and good candidates—for troops that would make up the ISF and



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visits a US military base in Kiryat Gat, 24 October 2025. | Photo: POOL

undertake the dangerous mission of disarming Hamas.”

That absence of an ISF is unrelated to the issue of a base, and entirely related to the fact that such a force, “to fulfill its mandate, would almost certainly have to engage in hostilities with the terrorists, take losses, and cause civilian casualties. No country, other than Israel, is willing to sign up for that,” he said.

Unless a realistic template for an ISF is formed, noted Misztal, “building bases for a non-existent force appears to be an exercise in keeping the ceasefire on life support rather than seriously grappling with the difficulties of implementing its second phase.”

Committed to Ensuring the Quiet

Lt Col (res) Dr. Shaul Bartal, who served extensively in various security capacities in Judea and Samaria and who is a senior research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, argued that a US base in Israel is not inherently negative.

Bartal told *JNS* that the base should be viewed through the lens of US global power competition, not just the local Gaza ceasefire.

“The current American interest in establishing a large base in Israel is intended, among other things, to strengthen the American presence in the Middle East against the tendency of some Arab countries to get closer to China, which is considered a threat to American hegemony in this region as well. This is even before we have talked about Israel. In this context, one can also understand the proximity between Trump and Syria and the attempt to harness the new Syria under American protection,” said Bartal.

From this perspective, Bartal noted, the

base offers potential advantages for Israel, both in terms of security and economics. He added that “a large American base will help Israel ensure the ceasefire agreement signed vis-à-vis Hamas through Egyptian-Qatari mediation. Supervised international force involvement in the Gaza Strip will help stabilise the situation in the Strip in two ways. On the one hand, it will increase deterrence against Hamas.

“Hamas will hesitate greatly to launch further attacks when there is a large American base on the border of the Strip, and the Americans are committed to ensuring the quiet. Also, a multinational force that is not Israeli will be able to operate more freely inside the Strip as it is defined according to the Trump plan that Israel agreed to—as a peacekeeping force.”

However, Bartal warned that this presence could come at a steep price for Israel’s sovereignty and freedom of action. At the time, he added, the IDF would “continue to be responsible for securing borders and communities. But the issue of humanitarian assistance and managing the Strip’s crossings—this would be done in coordination vis-à-vis the Americans.”

On Sunday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said, “Gaza will be demilitarised down to the last tunnel and Hamas will be disarmed on the yellow side (the Israeli-controlled part of Gaza) by the IDF and in the old Gaza by an international force—or by the IDF.”

The comment appears to suggest that Israel is determined to implement the removal of Hamas’s armed capabilities if or when the ISF fails to do so on the Hamas-controlled side of Gaza.

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Short News

Hadar Goldin Buried in Israel



Israel Defense Forces Lt. Hadar Goldin was laid to rest in Kfar Saba on 11 November 2025, more than 4,000 days after he was killed during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. Thousands attended the funeral, held two days after Hamas returned his remains as part of a US-brokered truce. Goldin was killed on 1 August 2014, just two hours after a ceasefire began. “Hadar, you gave far beyond measure for your country. We continue to discover rays of light you left behind after your passing,” said IDF Chief of Staff Lt Gen Eyal Zamir at the funeral. “You have returned to the land for which you fought, but we will go back to every place where a promise remains unfulfilled, and we will keep working until the last of our sons returns home.” | Photo: Flashgo

Groundbreaking Research

Israeli archaeologists have developed a groundbreaking technology to make hidden spaces visible under archaeological sites. The detection system works like a kind of X-ray and enables mapping of underground structures so that archaeologists don’t have to start digging haphazardly. These hidden spaces are frequently found in Israel.

Families in Crisis



A new post-war report shows the toll reserve duty takes on families: 50% of reservists’ wives say their husbands’ absence has caused marital difficulties. Thirty percent considered divorce, and nearly seventy percent sought psychological help after 7 October 2023. The absence of their father also greatly affected the mental situation of the children: fifty two percent of the families noticed a deterioration of the mental health of the children. | Photo: Flashgo

The Mainstreaming of Jew-Hatred

■ **Melanie Philips**

JNS

In both America and Britain, a disturbing restructuring of politics is underway that appallingly hinges on the demonisation of Israel and the loathing of the Jews. The way this animus has been deforming liberal and left-wing politics has long been obvious.

New York has elected a radical mayor, Zohran Mamdani, an obsessive Israel-hater who promotes the extreme left agenda of the Democratic Socialists of America.

The Democratic Party has increasingly been turning against Israel. Its 'squad' of radical Israel-bashers was mirrored in Britain by Jeremy Corbyn, the hard-left 'friend' of terrorists who was ousted as leader of the Labour Party because of his extremist views.

Although more centrist, the current Labour government in the UK under Sir Keir Starmer has been unprecedentedly hostile to Israel, too, as well as pursuing ruinous left-wing policies.

The forces of conservatism are desperately needed to fight all this. But conservatism is having a crisis of its own.

In America, there's an escalating civil war over the mindset promoted by the immensely influential podcaster Tucker Carlson, the former cable-TV host at Fox News. He regularly platforms Holocaust deniers, fascism apologists and antisemites like the white supremacist, pro-Nazi, pro-Stalin freak Nick Fuentes. The conservative Heritage Foundation is in turmoil over these views. President Kevin Roberts defended Carlson and Christians' right to 'critique' Israel, but also suggested Israel pressures Washington via the 'globalist class'—a coded reference to hidden Jewish power and a classic antisemitic trope.

US Vice President JD Vance has also left uncomfortable questions hanging air. At a Turning Point USA rally, he failed to rebut antisemitic suggestions, including a claim that the Jews had persecuted the Christians, and implied that Israel had somehow controlled American presidents other than Donald Trump.

These attitudes are widespread. Conspiracy theories about a 'great replacement,' Hitler being right, and Jews dragging the US into Middle East wars are now common, especially among young 'Zoomers' in influential circles.

Rod Dreher, an American conservative writer and editor living in Hungary, says Beltway insiders have told him that between 30% and 40% of the Zoomers who work in political Washington, DC, are fans of Fuentes.

On my recent visits to America, I was



Crowds at London's 2024 'March Against Antisemitism'. | Photo: Michael Lee/Campaign Against Antisemitism.

told that this rise of 'radical populism' had developed from a constellation of resentments harbored by young white people, particularly young men. With many of them left behind economically and unable to afford a house, they have been discriminated against through diversity and equality laws.

The resentment is being further driven by 'father hunger,' the fact that so many of these young men have been brought up without a committed dad. There's also huge fury at those seen to have dragged the United States into catastrophic wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With liberal ideologues denouncing America for its original sin of 'whiteness,' what has developed on this wing of MAGA is a kind of populist ethno-nationalism wrapped up with strident misogyny and antisemitism.

The thought bubble in these circles runs like this: the postwar liberal settlement has failed; the liberal West brought down Hitler; Hitler should have won.

This parallels the scarcely less breathtakingly dumb syllogism on the left, which goes like this: the Western nation state creates nationalism; nationalism created Hitler; get rid of the nation, and you'll get no more Hitler.

Those who feel overwhelmed by developments that seem to threaten their whole world generally develop conspiracy theories and fixate upon scapegoats—a process that invariably leads straight to the Jews.

Conservative Zoomers thus blame Jewish 'neocons' for the war in Iraq. This is absurd, since the principal administration figures who took the United States into that war were non-Jews, while Israel actually opposed it on the basis that the real threat wasn't Iraq but Iran.

These radical populists also single out liberal Jews for causing the collapse of

the West through race and gender identity politics. Liberal Jews can be criticised, of course, for subscribing to such socially destructive opinions.

However, blaming them for a politically mainstream worldview pushed mostly by gentiles, despite the fact that some of the most prominent opponents of these policies have been neo-conservative Jews, is to tumble down the Jewish conspiracy rabbit hole.

Among the ethno-nationalists, there are also disturbing echoes of the Christian antisemitism that poisoned Europe for centuries. The view that Christian Zionism is a modern heresy is gaining traction among Protestants and Catholics alike, putting into reverse the hitherto ironclad support for Israel by America based upon the reverence for Hebrew scripture among evangelical Christians.

This has produced a troubling convergence: the left blames Jews for capitalism, the right for liberalism and rejecting Jesus's divinity, and Islamists for the world's evils. Left, right and Islamists are now united by this hostility—an alarming trend with potentially seismic political consequences.

America's Democrats and Britain's Corbynite hard-left both turn off mainstream voters who reject their extremism. In parallel, if the Republicans are identified with white-nationalist conspiracy theorists, they will also lose great swathes of the public.

However, these extremes of both left and right now have significant and growing traction. In Britain, Corbyn's hard-left, the ultra-left Greens and the Islamists represent a huge body of feeling that is anti-Israel and anti-West. Competing with Labour for the same constituency, they will all damage each other. In theory, that would benefit the conservative side of politics. But that

grouping is itself divided between the populist insurgency Reform and the Conservative party.

The likely outcome, said the astute political philosopher John Gray in London this week, will be a seven-party split. Reform may emerge as the biggest party in this fragmented chaos, but radical leftists and Islamists will be greatly empowered.

In America, said Gray, after Trump leaves office, the forces of ethno-nationalist radical populism are likely to become even stronger.

At the same time, Mamdani has laid down a blueprint for a merging of radical progressivism and Islamism. That alliance of extremes will damage Democrats and benefit Republicans. But if Republicans are divided between mainstream conservatives and radical populists, they will destroy themselves.

More balefully still, this Zoomer generation—having never been taught the history of the worst that humanity has done to itself—is so profoundly alienated from a liberal democratic culture they believe has badly failed and comprehensively lied about it that they see nothing wrong with authoritarianism and fascism.

The political consensus over reason and morality disintegrated when the left adopted Palestinianism as its cause of causes and turned exterminatory Jew-hatred into a badge of conscience.

That, in turn, lifted the constraints against antisemitism that had previously existed on the right. Antisemitism has exploded on the right because the left gave it permission. In other words, the old guardrails against Jew-hatred have disappeared.

Ideological capture—silencing challenges to Palestinianism, identity politics and other 'progressive' dogmas—has sealed much of the left into a closed thought system. The right, meanwhile, has similarly retreated from rationality and truth.

Gray says that if politicians continue to fail and thus alienate the public still further, the West could be looking at the rise of real fascism or authoritarianism within a decade. None of this portends well for the Jews of America and Britain.

The way to respond is to fight like hell: to fight to destroy the progressive ideologies that have hollowed out Western civilisation; to fight to turn back the tide of Islamisation; and to fight to reconnect Christianity to its Jewish parent by affirming, promoting and celebrating the historic, biblically based identity and culture of America and the West.

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Syria-US: Change or Deception?

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

In early November a historic meeting took place in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington between US President Donald Trump and the new Syrian president, Ahmed al-Shaara. Historic because it was the first time since the Assad dynasty ruled Syria for the past 60 years that a Syrian president had met with his American counterpart in the White House. But also historic because until less than a year ago, the United States still treated al-Shaara as a dangerous al-Qaeda terrorist and had a \$10 million bounty on his head.

The question now is what was behind this meeting and who changed their previous positions over the past year. Trump has a vested interest in ensuring that his agenda of peace for the Middle East is followed, and the new situation in Syria, offers the US government opportunities to bring the country under its sphere of influence. Trump has clearly changed his stance on al-Shaara's past and even brought the Syrian leader a gift: a bottle of perfume.

With that bottle of perfume, Trump demonstrated his complete lack of understanding of Arab culture when he sprayed al-Shaara's ears without asking. However, the Syrian leader was visibly embarrassed when Trump asked if he had multiple wives after he suggested giving another bottle of perfume to his wife.

This marked the beginning of an otherwise positive, unique meeting that resulted in the temporary suspension of US sanctions on Syria for six months.

Al-Shaara had an interest in this meeting because Syria urgently needs aid to rebuild the war-ravaged country and is clearly making efforts to gain the support of Western countries, led by America. Now that Syria has broken away from the Iranian- and Russian-led pro-Assad coalition and is seeking rapprochement with moderate Arab countries and the West, the Syrian president clearly sees new opportunities. His attempts are hampered, however, by skepticism about his past as an al-Qaeda leader and his short-lived relationship with ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Ties to ISIS and Al-Qaeda

Al-Shaara clearly refused to discuss his al-Qaeda past, as several media interviews he gave after his meeting with Trump revealed, but he did discuss his decision to join the anti-ISIS coalition. According to the Syrian leader, he had previously had several confrontations with ISIS in his capacity as commander of the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria and later as the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). However he did not mention that ISIS



Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa at the UN headquarters in New York City, September 2025. | Photo: Flash90

attempted to assassinate him twice after he became president of Syria, primarily because of his attempts to seek rapprochement with the West and moderate Arab states.

ISIS has tried to recruit extreme elements of Syria's government to join their cells, citing al-Shaara's connections with the international coalition against ISIS since 2016. Al-Shaara's forces responded with a major operation in November, arresting 71 of the *Jihadist* movement.

When asked about his al-Qaeda past by major American media outlets, al-Shaara typically dodged questions or gave vague answers. He initially downplayed the 9/11 attacks, claiming he was too young to be involved. However, in 2021, he was much clearer about 9/11, saying: "Anyone in the Islamic world who claimed they weren't happy about the attack was lying."

During his Washington visit, al-Shaara defended his record, claiming he only protected his country. Yet his brief presidency saw massacres of Alawites, Christians and Druze, along with harsh crackdowns in major cities.

Relations with Israel?

Al-Shaara's responses to media questions about relations with Israel and possible Syrian participation in the so-called Abraham Peace Accords between Israel and Islamic countries were clearer.

He ruled out a relationship with Israel at this time but was willing to discuss with Jerusalem a renewed security agreement with the Jewish state and the IDF's withdrawal from strategically important locations in Syria along the Israeli border, as well as the return of the Golan Heights, which had belonged to Syria for only 19 years.

In Israel, al-Shaara's visit to Washington was closely watched, and questions were raised about the new Syrian president's

true intentions, given his past.

The Past of Ahmed al-Shaara

The new Syrian leader changed his nom de guerre after the fall of the Assad regime in early December 2024. Abu Mohammed al-Julani was changed to the name he was given at birth: Ahmed al-Shaara. This seemed to give the impression that he had assumed a new identity now that he was president of the Arab Republic.

The move, however, seemed familiar to some observers and journalists. Al-Shaara had a reputation for being a 'chameleon' in changing political and military circumstances.

Nicolas Pelham of *The Economist* described how al-Sharaa was arrested by Assad's Mukhabarat intelligence agency in Damascus before the US invasion of Iraq that led to the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein, but convinced them he was among the *jihadists* seeking to overthrow Assad and was released. Later, arrested by American forces in Iraq, he convinced interrogators he was Iraqi. Imprisoned for planting explosives, he met Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who gave him \$50,000 to set up an ISIS branch. Al-Sharaa used it to form his own Al-Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra.

Al-Sharaa's past doesn't seem to bother Trump, who seems to agree with the new star in the Syrian firmament that only the future matters.

In Israel, however, they haven't forgotten that Hamas was treated the same way when the terrorist movement won the first Palestinian elections. Hamas was supposed to become more moderate due to its responsibility for governing the territories allocated to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords.

Since 7 October 2023, we know where these kinds of illusionary ideas can lead.

Short News

5 Million Holocaust Names' Recovered



Yad Vashem announced in November it recovered the names of five million Jews killed in the Holocaust—"a life that mattered," said chairman Dani Dayan. Using AI, researchers hope to find another 250,000 names, though about one million may stay unknown. The project restores individuality to victims and warns against rising antisemitism that seeks both Jewish lives and the destruction of their state. | Photo: Flash90.

Nuclear Deal Ends

The ten-year-old nuclear deal with Iran expired in October. Under the 2015 agreement, sanctions were lifted in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear programme. Iran now says it is no longer bound by the deal, prompting the UN to reinstate pre-2015 sanctions (snapback mechanism of sanctions against Iran).

Access Blocked

Microsoft has recently blocked access to a number of its services for the Israeli IDF. According to Microsoft the IDF violated Microsoft's service agreements by recording numerous mobile telephone conversations of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and in Gaza. The IDF backed up its data to make sure that no information was lost.

Billions of Damage



The reconstruction of Gaza could cost well over 120 billion US dollars. Hamas claims that 70 billion US dollars are needed for damage repair to important sectors, while the Central Bank estimates that 53 billion US dollars are needed for reconstruction. Furthermore, experts predict that ten to fifteen years are needed to clear all the rubble, including all non-exploded ammunition. The costs for this are estimated at 1.2 billion US dollars. In total sixty per cent of the houses in Gaza are destroyed. | Photo: Flash90.

Home at Last—13 October 2025

13 October was a day of immense relief and overwhelming emotion. On this day, twenty hostages, held captive by Hamas for over two years, were finally released and set foot on Israeli soil after enduring unimaginable hardships. For their families, the joy of their return was nothing short of a miracle—one that brought tears of happiness to many around the world and hope to a nation. The first verses of *Psalms 126* seemed to have been written for this day:

“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’”

But even in the midst of celebration, there lingered the shadow of sorrow for the hostages who were murdered by Hamas and whose bodies are still being held. At the same time, those who have been released endured unimaginable hardships for two long years. Let us pray for their comfort and healing, and for a blessing over their lives as they begin to recover.

| Photos: Flash90



People waiting for freed hostages at the Re'im military facility in southern Israel.



Family and friends of Israeli hostage Bar Kupershtein watch his release from Hamas captivity.

Mixed Emotions

The exchange of hostages and Palestinian prisoners evokes different emotions and reactions in Israel. Three Israelis share how this impacts them.

Ruby Chen

Father of Itay Chen, whose body was held by Hamas until 4 November

“I am rejoicing for the families of the hostages who can hold their loved ones in their arms again. It was a moment of joy for many. This hostage deal for me felt like a twenty-ton hammer suddenly falling on me, because I have to face the reality of losing my son. I call on everyone to continue wearing the yellow hostage pins until all the bodies of the hostages have returned.”

Tal Hartuv

Terror Attack Survivor

“In 2010, my friend and I were attacked by a Palestinian terrorist during a hike. My friend Kristine Luken was murdered and I was seriously injured. Now my attacker has been released in exchange for the release of the hostages. These have been very difficult days for me. Israel has reneged on its promise to keep him behind bars permanently and has released this murderer. I was completely exhausted by the emotions. I found out through Google that my attacker was being released. You look up the list and then you see the terrorist's name, and it's like falling into an abyss. On the one hand, I find the hostage deal counterproductive.

On the other hand, I cannot bring myself to look the hostages and their families in the eye and say: ‘You, as hostages, will remain there.’ It is almost as if it is a choice between who will live and who will die. I think Netanyahu had no choice but to accept this deal.”

Anat Schneider

Journalist, Israel Today

“The return of the hostages is an immeasurable joy that is almost impossible to comprehend. The people of Israel can finally breathe again. All of us know that not only have our children returned home today, but a part of our hearts has begun to beat again. Now we can focus on healing and brotherhood. We can rise again and start anew.”



Ruby Chen.



Thousands gathered at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv to celebrate the return of the hostages.



Released hostage Evyatar David arrives to Beilinson hospital.



Released hostage Bar Kupershtein arrives to Sheba Medical center.

■ "A part of our heart has started beating again"



(Above) The family of Eitan Mor. (Below) Released hostage Avinatan Or reunites with his partner Noa Argamani. | Photo: IDF Spokesperson Unit



(Above) Released hostage Omri Miran arrives at Ichilov Hospital. (Below) Emotional reunion for the Cunio brothers, held hostage for over two years. | Photo: IDF Spokesperson Unit



Emotional moments at Hostage Square.



Donald Trump in Israel, honoured at the Knesset and (right) arriving at Ben Gurion Airport, 13 Oct 2025.



Jews and Gentiles—United in Hope!

Ninety delegates representing Christians for Israel in over 25 countries gathered in Israel for the biennial Christians for Israel (C4I) Forum from 30 October—3 November 2025. For almost thirty years, Christians for Israel has been growing around the world—planting and nourishing groups of Christians who carry the C4I mission to inform the church, pray for the peace of Jerusalem and comfort the Jewish people. Every two years, the leaders of our national and regional affiliates around the world gather in Jerusalem for a time of learning, renewing old friendships, connecting with the Jewish people, and planning for the future. Here are some impressions from the tenth Christians for Israel International Forum.

Our Common Messianic Hope

Our friend David Nekrutman (Isaiah Projects) encourages Christians to see Jesus' words in *Luke 4* as an invitation to celebrate *Shabbat*: "God doesn't want robotic faith. He wants us to freely choose His will. That is what we celebrate on *Shabbat*—we rest in God, in expectation of the *Messiah*."

In a deeply moving speech, Benjamin Philip (Hineni) encouraged us to remain focused on our task to bring Christians and Jews together in these messianic times. "The Christians for Israel mission is right in the heart of what God is doing in this world, preparing Jews and Gentiles for the coming of *Messiah*."

New C4I International Chairman

The newly appointed Chairman of C4I International is Willem Griffioen. Willem is no stranger to Christians for Israel; as a young man, he and his father helped establish C4I in the United States nearly thirty years ago. He has since served as long-time Chairman of the Israel Allies Foundation and has founded and led numerous businesses and ministries. Willem now lives in Washington DC with his wife Kathy and children. "I sense that C4I is entering a new season—God wants to do new things, and I am excited to be part of it."

Kfar Aza

On our journey to the sites of the 7 October massacre, we visited Kfar Aza, a *kibbutz* whose fields stretch to the border of the Gaza strip. The *kibbutz* was attacked early in the morning by around 250 Palestinian terrorists. They took 19 hostages. 62 residents were murdered in the most gruesome ways. Later that day the looters came. We saw the total devastation, the burnt and damaged houses. We spoke with survivors, people who in the past were dedicated to peace and coexistence with their neighbours. On 7 October they

saw the very people whom they had always worked with standing in their kitchens, looting and killing.

The New Antisemitism

According to Michal Cotler-Wunsch, until recently Israel's Special Envoy Combatting Antisemitism, the hijacking, inversion and weaponisation of the international legal system has fuelled antisemitism. It laid the foundations for the 7 October massacre, and enabled the genocidal terror of Hamas to be exonerated while Israel is demonised and delegitimised. Our shared morality has collapsed. Together, we must urgently reclaim Zionism and reject all forms of antisemitism.

Celebration of Hope

The closing event of the Forum was a reception with our Israeli friends and partners in the Train Theatre in Jerusalem, a picturesque location near the old railway station from the time of the Mandate. We celebrated the 45th anniversary of Christians for Israel's establishment in 1980. The keynote speaker was Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel, who spoke from her heart about 7 October, 2023. Having visited *kibbutz* Habbakuk on that day, she read from *Habakkuk chapter 1* and explained how this sounds to modern Hebrew ears as speaking of the catastrophe of that day. The word '*hamas*' (meaning in Hebrew: violence) appears there prominently.

Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency thanked Christians for Israel for decades of supporting and enabling *aliyah* of Jewish people to be made to Israel. She and her colleagues spoke emotionally about the special work of Koen Carlier and his team in Ukraine, helping Israel and the Jewish people in untold ways, especially during the difficult years of the war in Ukraine.

Monique Rijkers—YouTube FaktaIsrael (Indonesia)

"It was because of C4I that, as an Indonesian Christian, I learned about Israel for the first time in 2012. After receiving a vision from God in November 2012, three weeks later C4I held a seminar on Israel in Jakarta. At that time, Rev Willem Glashouwer seemed to speak directly to me. Today, our organisation shares the truth about Israel and has millions of followers in Indonesia. Our visit to the C4I Forum 2025 was to express gratitude for the seeds sown by C4I. Servants of God everywhere—you may never know the impact of the word you sow. But believe me, God's word is never in vain!"

Edda Fogorollo—C4I Italy

"Ever since 2008, C4I International has helped me to realise my calling as a teacher of Holocaust studies.



The Forum participants visit ZAKA, search and rescue organisation.
| Photo: ZAKA World



Visit to the car graveyard, a silent memorial to the victims of Hamas.
| Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia

With your help, over the years we have built an amazing team of talented young Christians in Italy who are now organising many events—all around the country and online—to educate Christians and comfort and strengthen the Jewish people. Praise be to God!"

Ian and Mandy Worby—C4I Australia

"It was wonderful to be with our C4I international family—it felt like a true reunion! We appreciated the fellowship, teaching, and encouragement, and visiting projects to see how our support brings comfort and solidarity to our Jewish and Israeli brothers and sisters was meaningful. The geopolitical and lawfare briefings and resources to defend our beliefs were invaluable. Thank you to everyone who made the Forum a success."



Part of the Christians for Israel family from around the world.
| Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



Marie-Louise Weissenböck (C4I Austria), packs a rescue kit at ZAKA.
| Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



Anemone Rüger with Holocaust survivor and community coordinator Gita Koifman.
| Photo: Ian Worby, C4I Australia



CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand
and
South Pacific Edition
December 2025

From Jerusalem: A Nation Holding Its Breath

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

A favourite piece of music from my youth was a song 'Everybody Hurts' (REM). At the time of writing, there are two bodies still being held in Gaza—two devastated families awaiting their loved-ones.

But the pain is not limited to the families of the remaining hostages, not even to the families who lost loved ones on 7 October and the resulting conflict. It is not limited to the families of soldiers who lost their lives serving their country, not even to those who suffered loss or damage from rockets and missiles—from Gaza, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iran, or any of their evil associates.

Everybody Hurts

There is not one person in this whole nation that has not been personally affected. Even those who haven't personally suffered damage or lost loved ones—and a huge percentage of the population has—will know many people who have. The entire nation is somewhat frozen, emotionally at least, waiting for the last two hostages to come home. They wait for the world to wake up and honour (finally) its commitments to remove the terrorists, to disarm and dismantle the murder gangs. Alas, when the UN has such a dismal track record in this area, we'd best not hold our breath.

As more evidence is revealed of UNRWA's long support and encouragement of terrorists—evident in the huge amount of UNRWA property, vehicles, buildings, and aid—that was blatantly used to prepare and commit the 7 October atrocities, there is not much call for hope on that front. On the northern border with Lebanon, UNIFIL had but one task—to ensure that there was no military presence in the zone between the 'green line' and the border with Israel. I have pictures I took myself, showing clearly the Hezbollah bases, including rocket batteries, sitting basically right beside the UNIFIL facility. Millions of dollars, military personnel from all around the world, and UNIFIL categorically failed to carry out its one, single, role. You'll appreciate why one is sceptical of any lasting peace as long as the UN has any involvement in it.

In Israel Right Now—I Am Writing From Jerusalem

This mission has seen an eerie quiet, a calm that every Israeli hopes will last, but that few actually believe will hold. The whole country feels like it is collectively holding its breath.

In between a very busy schedule of visits, meetings, study tours, and volunteer work, it's been a privilege to again just sit with our Israeli cousins—Jewish, Arab, Druze, Bedouin, alike—and hear their hearts. Our ANZAC group visited Majdal Shams, the Druze

village where 12 young boys were murdered by Hezbollah, who fired a rocket into their football game. We met with Rajwan, a young boy who survived—albeit badly hurt. We've met with survivors of 7 October—there are so many of them, in this very small country. Everyone has lost someone. Businesses have closed—men called up to the army reserves, women—mothers—too. Businesses owned by Israel mothers have also struggled, as mothers have had to assume the entire household responsibility, unsure of when—if—their husband will return. The effects of war are not concerned with gender, marital, or parental, status. Our friends at the Alzheimer's Medical Centre continue to faithfully serve those who are suffering from Alzheimer's and other conditions: war does not care if you are already struggling with life.

Similarly, Hineni, operating various programmes and support services from their soup kitchen in Jerusalem, continues to serve the poor, the homeless, the destitute.

CFOIC continues to work amongst villages in the Sector C areas of Judea and Samaria—i.e. wholly and unequivocally Israeli territory under the Oslo Accords—in places from which many ignorami are calling for any Israelis—Jews—to be ethnically cleansed. Sometimes the challenges here seem overwhelming. In my mind now is the

image of little Rajwan, seated at the playground, looking across at the soccer field where 12 of his friends were killed and many more injured. Rajwan ran back out from the bomb shelter to try to save his friend who had fallen. He suffered shrapnel wounds which saw him covered in blood, with a punctured lung, unable to breath properly. His friends did not survive.

Why is Rajwan so significant? Aside from his heartbreaking story, there is the simple fact that he instinctively turned, risking his own life, to try to help a friend. He simply did what was right.

And so must we. Even when it is unpopular, even when people call out the most horrendous, ignorant—and often blatantly deceitful—tropes and slogans, we must challenge the fairytales, demand (non-existent!) proof, and stand for the truth. Whether you have the opportunity to speak up, to challenge, or to stand in protest, do it. If you are called to pray, do it. If you are called to give, to financially support the people of Israel or those advocating for them, do it. God's instructions are, as they so often are on such crucial matters, very simple.

Bless Israel, and you will be blessed.

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ICJ's Flawed Gaza Advisory Opinion

■ Prof Gregory Rose,
Irene Petrakis and
Michael Pushenko

On 22 October, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its Advisory Opinion: *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organisations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory*.

The Opinion is the Court's response to a request by UN General Assembly (resolution 79/232), made in December 2024, after Israel ceased cooperation with UNRWA. This followed evidence implicating UNRWA employees in supporting and aiding Hamas, including by participating in the 7 October attacks. The General Assembly asked the Court to opine on Israel's obligations under international law.

A majority of the Court's judges found that Israel's UNRWA ban is illegal and that Israel must allow UN and other aid organisations unimpeded access to Gaza.

In a separate opinion, Vice-President Judge Sebutinde argued that the ruling abused the ICJ's advisory function, lacked reliable evidence on Israel's control of Gaza, and overlooked the complexities of urban warfare and Israel's security concerns.

The Advisory Opinion

The Opinion marked the third time that the General Assembly has requested an Advisory Opinion concerning Israel, constituting an abuse of process to prosecute lawfare against Israel. As noted by Judge Sebutinde, the ICJ should refuse to give an Opinion when necessary to safeguard the integrity of its judicial role.

Additionally, the Opinion prejudices two active contentious cases addressing Gaza's situation: South Africa vs Israel and Nicaragua vs Germany, which substantially overlap with the Opinion concerning the scope, content and applicability of humanitarian obligations.

The ICJ heavily relied on UN reports—including from UNRWA itself—while disregarding alternative sources such as Israel and UN Watch, creating a circular evidentiary and reasoning process. It also focused solely on Israel's obligations, while disregarding the effect upon them of the conduct of Hamas and other actors.

ICJ Misapplied Humanitarian Law and Law of Occupation

In discussing Israel's obligations to supply humanitarian aid to Gaza, the ICJ overlooked Article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Instead, it primarily focused on Israel's obligation under Article 59, which pertains to an 'occupying power'.



Peace Palace, Seat of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. | Photo: Shutterstock

The duty to deliver aid under Article 23 is not absolute but can be restricted if there is a risk of diversion and advantage to the hostile army. Given Hamas' repeated diversion of aid, any restrictions imposed by Israel would have been justified.

The ICJ primarily focused on Article 59, which outlines the duties of an occupying power. However, the application of this article was problematic because the standard for 'occupation' under international law is not met. Occupation, as defined in various doctrines, including *The Law of War on Land* (1880), Article 42 of the Hague Regulations (1907), and Article 6 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, requires both military and governmental control, which Israel does not have over Gaza.

ICJ criticism of Israel's aid pause from March to May 2025 stems from unreliable evidence that insufficient aid was delivered beforehand. Israel stated that enough aid was in Gaza to feed the population for months, meeting its Article 59 obligations.

Israel is Entitled to Cease Cooperation With UNRWA

The ICJ relied on an incomplete analysis of the legal framework for UNRWA's operations to contend that Israel's UNRWA ban contravenes the UN Charter and the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. In doing so, it largely disregarded a key piece of treaty law—the Comay-Micheltore Agreement—which qualifies UNRWA's immunities and privileges and permits Israel to cease cooperation with UNRWA in the territories on security grounds.

As highlighted by Judge Sebutinde, UNRWA's privileges under the UN Charter and the Convention must also be interpreted according to the principle of 'functional necessity'. This limits

privileges and immunities to what is essential for UN agencies to carry out their functions independently and effectively, consistent with UN purposes. Clearly, UNRWA's support for terrorism is not captured by this.

The ICJ Downplayed UNRWA's Support for Terrorism

The ICJ rejected evidence that UNRWA's infiltration by Hamas and other terrorist organizations is so systematic that it compromises the agency's neutrality. In effect, the court disregarded information provided by Israel.

The ICJ portrayed the involvement of UNRWA employees in the 7 October attacks as an isolated and remediable event, while disregarding UNRWA's endemic and longstanding links to terrorism beyond 7 October. It also disregarded UNRWA's role in exacerbating the conflict since its inception, including by radicalising Palestinians through its educational programs, and perpetuating the 'right of return' narrative.

Given the above, the ICJ also failed to consider Israel's duties under international law to suppress terrorism and not to cooperate with organisations supporting terrorism, such as UNRWA.

Conclusion

The ICJ Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025 constituted a misuse of judicial authority that subordinated the rule of international law in the UN to political necessity. It offered a flawed and incomplete assessment of Israel's obligations under humanitarian law, the law of occupation, and UNRWA's governing framework.

As shown in evidence that the majority of the ICJ bench disregarded, UNRWA is clearly a partisan actor in the conflict, has long enabled and supported

terrorism, and has ceased to act as a neutral humanitarian organisation, forfeiting its right to immunities and privileges. The dissenting opinion of Judge Julia Sebutinde outlined these flaws of the majority judgment.

The majority of the Court circumvented the existing Middle East sub-regional peace negotiation framework. Rather than endorsing a return to the negotiating table, it undermined fundamental principles of international law, such as sovereign state consent and unbiased adjudication.

The ICJ must begin to restore itself by curtailing its current enthusiasm for Advisory Opinion lawfare.

Read our full analysis here: <https://thinc-israel.org/articles/obligations-of-israel-by-the-icj-analysis/>

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Parliamentary Woes

■ Name Withheld

For the Green Party, 2025 continued to be a year of horrors with controversies around different MPs and fierce anti-Israel rhetoric. Mid-year keffiyeh-wearing Marama Davidson was diagnosed with cancer and stepped down for some months leaving Chloe at the helm. In the *Whakatitiki Times* 18 Oct 2024 following the Golriz and Darlene Tana controversies, Chloe declared "But I'm pleased to announce that Ben's record is squeaky clean and we've got a crisp new keffiyeh ready to go". Was it the kiss of death for his political career? Benjamin Doyle's tenure in Parliament was very short-lived. He was exposed on social media and faced a relentless barrage of accusations. Having disappeared from sight for some weeks, he gave his valedictory speech on 18 September. Former Christchurch City councilor Mike Davidson MP is his replacement. Things quieted down only for Te Pāti Māori party, the other anti-Israel minor party, to implode as a house divided amongst itself. Time will tell. Sparked by the death of Takutai Tarsh Kemp MP, the Green Party's peacemaker, then MPs Mariameno Kapa-Kingi and Tākuta Ferris' party suspension, including the House, allegations of intimidation and financial mismanagement followed.

Haredi Draft Conclusion

Joanna Moss

Previously, we examined the *Haredi* draft issue by theme: History, Legality, Necessity, Equity, Culture and Control. In conclusion we look at why the current *Haredi* position is unsustainable, not just the draft. The 7 October war coupled with a massive increase in population tipped the balance. The draft was a seemingly unsolvable problem and with the *Haredi* parties forming a critical part of the coalition for years, they can get kicked down the road. But it didn't help *Haredim*. As the war dragged on *Haredim* pose a wider problem to society including social cohesion and drain on resources. Israel's economy was booming. High tech tax revenues masked their financial burden, poverty remained and the war exposed the shortcomings. In reality, *Haredim* are a significant, mushrooming, financially unsustainable community, despite diaspora assistance. Some believe *Haredim* are driving emigration, especially of the talented and high income earners. The financial and personal burdens imposed upon the reservists and their families are massive and the anger towards *Haredim* is near explosion.

Numbers

Israel has a standing army of about 125,000 troops. Currently over 80,000 draft notices are going out this year alone. In Israel there is an unwritten social contract—when your child turns 18 they do their military service and keep the rest of the country safe on the basis that each person serves in turn. Expectations and obligations shape culture. *Haredim* do not participate in the social contract. No wonder IDF personnel are angry. If only 20-30% *Haredim* had served, it would have been a big help. The IDF can't cope with a massive increase in numbers, but the possibility of national service beckons, especially during and post wartime when civilian personnel needs are huge. How about harvesting crops? Most defence forces, like the IDF, rank military candidates based on dependency/pension liabilities. *Haredi* are encouraged to marry young and start a family, often at draft age. The more children they have, the less likely they are to be called up, so this was an added incentive.

Yeshiva Reform

Yeshiva reform, including cutting out the fake *yeshivas*, where students go to 'hide' to avoid shame and the draft is required. Not all *haredi* males are suitable for *yeshiva* study and some study part-time. *Haredi* institutions have rankings. Students try to get into the best *yeshivas* with prestige attached. If the government decides to build on the PM Ben Gurion precedent, the state would exempt certain students from the top *yeshivas*; those likely to become rabbis.

According to Micha Goodman there are 118,000 Israelis in full-time *Torah* study. By comparison there are 100,000 Catholic priests in training for a religion with 1000 times the followers!

Educational Reform

Given that 25% of kindergarten students are *Haredi*, the time for educational reform is now. *Haredi* children need to be given a good basic education and skills for the workplace and life. Some families want this for the children, but the community and the rabbis resist because they may lose control. Meantime, the top rabbis' children go to better, external schools.

Some progress was made with educational reform until the *Haredim* were confronted with accepting LGBT+ education. If the system wants to work with *Haredim*, then it needs to work constructively and provide a system that provides the basics and enhances traditional values, not drive them back into obscurity.

Political Reform

Dominance and dependence characterise their current relationship with the state. Over the years *Haredi* parties have regularly threatened to pull out of the government and bring it down. It's been an effective means of gaining increased benefits. If the next government does not include the *Haredi* parties: Shas and United Torah Judaism, you can expect major changes. These are likely to include stricter compliance with the draft, travel restrictions and a dramatic reduction in subsidies. Consequently, they will fall further into poverty and be more ostracised, unless there is reform from within. The power of the rabbis must be challenged. Ditto the politicians who exploit them.

Benefits

The government funds *yeshivas* for males and females and other *Haredi* cultural institutions. Currently *Haredim* receive multifaceted subsidies e.g. for large families, daycare, health insurance discounts and even travel. Yet they remain in poverty because their incomes are so low. This must change.

Cultural Changes

Haredi see themselves as offering a vital service to Israel in both security and strengthening Israel as the only Jewish state. They resent the notion that they are not pulling their weight or could be assigned national service. For them *Torah* study is a huge, personal sacrifice. When *Haredi* men opt to go to the IDF (e.g. Hasmonean unit) they often face huge obstacles from their families and communities including estrangement being seen as traitors abandoning the cause. This must change. Those serving must be highly regarded by the community. Yes there will be risks, but there will be



risks if the community becomes less closed anyway. They can look to their national religious brethren who negotiate a mid-way between secular Israeli society and strict religious life, and more *Haredim* in America work. Conversely, there are wonderful aspects to the community that need to be preserved.

Million Man March

On 30 October, 300,000 *Haredi* blocked Jerusalem's entrance in protest over conscription and 870 military arrests of those who ignored enlistment orders (only 7% of 6975 declared draft dodgers since the High Court ruling). For many ordinary Israelis this protest was the last straw. The IDF stated it needs 12,000 additional combat soldiers NOW.

Conclusion

It isn't a one-sided situation. *Haredim* do play a role in medical rescue motorbike services (*Hatzalah* 8,000 volunteer medics) and in body identification and burial (ZAKA) and provide many support services for their own communities.

Traditionally the IDF only wanted willing souls. There was always an exemption for talented individuals and conscientious objectors. Only 80% of eligible non-*Haredim* serve due to physical, mental and other reasons. Regardless, *Haredim* need to become more biblical and less rabbinical.

Simcha Torah Joy

Name Withheld

When a Jewish family asked me to join them in the synagogue for *Simcha Torah*, I knew it was something special, a once in a lifetime experience. As they had a young child, I knew that children were a part of the service, so much less formal. *Hakafot* is the special term used for the joyous walking with *Torah* scrolls.

After passing through security, I joined the mother's with children in the women's section. They greeted each other with great love and fellowship. I'm sure that is part of being a minority. Few of them knew where

the service had progressed to in the book as it was in Hebrew. Helpfully, every now and then, the leader announced the page number, as it skipped around. The Rabbi was in full flight on the raised Bema in the middle, facing the Ark where the *Torah* scrolls are kept. The service had both regular and unique elements. Towards the end, the scroll on the Bema table was rolled right back by hand to *Bereshit* (Genesis) to signify the end of the *Torah* cycle—a key part of *Simcha Torah*.

Once the Ark was opened, the Rabbi and key individuals took scrolls out and went around offering opportunities for the men to kiss their *tzitzits* on the

corners of their *tallits* and to touch the scrolls to signify their love for *Torah*. Next they began parading around the *shul* in a line with the scrolls cradled like a baby and the little children followed with either coloured fuzzy toy scrolls or pointers. They loved it.

Once they went outside into the foyer, the women began singing and dancing with a small scroll in the centre. They danced in a square formation, with opposite sides coming in and going out as well as performing other traditional Jewish dances. It was full of joy. Sadly, all returned to their places when it was time to re-house the scrolls and end the service.



Two Years After October 7: What the World Chose Not to Learn

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

Two years have passed since 7 October 2023—the *Simchat Torah* massacre—when Hamas terrorists stormed southern Israel and unleashed unspeakable horrors on civilians. It was the darkest day in modern Jewish history: 1,200 men, women, and children murdered; hundreds taken hostage; entire families burned alive; women raped and mutilated; babies executed in their cribs. The footage, proudly filmed by the killers themselves, should have been enough to jolt the world into moral clarity.

The World's Moral Amnesia

In the immediate aftermath, there was outrage, solidarity, and a brief moment of empathy. Then came the pivot. As Israel buried its dead and reeled from trauma, global opinion shifted from shock to suspicion. The victims became the accused. Within weeks, the narrative of Jewish suffering had been replaced by a familiar inversion—the claim that Israel was the aggressor and Gaza the victim.

This inversion was not born of ignorance but of wilful blindness and intentional deception. Hamas invaded Israel, not the other way around. Hamas declared war on peace, not Israel. And yet, across Western capitals and campuses, the world's moral compass swung wildly off course.

What We Should Have Learned

7 October should have taught the world that evil still exists—not abstractly, not historically, but vividly and intentionally. It should have reminded us that the security of the Jewish state is not a political choice but a moral imperative. It should have been a turning point in understanding that antisemitism never disappears; it merely changes its disguise.

We should have learned that the deliberate murder of Jews cannot be excused as 'resistance'.

We should have learned that a movement seeking Israel's annihilation cannot be a partner for peace.

We should have learned that 'Never Again' is meaningless unless it applies universally and consistently.

Instead, the lesson many chose to learn was the oldest one of all—to blame the Jew.

The New Face of an Ancient Hatred

Since 7 October, antisemitism has surged across the world at levels unseen in generations. Synagogues have been



| Photo: IINZ

defaced, Jewish students harassed, businesses targeted, and even Jewish worshipers murdered. Protesters chant genocidal slogans in Western streets under the guise of 'justice'. Universities—once bastions of critical thinking—have become echo chambers of hate, where Jewish identity is treated as a provocation and 'Free Palestine' serves as moral camouflage for intimidation.

This is not solidarity with Palestinians; it is scapegoating of Jews. And it reveals something uncomfortable: that beneath the language of social justice, much of today's activism is animated not by compassion but by contempt—not by the pursuit of peace, but by the desire to see Israel fall.

The Media's Complicity

Mainstream media have amplified this distortion. With a few exceptions, they have repeated Hamas's unverifiable casualty numbers, minimised Israel's humanitarian efforts, and sanitised the atrocities of October 7. Even now, stories of hostage suffering struggle for column space beside sensationalised accusations against the IDF.

The selective outrage is staggering. When Russia bombs Ukraine, it is condemned as barbarism. When Hamas hides behind civilians and those civilians die, it is blamed on Israel. The moral double standard is not a bug—it is the feature.

The Cost of Cowardice

For governments, the temptation to appease the loudest voices has proven irresistible. Instead of demanding Hamas's unconditional surrender and the release of all hostages, many have pressured Israel to show 'restraint'—as though self-defence were a greater sin than terrorism. The recognition of a

Palestinian state by some nations, while hostages remain in captivity and Hamas still rules Gaza, sends a chilling message: that terrorism works, provided its victims are Israelis.

Terror's Immediate Consequence: Manchester, Yom Kippur 2025

Nowhere was the danger of moral confusion clearer than in Britain. Just days after the UK government announced its recognition of a Palestinian state—a move framed as an attempt to 'revive the peace process'—horror struck Manchester. On *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, a man drove a car into worshippers outside the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation and attacked them with a knife. Two Jews were murdered, others wounded, and a community traumatised.

The symbolism could not be more striking. Britain's gesture of recognition, framed as a diplomatic act, was followed almost immediately by the murder of Jews on British soil. While no government can be held responsible for the actions of a lone extremist, the attack exposed a deeper, insidious reality: that the Jewish diaspora is increasingly treated as collectively responsible for the policies of the State of Israel—a notion that is both false and dangerous.

This is not how peace is built. It is how terror is normalised.

Across Europe, Jewish communities now face the consequences of this conflation. Synagogues operate under armed guard. Jewish schools are fortified. Worshippers hesitate to attend services, particularly on holy days. Antisemitic attacks have surged, fuelled by rhetoric that blames

Jews everywhere for the actions of a sovereign state. The pattern is unmistakable: the victims of terror are blamed for its existence, while the extremists who perpetrate violence are excused or celebrated.

Moral consistency matters. You cannot decry antisemitism while empowering the ideology that fuels it. You cannot claim to champion human rights while recognising a state whose de facto rulers glorify murder, deny women's freedom, and hold hostages underground. And you cannot honour the memory of 7 October while legitimising those who celebrated it.

Until the world learns that peace cannot be brokered through appeasement, the lessons of 7 October—and now *Yom Kippur* in Manchester—will remain unlearned: that evil must be confronted, not excused; that Jewish lives cannot be treated as collateral; and that the diaspora bears no guilt for the policies of Israel, despite the moral inversion propagated by those who conflate identity with politics.

What Israel Taught the World—Again

Yet amidst this darkness, Israel has shown the world something extraordinary. The unity of a wounded nation. The moral restraint of an army fighting an enemy that glorifies death. The endurance of a people whose survival has always defied the odds. Israelis rebuilt shattered communities, volunteered in hospitals, donated blood, and stood shoulder to shoulder across political divides.

If 7 October revealed the world's moral confusion, it also reaffirmed Israel's moral clarity.

The Question That Remains

So what have we—the so-called enlightened world—learned?

That antisemitism remains the world's most resilient conspiracy theory.

That truth, in the age of viral propaganda, is optional.

That too many people prefer comforting lies to confronting evil.

And that the Jews, once again, are expected to apologise for surviving.

But Israel's existence is not an apology. It is a declaration—that the Jewish people will never again rely on the world's conscience for their safety.

Two years after the *Simchat Torah* massacre, we can only hope the world begins to understand what Israel already knows: that peace is impossible without truth, and that moral clarity is not a luxury—it is the foundation of civilisation itself.



Moral Clarity from Winston Peters at the UN

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

“New Zealand’s Foreign Minister chose truth over trend—and reminded the world that peace begins with principle.”

The annual UN General Assembly in New York has become a politicised forum where Israel is often singled out and moral clarity sacrificed for diplomacy. This year, however, New Zealand’s Foreign Minister Winston Peters broke from the trend, affirming at the UN and in Parliament that lasting peace must be grounded in reality, legitimacy, and accountability—not rhetoric.

Setting the Scene

Each September, world leaders gather in New York for ‘leaders’ week.’ In 2025, several countries—including France, Australia, Canada, and the UK—used the UN to announce conditional recognition of a Palestinian state, claiming it would revive the two-state solution. In reality, these moves rewarded political stagnation and terrorism rather than progress.

Amid this chorus, Winston Peters stood out for his sobriety. He reaffirmed New Zealand’s commitment to a negotiated two-state solution, making clear that recognition cannot precede legitimate governance and lasting peace. “We do not recognise a Palestinian state at this time,” he said, citing Hamas’s control of Gaza, the lack of accountability in the Palestinian Authority, and ongoing attacks on Israel.

Leadership and Coalition Unity

It was no accident that Peters, not Prime Minister Luxon, represented New Zealand. As Foreign Minister, he balanced divergent voices in Cabinet and secured consensus on a cautious, principle-based Middle East policy, demonstrating the steady leadership the country has often lacked in recent years. Importantly, the Cabinet paper advising



The United Nations Office with the flags of the member countries. | Photo: Shutterstock

against recognition was drafted by the Office of the Foreign Minister, not MFAT—a rare move that highlighted the conviction and independence with which Peters and his team shaped this stance.

The result was a position that held firm to moral and strategic principles: support for peace, rejection of terrorism, and insistence that statehood must be earned through responsible governance, not bestowed through diplomatic symbolism.

What Peters Said

Peters’ speech had three key elements:

- 1. Condemnation of Hamas**—unequivocal recognition that the atrocities of 7 October and the ongoing use of civilians as shields remain the chief obstacle to peace.
- 2. Support for a negotiated two-state framework**—not as an abstract slogan, but as an end-state that must follow reform within Palestinian leadership and a commitment to coexistence.
- 3. Humanitarian concern**—acknowledgement of suffering on all

sides, coupled with an assurance that New Zealand’s aid would continue to flow through vetted, accountable channels.

Unlike others who used the UN podium to moralise, Peters offered realism: there can be no peace while one side glorifies murder and rejects Israel’s right to exist.

The International Contrast

By contrast, France, the UK, Canada, and Australia recognised ‘Palestine’ independently, without coordinating with Israel or the US. In Canberra, the Opposition called it reckless, while commentators in London and Ottawa warned it rewards extremism and undermines moderate Palestinian voices.

Peters’ stance thus placed New Zealand alongside a smaller, principled camp that includes Germany, the United States, and Japan—nations that understand the perils of symbolism divorced from substance.

Speaking to New Zealanders

Back home, Peters’ speech to Parliament was measured. He reiterated his New

York points: opposing terrorism, supporting Israel’s right to defend itself, and affirming that a two-state future requires Palestinian renunciation of violence and recognition of Israel.

Predictably, activist groups and some opposition MPs criticized the government for “inaction.” Yet many New Zealanders responded positively, with public commentary and talkback reflecting relief that the country had taken a principled, independent stance. As Prime Minister Luxon put it:

“We can be proud... because we’ve made our own independent decision and assessment of it.”

Others in the media described Peters’ address as a welcome return to moral clarity in foreign policy—a reminder that conviction, not conformity, should guide New Zealand’s voice on the world stage.

A Moment of Moral Definition

At a time when many Western governments seem eager to exchange principles for applause, Winston Peters brought a note of moral steadiness. His UN speech and subsequent address in Wellington reaffirmed something New Zealand once understood instinctively—that peace in the Middle East will not be achieved by slogans or symbolic recognitions, but by confronting terrorism, encouraging reform, and standing with Israel’s right to live in security.

For Israel’s friends around the world, including those in the Christian community, Peters’ words offered encouragement. They reminded us that integrity in foreign policy still matters—that it is possible for small nations to stand tall when others waver.

In an age of diplomatic confusion, New Zealand’s message under Peters’ leadership was refreshingly clear: recognition should follow peace, not precede it.

Where Did All the Palestinian Refugees Come From?

■ Name Withheld

According to our media, academia, and tens of thousands of marchers on our streets, Palestinians became refugees because of the *Nakba*, Arabic for ‘catastrophe’, when the Europeans tried to colonise the Middle East by creating Israel in 1948. This caused 750,000 Palestinians to flee what became the land of Israel in the first Arab-Israeli war.

What they carefully ignore is *who invaded whom*. On 15 May 1948, the day after Israel was declared a sovereign nation according to international law

and UN Resolution 181, five Arab nations broke that law and invaded the land, crossing their own internationally recognised borders— Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq from the north, Jordan from the east, and Egypt (with a Saudi Arabian contingent) from the south. Jordan seized and annexed the West Bank while Egypt seized and occupied Gaza until Israel drove them out in 1967. The Jews did not invade Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia—there are no Arab refugees from these countries—so if there had been no war in Israel in 1948, there

would not have been 750,000 Arab refugees. In fact, 160,000 Arabs actually stayed in the land of Israel and became Israeli citizens.

It’s undeniable: the Arab nations began the war which led to the Palestinians fleeing the war, hoping to return when Israel was defeated. But that’s not all—the Arab nations also caused 850,000 Jewish refugees to flee from the Arab nations, not from Europe to colonise the Middle East but from the Middle East and North Africa! Ironically, 600,000 fled to Israel, doubling the number of Jews in the land. In 1958

Israel closed the last Jewish refugee camp because their refugees had been assimilated; Israel had addressed their larger *Nakba* in just ten years with vastly fewer resources and land area than the fabulously wealthy Arab petro-nations.

The Arab nations, however, refused to accept the 750,000 Palestinian refugees in 1948 so there are now six million! The problem has been steadily getting worse and the Arab nations refuse to solve it. Hopefully now with the Gaza War Peace Plan, the Arabs will accept their responsibilities.



Memorial in Whangarei

■ Todd & Julia Vincent ICEJ Northland

“Layers, and layers, and layers of grief, shock and fear,” was how Sarita describes the aftereffects of 7 October 2023. Originally from Israel, Sarita now lives in Northland. I spoke to her recently about the impact these last two years have had on her.

She spoke of the shock and trauma Jews felt after that terrible day, and the intense fear and anxiety that followed. Even in New Zealand, there was a sudden sense of caution—Jews had to consider whether it was safe to display the Star of David or other symbols of their identity.

Grief and despair fell over many Israelis and Jews in New Zealand. Sarita spoke of her nephew, an IDF soldier who, with just five others, heroically defended a women’s army base near Gaza on 7 October, saving 50 women before losing his life.

The past two years have been challenging for New Zealand’s Jewish community, who gathered at Rhema Church in Whangarei on 7 October 2025 to commemorate and remember. This was a time for the Whangarei Jewish community to remember and mourn. They also invited Christians and other supporters to join them. It was a memorial in unity.



Representing the Jewish community, Sarita led the evening. Five candles were lit. The first candle was lit and the *Yizkor* prayer was recited in memory of the heroes, the fallen, and those murdered on 7 October. The next candle was lit in honour of the human spirit. The third candle represented the solidarity and support from those supporting Israel and the Jewish community. The 4th candle, the candle of valour was lit by a member whose family in Israel had been directly affected after 7 Oct. The 5th candle represented renewal. It was a special evening.

After reflecting on recent years, Sarita shared one last thought.

“Our answer to those who try to kill and destroy us is to thrive, to prosper, to contribute to the world, to uphold our values. To build back bigger and better. We choose life. We choose excellence. We choose to answer destruction with construction and hatred with compassion”.

Two Years On—Auckland



■ Name Withheld

The Auckland Jewish community held a moving event for the second anniversary of the 7 October attack. NZ Jewish Council representative Shoshana Maasland voiced feelings shared by many.

“For many of us New Zealand Jews, 7 October was a decisive moment when we realised who our friends were. While some friends reached out and stood by us, many of us felt let down by others. Some friends immediately joined ceasefire protests, which for some reason never demanded the release of the 250 hostages, even when children, babies and the elderly were among them.

It has been saddening that friends and many other generally well-intentioned people seemed unable to see both the suffering of innocent Gazans AND the suffering of hostages and all Israelis as worthy of sympathy and understanding.

Others among us felt let down by colleagues. Professional bodies, including those in healthcare, published one-sided condemnations of Israel without mentioning 7 October or recognising the trauma and grief of our community, as if empathy is a zero sum game.

Social media was awash with atrocity denial. Shockingly, in the face of all the clear evidence of widespread sexual violence, we saw that ‘Believe all women’ didn’t apply to Jews.”

Youth leaders Leah Burger and Abraham Briones (pictured above) gave inspiring speeches. Briones shared these stirring words:

“For us Jewish youth in New Zealand, 7 October marked a new reality. Life wasn’t going to feel the same anymore. But it was also the moment a new kind of unity began.

Across the world, young Jews found each other again—through loss, through pain, through love for our people. We learned that when we say *Am Yisrael Chai*—‘the people of Israel live’—it’s not a slogan. It’s a pledge. A promise to carry the memory of those we lost. A promise to keep our identity alive, no matter how dark the world feels. And a promise to build a future worthy of their memory—one rooted



in unity, compassion, and hope.”

Leah Burger wrote:

“A divide became clear. There were those who could see our pain, and those who believed we didn’t deserve to feel it. But even in that isolation, something powerful began to happen within our community. People who once whispered, ‘My family was Jewish,’ now say aloud, ‘I am Jewish, and I’m not afraid.’

I am so proud of every Jewish student who despite the stares, the hate, and the isolation, still wore their Magen David—not just for themselves, but for those who were too afraid to.

We built a quiet language between us. A glance, a nod, a soft ‘I like your necklace,’ and in that moment we both knew. We knew we weren’t alone. We knew we were part of something bigger than fear. No words can hold the weight of that. The joy, the relief, the tears—they were all part of the same heartbeat.”

Deputy Chief of Mission, Maya Simon, shared the story of Shlomo Ron who saved his entire family through a sacrificial act of love. It was one of a thousand stories of bravery on that dark day. Stories that must not be forgotten.

Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour (pictured above) reflected on George Gilder’s book, *The Israel Test*, which argues that reactions to Israel reveal attitudes toward success and achievement. He noted that during the government’s decision on Palestine recognition, his office received emails ten to one against recognition, and that responses after the UN announcement were entirely supportive.

Dr Sheree Trotter spoke about the glimmers of hope amidst the darkness of the past two years and ended with a reminder of the eternal promises given through the prophet Jeremiah:

This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name: “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,” declares the Lord, “will Israel ever cease being a nation before me.” *Jeremiah 31*

Sombre Mood in Wellington

■ Joanna Moss

Wellington’s 7 Oct. memorial was delayed to synchronise with the official ceremony from Jerusalem that could not be held until after *Sukkot* had finished. This year *Simcha Torah* fell on Wednesday 15 October. It was a more somber affair with a strong show of solidarity from the Christian community. The presence of several Ambassadors reminded us all of the large number of foreign citizens that were taken and held hostage. The hostages were not merely Israelis. In fact there were seven German citizens as part of the final live hostage group, a significant number.

The event was hosted by Rob Berg, a British Jew and the NZ representative of the KKL-JNF Jewish National Fund NZ. There was a mixture of moving clips and powerful speeches including from President Hertzog, PM Netanyahu and hostage survivors recounting their stories, with the Rabbi reciting *El Male Rachamim* (God of Compassion) in strong

haunting tones that filled the room. Yifat Goddard spoke on behalf of the Israeli community. She gave a very personal account of the impact of the tragedy on her in NZ and as the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor. Ashley Church from the Israel Institute of NZ spoke passionately, powerfully and politically of the importance of Christian support for Israel, something that surprised and touched the hearts of many.

The Ambassador brought home the horrors of the choices people made on that day when he compared and contrasted the decisions of parents in the Holocaust who gave away their children to strangers or even jumped or threw them off moving vehicles in the desperate hope they might survive, with similar stories facing those escaping from the *kibbutzim* in 2023. Symbolic, remembrance candle lighting and global synagogues’ eternal flames remind us all that whatever happens, the Jews will remain, just as God promised. But they won’t escape suffering. *Am Israel chai*.



Hastings Pays Tribute

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

On Tuesday 7 October, 215 people gathered at the Clock Tower in Hastings to pay their respects to the victims of that terrible day two years prior. The Hastings Town Clock precinct is one of the most iconic places in the city to make a public statement, right in the heart of the CBD. Three churches helped run the vigil: Flaxmere Christian Fellowship, Iwi Tapu Destiny Church, and Revive Church. These churches work well together and represent many Christians in Hawkes Bay who support Israel. People from Napier, Wairoa, Waipukurau, and other areas came into Hastings to attend.

Despite the windchill and rain, attendees braved 40 minutes for a shortened programme due to the conditions. Pastor Nigel Woodley led the programme, with Ashley Church as keynote speaker. Representing the Israel Institute of New Zealand, Ashley eloquently explained the



disaster of that fateful day. The Israeli national anthem was sung, prayers were offered, and respect was shown with a minute's silence. Against the backdrop of a bitter, howling wind, the crowd paid tribute to the sufferings of Israel.

While concern was expressed for all innocents suffering in the conflict, particular attention was given to the remaining Israeli hostages, who had endured 732 days of captivity. Attendees prayed for a swift resolution to the conflict. All the Israeli flags were soaked in the evening storm and had to be spread out in Flaxmere Church auditorium to dry. Just days later, the remaining living hostages were freed.

Christchurch Marks Two Years

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel

On 7 October 2025, the Christchurch Jewish community and their supporters gathered in solemn remembrance, two years after the Hamas-led atrocities that devastated southern Israel. Jointly hosted by the Canterbury Hebrew Congregation and the NZ Friends of Israel Association Incorporated, the memorial service honoured victims, survivors, defenders, and diaspora voices shaped by the tragedy.

A harrowing video opened the evening, documenting the attack on Kibbutz Nir Oz. The footage bore witness to lives lost, homes destroyed, and the enduring trauma of that day.

Music became a vessel for grief and spiritual resilience. *'Shir Lama'alot' (Psalm 121)* was performed with haunting beauty—voice, violin, and piano weaving ancient trust into present sorrow. The psalm's themes of divine protection, sleepless vigilance, and the assurance that "the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" resonated deeply with those gathered.

Shmuel Hasefri's *'Winter 1973'* echoed the pain of past wars, while *'Give Thanks—Hodu'* offered in voice and guitar, reminded attendees of the



NZ Friends of Israel Assoc Inc.

enduring power of gratitude even in the shadow of grief.

A panel discussion followed, featuring City Councillor Aaron Keown and two members of the Jewish community. Each shared how 7 October and its aftermath had shaped their lives, their fears, and their resolve. Their reflections underscored the emotional toll and the strength found in solidarity.

The names of all remaining hostages were read aloud—each name a world, each silence a prayer.

The keynote address, delivered by the President of the NZ Friends of Israel Association, affirmed that remembrance is not surrender. It is covenant. It is hope.

"To lament is not to lose faith... To hope is not to forget suffering."

In grief, Christchurch found unity. In memory, it found strength.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister: Sharren Haskel



■ Name Withheld

On her six-day South Pacific tour of nations supportive of Israel at the UN, Sharren Haskel ended her whistle-stop visit by transiting through Auckland, meeting with the Jewish community, Christian leaders, and the Prime Minister of Samoa.

The meeting was chaired by the Israeli ambassador to New Zealand, His Excellency Alon Roth-Snir. Bryce Turner of Christians for Israel spoke in which he shared about the different advocacy campaigns taking place by those represented in the meeting. These included public rallies standing for Israel, correspondence with the government, newspaper articles and social media campaigning. Of note was the *haka* performed by Destiny Church early in the '7 October' war of which the deputy foreign minister said every Israeli watched on their devices and it encouraged the nation. Destiny's Brian and Hannah Tamaki were present. Nigel Woodley then spoke about the

special delegation of Christian leaders who visited the Beehive in August and presented to Winston Peters senior advisors a dossier explaining why New Zealand should not vote for Palestinian statehood. A copy of the dossier *'Not Yet and Not Until'*, signed by all five members of the delegation, was presented to Minister Haskell and it was well received.

Sharren Haskel addressed the meeting and gave a literal translation from the Hebrew of *Habakkuk* chapter one, correlating the use of the word Hamas (which means violence) in that chapter with events that unfolded on 7 October 2023. Those present were awed by the fact that a minister of the State of Israel would give such an interesting Bible lesson as part of her presentation. The minister made it clear that Israel appreciates advocates like those present that day in Auckland. The general feeling in the meeting was warm and cordial, and the Israelis knew they were among true friends.

Ambassador Visits Marlborough

■ Julian Hawken

It was a privilege for the people of the 'Top of the South' to welcome His Excellency Ambassador of Israel to NZ, Alon Roth-Snir on 10–11 September.

A group of 60 people, members of the business community and other locals, both from the Jewish community and from Christian churches, gathered at Harvest Life Church in Blenheim to hear the Ambassador and the Embassy of Israel's Economic and Trade Officer, Mr Mijail Linares. After speaking they showed video demonstrations of amazing Israeli inventions that would be very useful in our farming sector, orchards, vineyards and seafood production. Then, several local businesses shared about their connection with Israel, either through purchasing Israeli made equipment or by selling their produce to Israel. Post-meeting conversations with the Ambassador and Mr Linares have already sparked new business opportunities.



The Ambassador speaking in Picton.

On 11 September, the Ambassador spoke to 70 mainly Christian supporters of Israel at the Union Parish Centre in Picton. The Ambassador spoke about the challenges of false information in the media and urged us to stand firm in the truth. During his speech, the New Zealand flag began to fall, he straightened it, saying, "Israel needs New Zealand!"

At both meetings, we sang the *Hatikva* and closed with the *Aaronic* blessing. It was a joy to host the Ambassador, and we remain committed to supporting Israel!

From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand

A Ray of Hope

I began writing these comments a day before our hostages were to be released after two years in hell. As I reflected on the news,

I wondered: “How do Israelis feel? Could anyone fathom the sense of relief and joy that has permeated this nation?” I know that our friends could probably imagine how we felt, but the true sense was beyond description.

For two years, this country sank into a morass of sadness as never before. The magnitude of the horrors of 7 October overwhelmed us like a monstrous tsunami and a lethal hurricane. All our friends, and indeed, all decent people could not ignore the collective tragedy that befell us.

Now the clouds seem to be lifting. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the US president, it seems that a new dawn may rise. The sight of all living hostages embraced by their loved ones brought tears of happiness to an entire nation. Nevertheless, as our history as a free nation has shown, side by side, that unique moment of joy is accompanied by the penetrating pain of witnessing the coffins of those who were killed by Hamas on 7 October 2023, and since. If further proof as to the true nature of Hamas is needed, consider the fact that more than ten deceased hostages have not yet returned home. We as a nation will not rest until every single hostage is back. The weekly gathering of tens of thousands of people at Hostage Square is a clear sign of our commitment.

The return of the hostages is the first stage in the agreement elaborated by the US president and his advisors. The ensuing segments will require hard and vigilant work if they are to succeed. Our first and foremost goal is to ensure that the population along the Gaza Strip is never again threatened by terrorists from across the border. Internally, if Israel as a nation and society is to heal from the horrors of the past two years, it must undertake a thorough and honest investigation into one central question: how was 7 October allowed to happen? This question is already embedded in our national reality. To move forward, all events leading up to that day must be carefully scrutinised by a national, non-political commission of inquiry. Without the timely establishment of such a commission, the healing process cannot truly begin.

As I conclude these remarks allow me to express my deepest gratitude for your true and unequivocal support during those times of trial.

From Darkness to Light



Maya Simon, DCM and Consul, Embassy of Israel in New Zealand speaking at the Auckland event. | Photo: Perry Trotter



His Excellency, the Ambassador of Israel, Alon Roth-Snir speaking at the Wellington commemorative service. | Photo: Nicole Parry

■ Maya Simon

DCM & CONSUL | Embassy of Israel in New Zealand

On 16 October, the Embassy, in partnership with local communities, held two commemorative services marking the 7 October massacre—one in Auckland and one in Wellington.

Deputy Prime Minister Simon Court spoke at the Auckland service and Hon David Seymour spoke in Wellington. Representatives of local communities, including Christian communities, also took part.

We chose to hold the ceremony on 16 October rather than on the 7th, due to the Jewish holiday of *Sukkot*. This decision, seemingly small at the time, proved to be deeply meaningful. In the days between 7–16 October, a long-awaited miracle occurred—one that changed our reality entirely.

On 13 October, twenty of our hostages were released as part of Trump’s deal, returning home after more than two years in Hamas captivity. It was a day of immense joy and relief. People across Israel, and families and friends around the world, watched their release with tears and gratitude. A great weight was lifted from our hearts—there are no longer living hostages suffering beneath the ground in Gaza.

Yet, the struggle is not over. The bodies of hostages remain held by Hamas, despite its commitment to return them all. Hamas continues to violate that promise, seizing every opportunity to attack our soldiers. Israel responds firmly and decisively to such breaches—to protect both our soldiers and our citizens.

At a time when winds of change and hope are beginning to blow across the Middle East (not only Wellington’s famous wind), your friendship and support are more vital than ever.

We witness how many so-called pro-

Palestinian activists—who loudly protested against a democratic country fighting for its life for two years, calling for an end to the war—now fall silent when that goal is being achieved, or worse, continue to protest. Most of them probably do not even know and understand what they are protesting for. In contrast, your steadfast support remains strong and unwavering, even in the face of efforts to silence, delegitimise, or intimidate. For that, we are deeply grateful.

Today, we stand at a historic turning point—after two years of fighting on seven fronts: Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, Judea and Samaria, the militias in Iraq and IRGC in Iran.

We are beginning to see the change our actions have brought to the Middle East—changes that will continue to echo around the world. The IDF fights not only for Israel, our home and the Promised Land we longed to return to for over 2,000 years, but to ensure that the side of light, reason, faith, and the sanctity of life prevails over the side of darkness, fanaticism, and the worship of death.

As the Ambassador emphasised in his speech at the 7 October ceremony in Wellington:

“We did not choose this war—it was forced upon us by those who hide behind lies and use their own citizens as shields. We stand against those who traffic in terror, and we stand with friends who understand what is at stake. Israel’s defense is not only for our own survival—it is part of a broader fight for the security and values of the world.

We fight with partners who have stood shoulder to shoulder with us in the darkest hours—when rockets fell and families were torn apart, when the threat to our existence was immediate and real. We remember those who stood by us, and we honour them for their

courage and steadfastness.

At the same time, we face a battle for truth itself... And yet, in sharp contrast to this death cult, Israel and the Jewish people continue to create, teach, and heal. Even in these dark times, Israeli and Jewish Nobel laureates illuminate the world with discoveries that save lives, advance knowledge, and benefit humanity. Their achievements remind us that life, learning, and hope persist despite hatred—and that the human spirit can triumph over barbarity.”

We will finish with the words of the prophet Isaiah, summarising it better than we could: “*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.*” (Isaiah 60:1–2)

Jubilee News

PM Norman Kirk was behind the invitation to Israel to open an Embassy in Wellington, up until that point NZ was served by a non-resident ambassador based in Sydney. Plans took shape in 1975, but it wasn’t until early February 1976 that Ambassador Haim Raphael presented his credentials to the then Governor General Sir Dennis Blundell as the first resident Israeli Ambassador. He was no stranger to NZ through his former roles. In 2026 we celebrate the Jubilee of NZ-Israel relations.

At that time Israel’s population was 3,455 million just ahead of NZ’s 3,083 million. Both were small and socialist nations. This year Israel surpassed 10 million, but emigration (110,000) exceeded immigration for the first time.

Solidarity March and Symposium 2025

■ Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem

The Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem has just completed its annual events for 2025—a Solidarity March and an Academic Symposium.

The annual Indigenous march in the Old City was led by a delegation of First Nations from the US, Canada and Alaska. As they made their way through the ancient streets, the sound and sight of traditional drumming, dancing and singing went before them. Also, two musicians joined in with the Indigenous instrument of Israel—the harp.

There was a strong presence of Australians this year. Two groups presented their statements of support for Israel. Munganbana Norman and Barbara Miller, founders of Indigenous Friends of Israel, brought a declaration, representing Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Rim. Norman also brought a large two metre boomerang specially designed to convey the love of the Indigenous peoples for Israel. Indigenous Australian Debra Harding-Morris presented a statement representing another group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Both groups had the opportunity to present their framed declarations and boomerang to Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel, who had recently returned from the Pacific.

Indigenous Australian Nova Peris OAM also participated in the March and Symposium. Her stirring speech at the symposium touched the hearts of the audience, who responded with a standing ovation. It was a reminder that in the face of ostracism by the world community, Israelis are very grateful for their friends.

The Symposium hosted another stellar line-up of speakers this year. Dr Michael Wechsler, an expert on classical Judeo-Arabic literature deftly put to bed the false Palestinian narratives that undermine Jewish indigenous connection to the land of Israel. He demonstrated from Arabic sources that Arabs recognised (and even affirmed) Jewish presence in the land. Assoc Prof Shawn Zelig Aster showed that even in Babylonian exile Jewish identity and indigeneity was preserved. Dr Charles Asher Small spoke about the importance of understanding the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the anti-Israel movement today. We had a group of Australian scholars who discussed Indigenous Jewish collaborations. Prof Gillian Gould shared about her upcoming book on this topic. Shelly Bengiat emphasised the importance of caring for the environment and Torres Strait Islander Loretta Pele spoke of the connection of her people to the ocean and the reasons why her people love Israel.

The day ended with Dr Sheree Trotter addressing the problems with Settler Colonialism as an ideology and a live zoom interview with Adam Louis-Klein. Klein addressed the challenge of antizionism and impressed the audience with his fresh approach.

According to IEJ Director, Dr Sheree Trotter: “The Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem has been established for less than two years and we have already had two significant annual events in Jerusalem. We expect these events to grow from year to year as we build and strengthen our network. We see the discrimination and marginalisation against Israel and the attacks on

Jewish people and we know that a deliberate disinformation campaign has poisoned much of the world against her. Our message is strong and clear—many Indigenous people stand with Israel. We are working globally and in our communities to build support for Israel, to educate and to change the narrative”.



The Distress of Our Media

■ Dr Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

For many in our media news of the Gaza ceasefire was most upsetting. They lost a splendid source of bad news and tales of destruction and woe. They lost daily pictures of suffering, destruction and harm. Ultimately, they lost a way to give their readers a sense of righteousness above the mundane complexities and challenges of daily life.

Also lost: Inviting readers to ‘have your say’ on a hot, international topic; moralising editorials; offering steady, but still exciting, news coverage as an alternative to the madness of social media.

To be appealing, such coverage needs a villain; *voilà* Israel and its accomplices. The conflicts around Israel inflame our local media as no other overseas conflict can. War in the Ukraine, civil war in Ethiopia, millions at risk in Sudan; these are complex and lack ready images of the little guy struggling against long lived oppression. As to the Uighurs in China, best not to annoy the dragon. On Israel, plenty of meaty reporting from news bureaux feeds far-away New Zealand with tasty material.

Local content is needed too. Recently, readers of *Otaki Today* discovered local hero Sam Leason. Speaking from his “latest base in the Isle of Skye,” he said that he had planned to attend “a very cool festival in Morocco.” But seeing Israel’s “clear campaign of eradication,” he joined a land march from Egypt to Gaza. Later he joined the Gaza

freedom flotilla. Thus, the media displays uninformed claims by locals.

Local notables contribute. Labour’s former foreign minister Phil Goff wrote in *The Post* “Israel simply doesn’t care about the impact of its military attacks on civilians and how many innocent people and children it is killing... Sadly, a country of people who were themselves long victims of oppression is now guilty of oppressing and committing genocide against others.” Goff wishes to save Jews from themselves.

From academia, Emeritus Professor of Public Policy, Jonathan Boston, also wrote for *The Post*. In advocating sanctions on Israel, he mentions Hamas just once: “Senior members of Hamas who were involved in negotiations to secure a ceasefire” were subject to “an unprovoked attack” by Israel. Boston phrases his arguments carefully; no rush to conclusions here. Yet, Hamas emerge as the peace-loving good guys.

Our media is weak on investigative journalism and arrogant in the bias it creates. The media put steady pressure for New Zealand to recognise Palestine. Winston Peters’ lengthy pondering and eventual refusal were variously presented as out of step, a stalling tactic, isolationist, and “a missed chance to lead.” In other words, be moral and follow the crowd.

When *Stuff* ran a ‘People’s Voices on Gaza’ series, five of the six voices published accused Israel of genocide. None recognised Israel’s right to self-defence.

The Post editorial of 11 October on the Gaza ceasefire took a few parting shots at Israel: “The deliberate

starvation of civilians can never be justified as a military tactic,” and “nearly one child in four suffers from malnutrition” (a debunked claim.) Of Trump’s success it remarked “much as it might pain some readers to hear it.” But the writer cannot accept Trump’s success or that French President Macron’s intent to recognise Palestine undermined hostage talks. Instead, the editorial pleads “It has been argued that increased opposition to Israel from Western states was pivotal” and claims “another recognition of the power of mass protest, even if those protests did not lead to New Zealand recognising a Palestinian state.” No thought or care that such opposition and protests may well have encouraged Hamas to resist any ceasefire and retain the hostages.

The Post just can’t let go.

Reading *Stuff* over a few days recently led me to make formal complaints about four articles: an article on “the truth” behind images of starving children in Gaza managed to avoid the key facts; another described Israeli claims as “without evidence,” when evidence was provided; etc. The editor’s response was dismissive and referred to “the absence of definitive proof.” Naturally, this test was only applied to Israel.

As David Abrahams, a UK commentator, put it: “To speak plainly, to mourn sincerely, to ask for perspective—these things are now suspect. In a climate thick with vulgar rhetoric and vengeful slogans, the space for shared moral understanding is vanishing.” The New Zealand media pack are complicit in this.



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

■ Perry Trotter

An adaptation of a recently published video.

Over the last two years Christians have been murdered at an alarming rate in places such as Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and India. Based on the output of NZ’s Baptist Union, however, persecution of Christians does not concern Baptists anything like the actions of the only democratic state in the Middle East—one that has fought for its very existence in a war it did not start and did not want.

Israel, the only nation in the region where the rights of Christians are fully protected, has come under harsh criticism from various Baptist leaders, while the persecutors of Christians are, to a large degree, ignored.

Of course, not all NZ Baptists are represented by the various problematic articles, statements and podcasts publicised by the Baptist Union. I’m pleased to say that we have been able to speak at a number of Baptist churches that would strongly disagree with the material promoted by the Baptist Union.

Many of the mainstream libels against the Jewish state peddled by groups such as the UN have been repeated by the Baptists. Indeed, one recent statement speaks of “indiscriminate bombing, murder, sexual violence, torture”. This is deeply irresponsible and only contributes to surging levels of antisemitism. It is sad to see ostensibly evangelical institutions willing to substitute the victim for the aggressor, distort history, promote aberrant theology and engage in promoting modern day blood libels.

Before addressing a few of the problems with the Baptist material, some background information will be helpful.

A major contributor to the statements is Dr Philip Church who, at the time of this article, is listed on the Laidlaw College website as a senior research professor. Unfortunately, Laidlaw College has a record of controversy in this area. In 2012, in cooperation with Tear Fund NZ, Laidlaw College hosted UK Anglican Priest Rev Dr Stephen Sizer, notorious as perhaps the leading Christian anti-Zionist of the period. Sizer had long been accused of antisemitism and association with Holocaust deniers and terrorists. He was ultimately formally charged and found guilty of antisemitic acts by a disciplinary tribunal of his own UK Anglican Church, hardly an institution known for its support of Israel.

None of this deters the Baptists. Weeks after the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, they published an anti-Zionist piece citing Sizer’s work as providing

“context for the current conflict,” revealing much about their influences. Laidlaw College, however, was not always aligned this way. Its founder, Rev. Joseph Kemp, a Baptist, wrote a century ago about Israel’s restoration, marveling at the survival of the Jewish people and seeing their regathering as miraculous—decades before Israel’s rebirth in 1948.

Today, some linked to Laidlaw College and NZ Baptists have replaced strong support for Israel with antagonism toward the Jewish state and disdain for the founder’s beliefs.

Many renowned Baptists, in contrast to New Zealand Baptists, have upheld biblically grounded support for Israel’s restoration. In 1864, Charles Spurgeon criticised those who deny or spiritualise the Bible’s predictions of Israel’s regathering.

In commenting on *Ezekiel 37* Spurgeon declared it nothing less than treason to God’s Word to neglect the prophet’s primary meaning.

“...if words mean anything... there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality...”

I think Spurgeon was right to describe the machinations of replacement theologians as treason to God’s word.

Dr Church makes numerous problematic statements, from promoting widely discredited maps (for which even MSNBC apologised) to downplaying Palestinian terror and misrepresenting the region’s history.

To illustrate the issue, Dr Church calls ‘Judea and Samaria’ the “Israeli government name for the West Bank.” While technically true, Christians may note that Jesus—and several New Testament writers—used these terms, whereas ‘West Bank’ appears to have originated in hostile political discourse after 1949. There seems to be a concerted effort to minimise or downplay Jewish connection to the land of Israel—and neither history nor the Bible is going to stand in the way.

Dr Church frequently uses the term “Indigenous Palestinian Christians”, but asserts that “only a tiny minority” of Jewish people are indigenous to the land. My most charitable reading of this is that it demonstrates a profound misunderstanding of Indigeneity, or historical reality, or both.

There are several markers of Indigeneity. One is the ethnogenesis of a particular group in a particular land, in which a unique culture and language develops. Jewish connection to the land of Israel has a thoroughly documented connection extending more than 3500 years. It is exceptionally well attested by archaeology—and, of course, the Bible.



Perry Trotter.

Much more could be said but the Jewish people are most certainly indigenous to Judea.

Remarkably, Israel existed in the very same land 3000 years ago, with the same name, and very similar language, religion and culture. How many nations can make the same claim?

Mainstream media and much of academia portray Israel as a settler colonialist project. In reality, Israel is a clear example of decolonisation by an indigenous people group re-establishing themselves in their ancestral homelands—with their unique cultural practices intact and their ancient language restored. That is why Israel serves as an inspiration to many indigenous people.

Portraying Israel as an occupier is as absurd as painting Ngapuhi as occupiers of Northland.

Yes, the Arab people are indigenous too—but to the Arabian Peninsula. It is there that their unique cultural markers developed. The presence of Arabic speaking peoples throughout the broader region is not a mark of Indigeneity but rather evidence of colonialism. As a result of the Islamic conquests of the 7th to 9th centuries, Arabic spread to North Africa and the Middle East. Peoples across the region were forced to submit to Islam, and the language of the Islamic imperialists was imposed on native inhabitants. Many Indigenous languages were banned and some were subsequently lost.

None of this is to deny that some Arab families have lived for generations in the land of Israel. They have indeed. And some of those Arabs today contribute greatly to Israeli society, and even serve alongside Jewish soldiers in the IDF. Much more could be said. My point is that any implication that Jews are not indigenous to the land of Israel is patently absurd.

Before moving to the biblical and theological matters that are my primary concerns with the Baptist material, let me make a further comment on the present conflict.

7 October 2023 saw the greatest number of Jews raped, mutilated, burned and slaughtered in a single day since the Holocaust. Dr Church describes the massacre as “unconscionable”. Good. But he then quotes with approval the words of a Palestinian friend: “how long would you let me stand on your neck before you started retaliating?” This is an egregious justification of terror. Church says that he is “keen to set the context in terms of 17 years of utter oppression of the people of Gaza.”

No, that is plainly not the context.

Israel withdrew fully from Gaza in 2005 in the hope that the Gazans would establish a thriving society. Instead they elected the terror group Hamas, who turned Gaza into a terror base and built 500km of tunnels under schools, hospitals and homes, with billions in humanitarian aid. Israel attempted to prevent the flow of arms to Hamas, but despite this, about 20,000 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israeli citizens from Gaza since 2005.

That, along with Hamas determination to annihilate the Jewish people, is the context of 7 October. That is the context in which following 7 October Hamas vowed to repeat their atrocities again and again and again.

In part two I will address some of the biblical and theological problems in the Baptist material. The Christian viewer can then decide if the positions promoted by the Baptist Union are faithful to Scripture, or in the words of Charles Spurgeon, treason to God’s Word.

View full video here:
<https://israelbiblicalworldview.org/nz-baptist-union>

In Search of the Palestinians—Part 3

■ Dr Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

The previous two parts of this series searched for the Palestinians in history. We found that such an identity only began to emerge in the early 20th century under European influence and in reaction to rising Jewish immigration. Until 1967, nationalism was primarily expressed in terms of a wider Arab or Syrian nationalism. After Israel's success in the 1967 war, this changed. Rather than little Israel battling a united Arab front, the pitch became big Israel suppressing a Palestinian minority.

In this final part of the series we consider the elevation of this relatively new Palestinian cause from a local liberation movement into a global force and focus of international solidarity.

Antisemitism reoccurs throughout the last two millennia, particularly in Christendom, typically as a moral drive. Today, Islamists articulate their hope of Jewish eradication through *jihad*: divine justice through cosmic warfare. Western radicals mirror this in terms of social justice and their fight against oppression. Two sides of the same coin, whose value is set in Jewish blood.

Palestine has become the touchstone of a deeper narrative than a strip of land. To give a few quotes: A Rutgers University panel held that "Palestine is a queer feminist struggle against imperialism; criticising Hamas's persecution of LGBTQ Palestinians is a 'homophobic' tactic." Irish actress Denise Gough in a viral video likened Israel to the fatal flaw in the Death Star in Star Wars—the way to destroy the evil monstrosity. Nelson Mandela: "Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." A murderous US radical back in the 1960s, Angela Davis: "Palestine itself is a kind of moral litmus test for the world." Palestinian radical Refaat Alareer: "There's a Palestine that dwells inside all of us... a free Palestine where all people regardless of colour, religion, or race coexist." World Peace Council President Romesh Chandra: "There can be no peace without Palestine." Famous novelist Arundhati Roy: "Not all the power and money, not all the weapons and propaganda on Earth can any longer hide the wound that is Palestine... the connections between all the wars, all the occupations, all the famines and displacements." A banner at a protest outside the UN this September: "Free the earth! Free Palestine!" Decolonising Therapy social media posts: "Mental health liberation is Palestinian liberation." Rethinking Schools (whose material is used by 200,000 US teachers): educators have a "moral and



National March For Palestine: Stop Arming Israel in the UK. November 2024. | Photo: Shutterstock

Who in the church will pursue the Lord's blessing and build His temple together? And who will lift the world's banners of righteousness?

educational responsibility... to join and teach about... the movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel."

These are not outliers. Solidarity marches in Western cities—even after the ceasefire—see massed Palestine flags. I venture that few participants would hasten to parade their own nation's flag. The hashtag 'stand with Palestine' has more than 4.2 billion TikTok views associated with it. On a single day this September, a post by Candice Owen raging against Israel gained 100 million views.

The UN has long pursued such a consensus. UN resolutions and publications refer to Jerusalem's Temple Mount and Western Wall Plaza only by their Islamic names al-Haram ash-Sharif and the Buraq Plaza—denying Judaism's ties to its holiest sites. US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick said back in the 1980s "I think the Holocaust is possible again. I didn't think so before I came to the UN, but I think so now." In the period 2015-2024: the UN passed 172 resolutions against Israel; 78 against all other countries combined. For the UN, Israel is at least twice as evil as the rest of the entire planet combined. UNRWA, with its 30,000 employees (mainly Palestinian), is viewed as a subsidiary of Hamas—including by the US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio.

The impact of all this and the relentless hostility of the mainstream media has been to isolate and put Jews at risk internationally: in public places; in schools, colleges and the professions; in publishing, sport, the arts; in their shops

and cafes; even in synagogues. Jews are expelled from the community of the upright—unless they submit and publicly denounce Zionism. By contrast, violent anti-semites are given public platforms by key commentators, threatening protests are permitted, and their hate symbols widely paraded. A recent survey found that 1 in 4 Americans see antisemitism as a justified reaction to the Gaza war, rising to nearly 40% among young evangelicals. For most Americans, the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" is acceptable and not anti-Jewish.

Instead of solidarity or compassion, hostility and an explosion of hateful myths. As journalist Jamie Weinstein puts it: "The sadistic 7 Oct. massacre was the easiest moral test of our time. Since so many people are failing it, it has become the most clarifying moral moment of our time."

The suffering of the Palestinian people has become a holy witness, held up by a priestly class of experts and broadcast by their advocates. Here, we are told, is a people with a long history and culture and deep roots in the land who are denied their heritage and rights. However, as I demonstrate in my book *From the River to the Sea: the Land in History and Prophecy*, much of that conventional narrative is false.

Anti-Zionism holds a single article of faith: Israel is uniquely evil. No fact can breach that belief; every untruth against Israel is not only plausible but has weight because it confirms dogma. Circulating the lies is an act of brotherhood in the battle.

Palestine and the Palestinians are cast as the tip of the spear in a global struggle. The nations have anointed Palestinians as the anti-chosen people. The symmetry is precise:

- a people chosen (largely invented) by the world to counter an ancient people chosen by God
- their claim to history, the Land, and Jerusalem against Israel's claim
- their restoration to bless the whole world and undo 'the poison' of Israel's restoration
- global solidarity of the 'right thinking' to uphold Palestine, not the unity of believers to bless Israel.

In sum: beloved and vital Palestine versus toxic Israel.

This role of the anti-chosen people does not mean that individual Palestinians are necessarily 'bad,' any more than individual Jews are necessarily 'good.' The state of Israel and Jewish groups are certainly not beyond criticism, harsh criticism. But what we see goes far beyond that: Palestine as the critical weapon to deal to the Jews and Israel, finish off the 'Death Star.'

The details of the current conflict in Gaza are complex. But the undergirding moral and spiritual issues are not. The anthropologist Louis-Klein terms anti-semitism 'the holiest hatred', a finger-poking in the eye of the Creator as an indictment against His choice. The Bible warns us of the consequences.

"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

"And now many nations have been assembled against you... But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, and they do not understand His purpose." (Micah 4:11)

"Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples... I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples." (Zechariah 12:2)

The Bible is insistently bi-cultural from *Genesis* to *Revelations*: Israel and the nations, Jews and gentiles. Here is God's hand in history. Paul speaks of the unity of believers in *Ephesians 2 and 3* "both into one... fitting together into a holy temple... gentiles... fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promises." These statements are bi-cultural, not multi-cultural: Jewish and gentile believers in Christ fitting together.

Who in the church will pursue the Lord's blessing and build His temple together? And who will lift the world's banners of righteousness? Time to choose.



Kiwis Witness Hope in Jerusalem

■ Heather Moore

Participants in this year's ICEJ Jerusalem March on 9 October were able to stand and pray beside the Knesset for the Trump-brokered ceasefire deal.

Kapiti Coast couple, Martin and Rita Whyte, were among a small group of New Zealanders participating in the annual march, which was attended by about 2000 people from up to 75 countries. For security reasons, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem March was held within Sacher Park ending at the Wohl Rose Park near the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), with a time of praise and intercessory prayer.

This loud and colourful event is one of many organised by the ICEJ during the week-long *Sukkot* celebration, and is seen as a powerful expression of Christian support and comfort for Israel.

Rita said one of the things that struck her was the number of Israeli families who had come out to see the march and were calling out their thanks to the marchers.

And while the mood this year was buoyed with the hope of a successful peace deal and the return of the remaining hostages, it was tempered with an attitude of "We will celebrate only when we see the hostages returned". This is a nation that has lived through the many broken promises of their enemies.

For the Whytes, who spent a year walking weekly with the Israeli community in Paraparaumu in the global *Run For Their Lives* campaign, to be in Jerusalem to witness the return of the remaining hostages was a momentous occasion. They noted the



The ICEJ March, held in Sacher Park and ending near the Knesset. | Photo: Martin and Rita Whyte.

huge contrast between the New Zealand public where most Kiwis were either not aware of, or not willing, to acknowledge the ongoing suffering of the hostages and their families; and Israel, where the hostage crisis was a national sorrow, felt keenly by the whole nation, whether or not they knew the captives personally.

"Israel remembered the hostages daily with photo banners, roadside sculptures, and yellow ribbons literally everywhere, at intersections, on fences, stuck to the gates of the Old City," Rita said. "The nation mourned the death of each IDF soldier."

A collective sigh of relief was breathed at the miracle of all live hostages released together on *Simchat Torah*, exactly two years after their abduction.

For Martin and Rita, celebrating *Sukkot* in Jerusalem fulfilled a long held dream of

the *Pesach* proclamation, "next year in Jerusalem!" Through their friendship with a former Wellington rabbi and his family, they had accommodation for five weeks with an orthodox Jewish couple. "Our hosts, lived in an Orthodox Jerusalem neighbourhood about 30 minutes' walk from the Old City, they keep *kosher* and maintain the daily rhythm of prayer and *Torah* readings," said Martin.

They experienced prayer and meals in the *Sukkah* booth in their host's back yard, and seeing booths in yards and on balconies throughout the city.

"On *Yom Kippur*, and *Shabbat* in Jerusalem, young and old alike walked, cycled, and skated the streets devoid of traffic and public transport for 24 hours," Rita said.

One of the Whytes' key goals in visiting

Israel was to spend time volunteering. They worked with food rescue organisation, Leket Israel, for several days grape and avocado picking.

Martin said that for the past two years a seasoned team of retirees had faithfully turned up to help with the harvesting because of the shortage of available workforce since 7 Oct. due to serving in the IDF, left the country, or injured.

Harvesting avocados took them to Nir Oz, one of the *kibbutzim* that had been breached during the 7 Oct. massacre. After the day's picking they were shown the decimated *kibbutz*, where the horrors took place, damage done to infrastructure by the terrorists and were told of the hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of farm machinery and irrigation equipment stolen.

The Whytes were so appreciative of the conversations and encounters during their time in Israel. One such meeting was with the avocado picking crew, where they met a man who had spearheaded restoration work on the Mount of Olives and they were privileged to have him guide them personally, to see the work in progress.

Other highlights included worshipping with the Messianic communities that meet at Christ Church in the Old City, and at Rishon LeZion near Tel Aviv, and to see the burden they carry for their Jewish brothers and sisters, to come to know the *Messiah*, *Yeshua*, themselves.

"The Messianic Community is doing the hard lifting in Israel," said Martin. "Our role is to assist them by holding up their arms—*Exodus 17:12-14*."

Responding to Online Trolls and Critics

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel

Let's be honest—talking about Israel and antisemitism online is tough. Even now, two years after 7 October and despite a peace deal being signed, the trolling hasn't stopped. In fact, the wave of hostile comments on NZ Friends of Israel's Facebook, Instagram, and website has grown. It's a reminder that peace on paper doesn't always translate to peace online.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." *Proverbs 15:1*

Social media has changed how we engage. Algorithms feed us content based on what we already believe, creating echo chambers. A Google experiment showed how search results vary depending on your online behavior. So when someone says, "How can they believe that?"—it might be because they've never seen what you've seen.

This is especially true for younger people. They're on platforms like TikTok and Telegram, which are less

moderated and more likely to show graphic violence and disturbing images from places like Gaza.

Many of us older ones, know better than to click on those images—we've learned how damaging they can be to our mental health. But younger users, driven by curiosity and less aware of the emotional impact, are more vulnerable.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." *Proverbs 4:23*

Because of this, and knowing our youth will be tomorrow's leaders, we need to approach them with patience, compassion, and a constructive mindset. Burning bridges isn't the answer. We need to mentor them through this phase, helping them learn to read more widely, think more critically, and engage more thoughtfully.

And when we do engage in debate, we shouldn't aim to 'win'. Many people—especially younger ones—are more open to discovering truth for themselves than accepting it from someone who seems to oppose them.

Our goal shouldn't be to dominate the conversation, but to plant a seed. As the saying goes, we're not trying to win an argument—we're trying to put a stone in their shoe.

Something small, but uncomfortable enough to make them think and explore further after the conversation ends.

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." *Ephesians 5:15-16*

Two years on, it's time to take stock. Many of us have participated in robust online and in-person discussions.

We've learned a lot—about others, about ourselves, and about how technology shapes our understanding. The challenge now is to apply that learning with wisdom and grace.

Let's keep showing restraint, listening well, and responding with clarity. That's how we build bridges—and that's how we move forward.



Paleo-Hebrew Likely Not Sinai Script

■ **Yaakov Ben Yehoshua**

Director | Beth Melekh International

Some say, “Paleo-Hebrew is the only true text of Scripture.” Is that true? Answering this question is important because many in the body of believers rest on an intellectual pride of position, based on unproven assertions regarding the revelation and transmission of Scripture.

This article seeks to address the question of Proto/Paleo-Hebrew use in the Bronze Age and the likelihood of its use in recording the *Torah*/Ten Words at Sinai.

For the purposes of this article I have qualified the term Paleo with its predecessor Proto, which has less baggage attached to it regarding the misuse of terms and the pseudo-learned approach of many modern ‘Messianic Gentile’ and ‘Hebrew Roots’ proponents.

There are readily available source archaeological evidences* for the Order of Proto-Levantine Scripts of the Bronze & Iron Ages (*the following dates are approximate, Scholars and archaeologists differ on the precise dating).

The following list is from oldest to youngest and is based on archaeological discoveries of inscriptions, artifacts and manuscripts.

1900 BCE Proto-Sinaitic (Ancient Sinai Peninsula), 1700 BCE Proto-Canaanite, 1100 BCE Proto-Phoenician, 1000 BCE Ugaritic, 840 BCE Moabite, 700-538 BCE Proto/Paleo-Hebrew [some evidence suggests the possibility of earlier dating to 1000 BCE], 400 BCE – 100 CE Proto/Paleo-Hebrew Dead Sea Scroll Manuscripts.

The traditional (and most likely) estimate for the receipt of the *Torah* at Sinai is 1300 BCE.

Therefore, based on the archaeological evidence, and the dating of the Exodus, the *Torah* (inclusive of the tablets/Ten Words) could not have been written in Proto/Paleo-Hebrew as many suggest.

Paleo-Hebrew dated at 700-538 BCE, or is at a stretch, dated to 1000 BCE. Therefore, the evidence places it at 300 to 600 years later than the Exodus and the receipt of the *Torah*.

The *Torah* was most likely written in an earlier form of Hebrew that more closely resembled the Proto-Canaanite/Phoenician alphabets.

This puts to rest the false assertions of the endless parade of pseudo-learned, so called, ‘Messianic Gentile’ and ‘Hebrew Roots’ teachers who claim that the only true text of Scripture is the Paleo-Hebrew text of Sinai (which we have established is highly unlikely).

The ancient manuscripts (not inscriptions but scrolls) we do have in the Proto/Paleo-Hebrew script are



Prayer shawl (tallit) with Torah scrolls in a synagogue. | Photo: Shutterstock

found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and date between 400 BCE and 100 CE. We do not have a complete *Torah* text in Proto/Paleo-Hebrew.

It’s equally erroneous to claim, as some do, that a hieroglyphic interpretation of Proto/Paleo-Hebrew Scripture is necessary for a true understanding of the biblical text of the *TaNaKh* (OT).

Proto-Phoenician, Proto-Canaanite, and Proto/Paleo-Hebrew character alphabets are just that, character alphabets using letters to create words that have meaning based on the combining of letters and not based on the individual pictographic meanings of individual letters within a word.

In the case of Scripture, to interpret the sum of a word as a collection of ambiguous pictographic ideas that contradict the meaning of the word itself, is to breed confusion and misunderstanding. In fact, in many cases the conclusions reached are entirely erroneous.

Had God intended to convey His Word in hieroglyphics, He had an Egyptian set of hieroglyphics to work with which were adjacent to (though originated centuries earlier), but not the same as the Proto-Canaanite/Proto-Phoenician/Proto/Paleo-Hebrew of the descendants of Jacob, who had brought the Proto-Canaanite/Proto-Phoenician alphabet with them into Egypt and had carried into their own dialect (an earlier version of Proto-Hebrew) as a spoken and written language throughout their 400 year sojourn as slaves.

The reason that determining interpretation based on the pictorial form of ancient Hebrew, leads to misunderstanding, is that pictographic Hebrew when collected into complete words, was never intended to be

understood according to each individual pictogram within the whole, whereas, for example, the hieroglyphs of Egypt (not remotely similar to paleo Hebrew) are.

The meaning of words resulting from an alphabet is not determined by individual characters within words but by the collected characters, their root words and meanings. Therefore, seeking to use individual characters and their pictorial meanings to interpret Hebrew Scripture, which is a language based on an alphabet, often leads to grave error.

Even in their pictorial form the characters of a whole word are collected to convey a convergent meaning. Therefore, to single out each pictogram in order to glean a so called ‘deeper meaning’ is to misinterpret the meaning. This type of interpretation is often entered into by people who lack knowledge of the Hebrew language, its meaning and grammar, people who seek ‘Deeper Knowledge’ or ‘Deeper Revelation’ which is in fact more closely connected to the gnostic and higher learning esoteric heresy of the early Gentile Church than it is to authentic Hebrew spirituality. These kinds of heresies are spoken against by Rav Shaul (Paul) Hashaliach (the sent one), and are of significant danger to the hearts and minds of *Messiah* followers.

As is always the case, if a method other than the interpretation of the plain meaning of the text produces an interpretation that contradicts the plain meaning, that interpretation is error!

Dear *Messiah* followers, do not be led astray by ear tickling nonsense. We are of the sound mind of *Yeshua* our King, we are not conspiracy theorists, secretly knowledgeable or superior to the Word. To the contrary, we speak the Word plainly and clearly for all to hear and thus

afford others the opportunity to understand and receive salvation through *Yeshua* and reconciliation to God.

For goodness sake, at least take the time to learn a full Hebrew phrase or sentence before you go making doctrines out of ox heads and crosses!

The ancient Scriptural texts we have today, written in both Proto/Paleo-Hebrew, Post Exilic Hebrew/Aramaic and Ancient Greek are fully reliable.

They are not fully reliable on the basis that human scribes are fully reliable but because the Creator of the universe is fully reliable and ultimately responsible for the revelation, impartation, and transmission of Scripture.

Do not be fooled by those who promote teachings using theories that have no factual basis.

Likewise, do not entertain teachers who claim that Scripture in its transmitted languages can’t be relied upon “because humans wrote it,” or because some “undiscovered, more accurate version (a full Paleo-Hebrew *Torah*) exists.”

Those who make the aforementioned claims only serve to seed confusion, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. Have nothing to do with them.

Being pedantic concerning alphabet preference is unnecessary when it comes to the transmission and communication of Scripture. YHVH is the Creator of alphabets. The *Mashiach* (*Messiah*) is the Word Who establishes all language, spoken and written. During the first century while *Yeshua* taught in the Roman occupied land of Judea, both Hebrew and Greek were considered kosher languages for writing *Torah* Scrolls. This is evidenced in the manuscripts of *Qumran* (Dead sea Scrolls), and in the quotes from *Torah* presented in New Testament Scripture (texts dating approximately between 40 and 110 CE).

Yeshua may well have quoted Scripture from both the Hebrew and Greek language versions of *Torah* Scrolls (and sometimes an Aramaic translation) depending on the mix of Jews present listening to Him on any given occasion. Evidence suggests that Jews of first century Judea and surrounding areas spoke Hebrew, Greek, and at least three dialects of Post-Exilic Aramaic.

Don’t be beguiled by arrogant self-promoting people who claim a unique knowledge of Scripture that only initiates of their teachings have access to. The redemptive revealed message of God is available to all. It’s no secret.

God can be trusted, so trust Him for the inerrancy of Scripture.



Modern Israel *Part 7—Confronting Replacement Theology*

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

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

‘Replacement theology’ is not a bible course you will find on the curriculum of any orthodox Christian Bible College. Its sentiments however are interwoven into the fabric of Bible doctrine throughout Christendom. Replacement theology is a term used to describe the thought within Church circles that the Church has replaced the nation and people of Israel as God’s only covenant partner.

Has the Church Replaced Israel?

A Brief Summary of Church History

From the sunset of the apostolic age at the end of the first century—after the departures of the great leading Jewish apostles Peter, Paul, James, John, and many others—the Jewish influence on the Church of Jesus Christ began to wane. Jerusalem had been the ‘Christian’ capital of the world, although disciples were first called such at Antioch. It was to Jerusalem that Paul and others would submit regarding missionary reporting and matters of doctrine (Acts). After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70, and further in 135 in the Bar Kokhba revolt, the centralised Jewish (Messianic) leadership and influence over the universal Church was lost. For the second and third centuries the Church would go through a period of persecution, with many Christians martyred for their faith. This purified the Church into a powerful body of believers which may have constituted as many as ten percent of the population of the Roman empire by the time Constantine became emperor in AD 313.

As the Church developed into a worldwide institution, organised with bishops and patriarchs leading the Churches in different cities, the centralised capital of Christendom became Rome. The Emperor Constantine set up another Roman capital in Constantinople (Istanbul today), and a Church patriarchal system of leadership was developed there which would eventually rival the Christian leadership in Rome. This split created the Eastern Orthodox Church (of the Eastern Roman Empire). Today’s church denominations like the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Russian Orthodox Church are the offshoots from it.

The Church of Rome, leading the Christians of the Western Roman Empire, would become the Roman Catholic Church, led by the papal system of popes. In a further split in the sixteenth century,



| Photo: Unsplash

“What right does any nation have to give or take land from another nation? Who is it that has that right, brother?”

Martin Luther, dissatisfied with the Roman leadership and doctrine, helped to bring about the reformation from which we have the many Protestant churches of today. By this time in the sixteenth century the Church now had three main schisms: The Roman Catholic Church; The Eastern Orthodox Church; and the Protestant Church.²

Replacement Theology’s Ugly Outcome

Lacking Jewish interpretation in Church doctrine, and without the centralisation of Jerusalem, a disconnect occurred. Although the inspired Scriptures forming the Canon of the Bible had been established early in Christendom, some of the key actors in that Canon would have very little influence in bringing a balanced and native Israelite interpretation to it. It was from this Canon that Church doctrines were formed. The result was that eventually most Roman Catholic and Protestant interpreters dismissed Israel and the Jewish people as those who had now been supplanted by the Church.

Luther the great reformer, who brought so much blessing into the Church declaring that a man is justified by faith in Christ alone had a few faults. Regarding Jewry he wrote in his pamphlet *On the Jews and Their Lies*: “First, set fire to their synagogues or schools; second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. This will bring home to them the fact that they are not masters in our country; third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings be taken from

them; fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach on pain of loss of life and limb; fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews...”³

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis would use Luther’s teaching to justify their own evil actions against the Jews. Luther could not have foreseen the incredible damage that such a leaflet would bring to the twentieth century. Replacement theology, although perhaps unknown by name to many a Christian, is a spiritual force hidden in the hearts of many who do not appreciate that it is an extension of antisemitism. Replacement theology may have plenty of love for the world and the Church, but it has none for the Jew. A well-known New Zealand healing evangelist who worked powerful miracles in the name of Jesus, Weston Carryer, said to me that the problem is that there is a spirit of antisemitism in the Church. But most would not appreciate that. That spirit must be renounced and uprooted from its resting place. Then the veil will be lifted from off the Church to see Israel as God himself sees Israel.

Replacement Theology is a Delegitimisation of Israel

Even after the birth of the State of Israel, some mainline denominations were still holding to their Replacement Theology. When clear proof was seen that God had not finished with the people of Israel—with the establishment of their modern state—how could one who believes in the sovereignty of God, deny the fact that he had allowed the birth of

Israel to take place? Paul declared, “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands” (Acts 17:26 NIV). If God had finished with Israel, why would he allow her to regain statehood after two thousand years, and in the very place from which they had been cast out? This means that modern Israel is not a mistake and that it has been ordained by Almighty God.

I once had a conversation with a clergyman of a prominent denomination. We struck up a rapport with each other and discussed things pertaining to the Church. At some point in the conversation, I declared my support for Israel. He said, “I stand with the Palestinians”. He went on to ask, “What right did the British have to give Palestine to the Jews?”

He was referring to the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, which was the official document from the British government endorsing the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It was this endorsement which became the cornerstone of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine in 1922. The Mandate was accepted by all 53 members of the League at the time as a binding document in international law and authorised Great Britain as the ‘caretaker’ to see that the Jewish National Home was established in Palestine.

I answered my colleague “What right does any nation have to give or take land from another nation? Who is it that has that right, brother?” He was speechless. He knew as a minister, that only God has that right, and it just so happens that God has spoken very clearly in his Word about whose land it is. The Palestinians are precious and loved by God. But when it comes to land sovereignty: being loved by God does not give you the right to demand something which belongs to somebody else. The truth is that the land of Israel belongs to Israel. Any Bible scholar who is honest would have to admit this or cast his Bible aside and say, “I no longer believe the whole bible is the inspired word of God”. Israel, like its *Messiah*, has become a stone that makes some stumble, and a rock by which others stand.

“On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.” Zechariah 12:3

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“Hineni: Here I Am”

■ Benjamin Philip

Director | Hineni Soup Kitchen

My name is Benjamin Philip. I grew up in the Netherlands as a child of Holocaust survivors. During my career as an entrepreneur, I also developed a desire for a deeper purpose in life. As a result, I moved to Israel, where I became involved in Biblical studies and in Hineni Jerusalem, a non-profit organisation focused on social concerns and on Biblical principles and values for greater morality, justice, and peace.

Over the years, Hineni also became a place where Jews and Bible-believing Christians meet and work together in acts of kindness. Because of this, I would like to share some of my thoughts about today's world—a world where Jews and Bible-believing Christians who support Israel are being accused of supporting genocide, ethnic cleansing, child murder, and more. It has even gone so far that discussions about Israel dominate politics, tear apart communities and relationships, cause strife at universities, and create separation between close friends and family members. Society fails to differentiate between lies and truth, morality and immorality, justice and injustice—even when undeniable facts prove that many of these hateful accusations are completely false.

How is it that those who support Israel have become such an ‘oppressed’ minority in our own societies? As a practising Jew, I look for answers in God's word and in the prophecies of our prophets. They tell us that the time before the final redemption may mirror Biblical days—like birth pains—when God hardens the hearts of the nations, as He did with Pharaoh. In this way, God will again show His signs, so all will know He is the Lord, and the nations will face judgement for what they have done to the Jewish people.

The number of prophecies describing the nations conspiring against Israel is overwhelming. It is clear that the nations today conspire against Israel through the United Nations and by supporting organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

But this conspiracy against Israel will affect the whole world—just as Habakkuk foretold, describing a world marked by plunder and violence, repeatedly using the

word *hamas*. We should recall that God Himself used this word to describe the corrupt world of Noah, which He destroyed. Habakkuk warned of violence, strife, and conflict; a world where the law is paralysed, justice does not prevail, and the wicked surround the righteous so that justice is twisted and wrongdoing allowed.

He spoke of nations that would not believe even when warned; of a ruthless, impetuous people who sweep across the earth to seize homes not their own—a feared and dreaded people who make strength their god. Habakkuk describes those who come with violence (*hamas*), mocking kings and scoffing at rulers. His words echo today's world, including parts of Europe now facing large waves of Muslim immigrants who often live by their own laws, some seeking to Islamise their surroundings through violence (*hamas*) and pro-Hamas protests. Many governments, out of fear, may yield to this pressure and align themselves in hostility toward Israel.

However, while our world is being filled with *hamas*, God will also set apart people for a greater calling, preventing their hearts from being hardened against Israel like the nations. These people, who witness and refuse to join the hostility toward Israel, will often be rejected by their own societies. They will not follow the majority of their nation nor the teachings of their mainstream churches. As a result, they become a target because they choose to support Israel, and society treats them as one with Israel.

These difficult times give each of us the chance to show our loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God chose Abraham for his faith, values, and moral responsibility—and even he was tested. When God called, Abraham replied, “Hineni—here I am.” We should remember this when facing challenges with colleagues, church members, friends, or family. This is why it is vital to gather with other Bible-believing Christians who make similar choices and face similar pressures. Organisations such as Christians for Israel will continue to provide opportunities for believers to meet and receive guidance and Biblical insight into the events unfolding around us.

At Hineni, we have for years brought together hundreds of survivors of terror who meet, support, and

strengthen one another through shared experiences and Biblical guidance. Many Bible-believing Christians who volunteer at Hineni feel a sense of relief when they are here because they can speak freely about Israel and God without fear of hateful reactions. Instead, they meet people who think and feel the same way about their relationship with God and Israel, allowing them to strengthen and comfort one another.

Engaging with Jews also allows Christians to see that far more unites them than divides them. Their differences are not about right or wrong, but part of God's plan: Jews are to live by the Torah as a priestly nation for the Messianic age, while Christians are called to be the righteous among the nations whom God will bring to His holy mountain (Isaiah 56:7). We cannot become one another, but we must stand together, knowing that God will test us all.

Even Abraham faced great challenges, including Sodom and Gomorrah—cities full of robbery, immorality, and injustice. Yet he asked God to spare them, and God agreed if ten righteous people could be found. Today, I believe Jews and Bible-believing Christians together can form a symbolic ‘ten’ to find favour in God's eyes, hoping He may hasten redemption and ease humanity's suffering. This is rooted in our shared commitment to morality, justice, and acts of kindness—light in times of darkness.

I have seen many Jews and Christians whose lives were transformed after visiting Israel—their faith and confidence strengthened forever. I therefore encourage everyone, especially the young, to visit Israel: to witness the truth, experience the Biblical land, walk in the footsteps of our ancestors, connect with the Jewish people, and join a growing global movement preparing for the Messianic era—to be on the right side of history.

“For many peoples will come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)

Why wait? Say now: Hineni—here I am, ready to go and serve. We at Hineni would welcome you with great pleasure. Shalom from Jerusalem.

ANNUAL SUMMER Book Sale

Due to popular demand, we are repeating our Annual Summer Book Sale. Don't miss out! This offer is only available until 31 March 2026.

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“I Have Called You By Name”

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

The Bible highlights three groups who receive God's special care: orphans, widows, and strangers. Among Holocaust survivors in Ukraine, many were orphaned during the *Shoah* and are now widowed. Since the 2022 war, many have also become 'strangers,' fleeing the east to the Lviv region, which our staff visited in the fall.

Lviv... Lwow... Lemberg. A great city, a strange mix of Russian and Ukrainian, of Polish, Jewish and Soviet history, European architecture, and Austrian coffee house culture, when Lemberg was the northeastern outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Where are the Holocaust Survivors?

We learn that only about a dozen Holocaust survivors remain in the entire region. How can that be? Before the war, 100,000 Jews lived in Lviv—then part of Poland—and another 50,000 refugees arrived after the German invasion. I'm still trying to grasp the full picture. The devastation of the Holocaust here is unmistakable, and Olga Lidovskaya, who runs the small Jewish museum at the Hesed social welfare center, helps me understand more.

The Soviet occupation of Polish western Ukraine after the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939 brought imprisonment and re-education camps for the city's entire leadership. When Germany invaded two years later, those prisoners were summarily executed. Little was done to save lives in this politically suspect, newly annexed region: no factories to evacuate for the war effort, no *evakuatsia* for Jewish workers, and no remote villages to hide in.

“The young men were drafted into the Red Army, but at the next opportunity they went home again—except for the Jews, who knew what was waiting for them,” explains Olga. “After what the city had gone through at the hands of the Soviet leadership, people were not afraid of the Germans. Shortly after the occupation of the city, the Jews were forced to remove the bodies of inmates murdered by the Soviet leadership from the prisons. These images were then used to incite the population against the Jews.”

By early July 1941, when the Wehrmacht had not even advanced into most of Ukraine, 6,000 Jews had already been murdered in Lviv—by local residents. A ghetto followed in November 1941, then the murder of thousands of Jews—Yanovska within the city, or Belzec, until early 1943.

After 1945, eastern Poland became western Ukraine, and over a million Poles were deported. Jewish life in other Ukrainian cities persisted in the thousands, but Lviv had only 800 registered Jews—just 200 of them local.

Krystina? Or Natasha?

Natasha welcomes us with the utmost friendliness and leads us into her antiquated apartment. She smiles with great joy at her guests, the flowers, and the thoughtful gifts. She radiates such kindness and lightheartedness that one must assume life has always been kind to her.

“I only have photos from after the war, when I was already four,” says Natasha. “I had such eyes... here, look. I love this old photo.” When the photo was taken, Natasha was called Krystina. That was the name she was given when she was admitted to the orphanage, she tells us. Natasha is the name her adoptive parents gave her. But before that, what was before?

“I don't know,” Natasha says, hard to believe. “I only found out about all this much later, in first grade! People



Natasha never learned her real name. Her parents were murdered in the Holocaust after she was born. | Photos: C4I

told me I was Jewish. Back then, people didn't talk about nationality. I was friends with a blonde Ukrainian girl. Her mother told me what I know. I was born in 1941. My parents were both Jewish, that's what this woman told me. My dad must have been a Polish Jew, a professor. Shortly after I was born, my parents must have been murdered, and I ended up in an orphanage. When I was four, I was adopted by a Russian-Tatar couple.” Natasha survived the war relatively unscathed in the orphanage.

Natasha has been searching her whole life. She didn't dare ask her adoptive mother. Such topics were taboo in society. But later, she searched every archive she could think of with her son-in-law—laboriously and unsuccessfully.

“What is my original name? I have no idea. I don't even know my surname. I don't know what my parents' names were. Can you imagine going through life like that? Not knowing who you are?”

My gaze falls on the card in my hand, handwritten by Doris for the survivors, with the scripture from *Isaiah 43*: “I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Alexey

The drive to Alexey's place takes two hours from the regional capital of Lviv further west to near the Polish border; the Carpathian Mountains form a beautiful silhouette in the distance. The last stretch of road to the village of Vola Yakubova near Drohobych is just a dirt road. Once a week, a mobile corner shop drives through the village and supplies the residents. Here, at the opposite end of Ukraine, Alexey and his wife Anya found refuge when their hometown of Kharkiv was attacked by Russian missiles.

“If I have to cry, just ignore it,” Alexey advises us right at the start. “All the windows in our house in Kharkiv were broken during the very first attack.”

Then the Germans Came

His story begins in 1939 in a small Russian village across the border—without his grandparents. They were murdered in 1918 when the Ukrainian Haidamaks carried out a massacre of Jews in the wake of World War I. Father Abraham and his four siblings grew up as orphans. Alexey was barely born when his father went to the front.

“I can remember most of it clearly,” says Alexey. “First came the Romanians, then the Hungarians, then the Czechs, and then the Germans.” From then on, at the latest, he lived in constant danger. “I spent most of my time with my grandmother. My mother had to dig trenches. It was war, after all; she was hardly ever at home. When there were raids, Grandma hid me under



Alexey's life is a series of misfortunes. He is overwhelmed by the fact that this visit is so different from what he expected.

her skirt. I had to sit in the basement for a year when it got too dangerous. I got very sick.”

But how did they survive? Did no one betray them? Was a ghetto set up in the village? “How should I know, I was four years old when the war ended. There were Jews everywhere. When they hanged Yasha—was he a Jew? I have no idea, but it's quite possible. They were rampaging everywhere.” Alexey is fighting back tears the whole time.

“That's where I learned German as a little boy, from the Germans. When we fled to Austria two years ago, I understood a lot. And now you're here. Just ask, I'll tell you everything. I've been waiting for you for 80 years.”

Grown Up At 12

At 12, Alexey's childhood was over—he was sent to the Donbass to work in the mines.

“What else could I do?” Alexey exclaims. “I had to learn somewhere. My parents? I only saw them during the holidays. That's it. I won't say any more.”

Our contact had warned us not to ask about the children. When Alexey recites a poem he wrote himself—a touching declaration of love from a father to his daughter—we understand that he is talking about his own daughter, whom he buried at the age of 18. His son was already dead when he was born—he had the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

Inside, I cry out to God, the God who vindicates widows, orphans, and bereaved parents. Alexey pauses repeatedly, looking at us in amazement. Then he says, “I didn't expect a visit like this! I thought some officials would come and check how I live. But this encounter with you... Stay a little longer. Would you like some coffee? I've been waiting for you for 80 years!”

When I hand him the heart-shaped waffle from my mother, Alexey is deeply moved. “She prays for us Jews? Tell her to pray that we will see each other again, please!”

Alexey laughs with joy when I hand him the hand-knitted socks from Germany. And when we wrap his wife in her new shawl.

“Please, leave me your number,” Alexey asks. “When are you coming back? As soon as possible? Really?”

Alexey has another dream: “I want to go to Israel. For one reason only: I would go to the Wailing Wall to cry and pray for my whole family.”

Kindly join us in supporting the many Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in Ukraine.
Will you help? Any amount helps.

Finding Rest in the Lord

■ Rev Henk Poot
Christians for Israel Netherlands

I recently saw a report on how the hostages had found peace in the tunnels of Hamas. Some of them literally found light in the darkness. Peace in the word of God and prayer.

But there is also another side. Last spring I met someone whose daughter was murdered at the Nova festival. After a week, they found her body. I didn't dare ask him if he had found peace. But I do know he still goes to pray with one of his friends in the synagogue, early in the morning and late in the evening.

Some of the most difficult words of Jesus, I find, are the words to his followers in *Luke 21:16-18*: “They will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me...But not a hair of your head will perish!”

What a paradox! Rest in the Lord is found not in the absence of darkness, conflict and suffering, but in the presence of God. *Psalm 41:12* says: “You set me in Your Presence for ever.”

Whatever my situation, I know that the eyes of the Lord are upon me.

In *Genesis* we read that God creates order out of chaos, brings light into being. And then on the last day, the sixth day, God creates man: Adam and Eve, male and female. He breathes His breath into them and tells them what to do. They are not to rule over what is good and evil, but as God's children they are to listen to His words and to rule over the earth. The sixth day, the day after, perhaps Adam said to Eve, “Now let's get to work and see what we have to do”, and then God said “No, today you will sit down. Today is the *Sabbath* and today you will marvel at everything I did and made when you were not yet here.”

This is the core of the gospel. Paul echoes this in *Romans 5* (and he knows what he is talking about): I find reconciliation and life with God, not because I found Him, but because He seeks and finds me.

One of the things I learned from my Jewish friends—and it took me some effort at first—was not to ask God for anything on the *Sabbath*. It is an exercise in trust. We may stand in His mercy, in what He pronounces over us.

This also applies when it comes to finding peace in my faith. I don't know about you, but my faith, the faith I can give to God, is not at all certain. And then there are those beautiful words of Paul in *Romans 3:22*: “The righteousness from God comes through the faith of Jesus Christ to all that believe.”

Every morning, in my prayers, I go to the source of living water and ask for His faith and His devotion, His wisdom and patience and joy and mercy and peace, in the hope that through His faith I will sanctify the name of God today.

The Hebrew word for rest is *Menucha*. It is somewhat reminiscent of the word *Shalom*. It means that things are whole, that everything is in its place.

In the first place, for Israel, this means that the diaspora, the *Galuth*, is a place of unrest. In the diaspora, there is always the danger of premeditated antisemitism, the head of the snake, but also the danger of losing one's identity as children of God, the scorpion.

Israel will ultimately only find rest in the land that God has given them. The nation of Israel does not belong in the diaspora; it is an abnormality.

But the land is not only a place where Israel can build its own existence, it is also a spiritual place and a place of hope. It is not called the navel of the earth for nothing. This is where the origin of life on earth lies. God says: “This is the place of my throne and the place of my feet, here I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.” (*Ezekiel 43:7*)

It will be in the days of His return that the King of Israel will appear and that Israel will find peace. It is the time when God Himself will return to Zion.

“And the Lord will be king over all the earth, and on that day His name will be the only one.” (*Zechariah 14:9*).

You could say that God's return to Jerusalem and the building of the new temple means that God Himself will also come to rest. When the first temple was built, we read in *Psalm 132*: “Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place”.

The Bible teaches us that the Lion of Judah is waiting in heaven for the hour when He will assume the Kingship and descend on the Mount of Olives. We may encourage and strengthen Israel in this expectation.

But this is not just an expectation of things to come.

The Jews speak not only of the coming of the *Messiah* but also of the times of the *Messiah*, and I think they are right. The coming of the *Messiah* is happening now—it is in progress. In Christianity, we are accustomed to speaking about the time when the *Messiah* was here and about the great day when He will return, and in between we talk about Jesus dwelling in us in a personal relationship.

But the *Messiah* is here, He is present in history, in God's way with His people. As the Son of God always

was. He is not only the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega—but He is also the entire alphabet. It is His task to gather the children of Israel; it is He who must make Jerusalem a praise on earth. God has placed everything in His Son's hands.

There is strife in the times of the *Messiah*; some speak about birth pangs. The spiritual evils hiding behind the nations are not willing to relinquish their power and give it into the hands of the King of Israel. They lift Jerusalem like a heavy stone: “On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,” declares the Lord. “I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, “The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.” (*Zechariah 12:3-5*)

The times of the *Messiah* are not only times of conflict, they are also times of great miracles. And indeed, wonderful things are happening in Israel today. Not only did some of the hostages find God in the tunnels of Hamas, but during the war, unity and wholeness grew in the whole nation. One day, the access roads to Jerusalem were closed because so many people went to the Western Wall to pray. It was a fulfillment of God's promise: “I will pour out the spirit of grace and prayer upon my people” (*Zechariah 12:10*).

These are times when God gives us the opportunity to stand in the gap for His people. In a sense, the times of the *Messiah* are a time of purification and separation, of fall and resurrection—for the world, for Israel and for Christians.

It is about whether we confess that God's Word and His Spirit give truth. It is about whether we embrace our destiny to sanctify God and the land, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Whether we choose life over death.

Now is the time for Christians to confess Christ in His fullness: Son of God and Son of Israel; conceived by the Spirit and circumcised on the eighth day. The One who created all things bore our sins, rose from the dead, intercedes before God, and lives in us—Jesus the Jew.

And it will be the Son of God—a Jew—who will come on the clouds of heaven and every knee in heaven and on earth will bow before Him.

Reverend Henk Poot is a Dutch theologian, writer and Bible teacher. He has written many books and articles about the relationship between the church and Israel, including Son of the Blessed (2015).

The Lord's Prayer

By Kees de Vreugd

Threefold Praise

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

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

The Lord's Prayer as we know it ends with a threefold praise, just as it began with three petitions for the revelation of God's power. If we compare it with the version in *Luke 11*, we see that this praise is missing in Luke. In a number of ancient and important Greek manuscripts, it does not appear in Matthew either. But it does appear in the *Didache* (the 'teaching of the apostles'), an important early Christian writing from the beginning of the second century AD.

Jewish prayers always end with a praise. This was no different in the first communities of (mainly) Jews who were followers of Jesus.

The praise focuses on God. The Lord's Prayer has started with a prayer for the coming of His kingdom. This is confirmed once again in the closing praise. “Yours is the kingdom.” God is king. He reigns. The psalms are full of this. His reign manifests itself on earth as it does in heaven. But when we say this, we acknowledge His kingship and submit to it.

“And the power.” When Jesus stands before the high priest on the night He is betrayed, He testifies: “You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power” (*Matthew 26:64*). In the language of that time, this is also a description of God Himself on His heavenly throne.

“And the glory.” God is surrounded by splendour and majesty. His glory is His divine radiance that illuminates everything. In the Bible, it is the description of His presence, particularly in the tabernacle and later the temple, but also when God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai and in the desert. That glory looks like a consuming fire (*Exodus 24:17*). In post-biblical Jewish sources, the *Shekinah*, God's presence (literally meaning dwelling), is mentioned in this context.

The three praises thus describe God in all His divine power and majesty, at all levels, so to speak—in heaven and on earth. God is king, He reigns with power, and His glory fills the whole earth (*Isaiah 6*).

Recommended Viewing

Zionism at the Ends of the Earth:

A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity

An excerpt from the Foreword by Dame Lesley Max

Dr Sheree Trotter is an historian whose doctoral thesis provides much of the source for this book. I am pleased that her findings will become more widely known, because they provide an accessible pathway to understanding of one of the most currently fraught and misunderstood issues in the world—Zionism. In particular, this book illuminates what Zionism meant both to Jews and to their Christian fellow citizens, in a small nation at the end of the world—New Zealand—at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

The sub-title of the book—‘A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity’—reveals the focus which, for me, triggers recognition, page after page.

In particular, the author has given an indication of what is the most poignant element of the collected papers, namely, the letters from Jews in Europe in the 1930s, desperate to find refuge in New Zealand for themselves and their elderly parents from the overwhelming Nazi threat. Those politely worded letters, some on ‘onion-skin’ airmail paper, often beginning ‘*Sehr geehrter Rabbiner*’ (Most esteemed Rabbi), drove Rabbi Astor to unceasing effort on behalf of these trapped people. But very few were accepted.

Dr Trotter reports: “E.D. Good, Comptroller of Customs, commented that ‘Non-Jewish applicants are regarded as a more suitable type of immigrant.’” So only 1100 in all were saved from extermination in Europe. The children of those few rescued individuals are my contemporaries. I can’t imagine much better or more productive citizens.

A distinguishing feature of this book, written by a scholar who is Christian and of Maori heritage, and which deals with Jewish religious, historic and communal matters, is that it is so accurate in its analysis. This perceptiveness and understanding of nuance as well as the broader picture is, in my experience, rare among writers on New Zealand Jewish topics.

One of the most striking elements in this book for me was the evidence of fascination with and sympathy for the return of Jews to the land of Israel among political, civic and academic leaders in New Zealand and the consequent sympathetic coverage in newspapers, both metropolitan and provincial.

Another is the crucial role New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser played, such as at the United Nations in April 1945.

In my view, ‘Zionism at the Ends of the Earth: A Story of Humanitarianism and Identity’ is a valuable and unique addition to the scholarship on a subject that is both historical and profoundly relevant today.

Gentiles Grafted In, Jews Broken Off

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

In this article we continue our study of *Romans 11:12-27*, in which the image of the olive tree is central.

Paul states that parts of Israel—“*some of the branches*”—were “*broken off*” (*Romans 11:17*), expelled from communion with their God, from their land and from their original destiny. Paul, however, is not so much concerned about Israel’s behaviour or misbehaviour, but rather about the relationship of the believers from among the Gentile nations with the Jewish people. He targets the arrogance that has characterised the attitude of non-Jews toward Israel over the millennia.

“If some of the branches were broken off, and you, who are a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them, and became in this way a partaker with them of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, (remember:) You do not bear the root, but the root bears you. Now you will say, the branches were broken off, in order for me to be grafted in.” (Romans 11:17-19)

Klaus Wengst sees this illustration as portraying the oldest “evidence of the substitution theory or, to be more exact: of the theory of a partial substitution. The Israel that ignores Jesus is seen as rejected, and people from the Gentile nations have taken their place.” In addition, he observes: “In contrast to *verses 1 and 11*, where Paul vehemently refutes the thesis of Israel’s rejection and fall, at this point, he goes relatively deeply into this line of thought”:

■ **“Now you will say, the branches were broken off, in order for me to be grafted in.”**

“Correct! They were broken off because of their unbelief. You, however, stand by faith.” (Romans 11:20a)

However, Paul goes on to warn the Gentile who believes in Messiah:

“Be not proud, but fear: For, if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. Consider therefore the goodness as well as the (cutting) severity of God: (cutting) severity against those who fell. Towards you divine goodness, as far as you remain with His goodness. Otherwise you also shall be cut off.” (Romans 11:20b-22)

“Like the stroke of the axe cutting down this proud branch, the future passive *ekkopese* (you will be cut off) abruptly closes the sentence” observes Swiss theologian Frédéric Godet.



Grove of Arbequina olive trees near the Syrian border fence, in the southern Golan Heights. | Photo: Flash90

In order to show the dangers of Christian arrogance, Paul engages in a fictive conversation. “*Be not proud*” (*verse 20*), he warns his Gentile Christian reader, and: “*Do not boast against the natural branches*” (*verse 18*).

“*You do not bear the root, but the root carries you*” (*verse 18*), the Apostle explains his warnings and reminds his readers that a non-Jewish follower of Jesus is a “wild olive branch” that “was grafted in among them” and thus, became a ‘*synkoinonos*’, literally, a ‘co-partaker’, “*of the root and fatness of the olive tree*” (*verse 17*).

Theologian Norbert Baumert is quite convincing in his argument that this participation is not just about the common power source. “At least, their origin is different!” Rather: “The grafted

The Jewish teacher finds the answer to this question by turning the Hebrew root ‘*barakh*’, from which the “shall be blessed” (*lehibarekh*) stems, into another root form. He concludes that Abraham’s blessing applies also to the Gentiles, who allow themselves to be ‘grafted in’ (*lehabhrikh*) to the olive tree Israel—as for example the Moabite Ruth or also the Ammonite Naamah. According to the teachings of the Old Testament, this was impossible (*Deuteronomy 23:4-7*). But God not only made these two women members of the people of Israel, he even used them be the ancestors of its most important princes.

The crucial precondition for this, however, was that these non-Jews allowed themselves to be broken off from their original wild olive tree and to be grafted into the noble olive tree of Israel. “Your people is my people, your God is my God!” the Moabite great grandmother of King David professed as she committed herself to her embittered mother-in-law, for better or for worse: “*Where you die, will I die, there I will also be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also if anything but death separate us*” (*Ruth 1:16-17*).

As a matter of fact, as people who have come to faith in Messiah Yeshua from the Gentile nations, we need to be cut out of our natural national and cultural context and be grafted into the olive tree—Israel.

Godet explains this passage of Romans as follows: “*The Gentiles become God’s people through the Jews, not the Jews through the mediation of the Gentiles. Be that as it may! Like it or not, the fact remains regardless!*”

in branches became companions of those noble branches that remained in the olive tree in producing the fatness of the olive! Only in the fruit drips the fat!” This interpretation would also line up with the overall intention of the entire chapter, in which Paul shows how the interaction of the Gentile nations with Israel produces ‘fruit’.

Perhaps Paul, who might have been known as ‘Rabbi Sha’ul of Tarsus’ at this point in his life, uses this imagery and play on words to refer to one of the oldest prophecies of God. In the Babylonian Talmud (*Tractate Yebamoth 63a*), Rabbi Ele’azar asks the question: “*What does the text ‘in you all families of the earth shall be blessed’ mean?*” (*Genesis 12:3*).

Hanukkah in the New Testament

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

On the 25th of Kislev in the year 3622 since creation (according to the Jewish calendar), the Maccabees liberated the temple, which had been desecrated by the Greek rulers for three and a half years. The temple was cleansed and worship was restored.

Hanukkah is the only Jewish festival mentioned in the New Testament but not in the Old Testament, although the Old Testament does refer to the historical circumstances.

Jesus was in the temple on the Feast of Dedication and it was winter (*John 10:22*). That is *Hanukkah*.

Jesus emphasises the importance of the temple by being there at the feast. For He Himself calls the Temple the “House of My Father”. The Temple is the place where God allows Himself to be encountered. When Jesus, the Son of Man, is in the temple, in the House of the Father, at this feast, it creates expectations. The tension is palpable: “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, the promised King, tell us plainly.” Jesus does not tell them plainly—not yet. The Church and Israel have had to endure this tension ever since the cross and resurrection. Jesus’ works bear witness to Him. But there is still one last thing, for which the cross and resurrection are the guarantee in the New Testament. We read about that in *Daniel 7* and Jesus mentions it in *Matthew 24*: “The Son of Man is coming with the clouds of heaven”.



Lighting the candles on the last eve of *Hanukkah*. | Photo: Shutterstock

Daniel sees a vision that sends shivers down his spine. What does he see? Four living creatures, four different ‘animals’, emerge from the sea. The sea is a symbol of the world of nations. Each animal represents one of the great powers of that time.

The fourth animal manifests itself in all its cruelty and horror; it looks terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws. And it has its sights set on the ‘saints of the Most High’, on Israel.

Daniel asks for details about the vision. What is the beast? For he had seen that it had ten horns, three fell, and another replaced them. And that horn spoke. Or rather, it roared and bellowed blasphemous language. It wages war against Israel and prevails—initially. For

there is a limit to its power. Until! Until the Ancient of Days comes. God Himself sets limits on the powers.

It concerns the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in the first half of the second century BC, who wanted to turn his empire into a single people, culture and religion, under one king, himself, and who claimed divine honour for himself. What did he do? He banned the *Torah*, circumcision and temple service. And he placed a statue of the Greek supreme god Zeus—perhaps also associated with Baal—in the temple. Daniel calls this the “*abomination that causes desolation*” that was placed in the temple (*Daniel 11*). He instituted a monthly feast day in honour of himself. He changed the times, broke the covenant and stopped the sacrificial service.

The Maccabees rebelled against this king. They ultimately succeeded in driving out his occupying army, liberating Jerusalem and the temple, and restoring temple service. All in all, this took three and a half years—in terms of Daniel’s vision:

time, times and half a time. That is why Jesus is in the temple that winter. And now we feel the tension. Because that last part of Daniel’s vision and explanation: the eternal kingship for Israel, that is still not there. Yes, the Maccabees ruled for about 150 years. But their power was also corrupted. It was still not the promised eternal kingdom of the *Messiah*. Then there is Jesus. His deeds testify to Him. Everyone agrees on that. He Himself testifies that He is the Son of Man from heavenly glory: “I and the Father are one.” Then it comes down to faith. To recognition. It becomes very exciting. The Son of Man has come, and will come, as He said, with the clouds of heaven.

We have been living in that excitement since the cross and the resurrection. Will 2026 be the year of His coming? *Hanukkah* begins on Sunday evening, 14 December, and lasts until Monday, 22 December 2025.

The Bible Speaks

He Will Reign Over the House of Jacob Forever

“And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.’”

Luke 1:30-33



Perhaps the words of Gabriel that deserve special attention are these: “The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David.” It was not Herod— a descendant of Esau— who was on the throne at that moment, but Jesus, a descendant of Jacob, of Israel. And He will be King over Jacob for all eternity. During Christmas, few take time to reflect on the truth that salvation is from the Jews, yet this is no small or incidental detail. Let us pray for the soon return of Jesus to Jerusalem, where He will take up His throne in the city of David and reign over all the earth.



Doughnuts (*sofganiot*) on sale for *Hanukkah* at the Mahaneh Yehudah Market in Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

Dealmaker? Peacemaker?: Trump and the Middle East—Part 2

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

In part one, we learned about Donald Trump and his political comeback and how he practised his legendary dealmaking in the Middle East. We concluded by briefly assessing his interactions with regional players, particularly the Houthis of Yemen and HTS, who are currently governing war-torn Syria. We continue the regional assessment.

Iran

Its nuclear programme is a real worry, and while negotiation has been the understandably chosen method of dealing with it, Iran appears to be running down the clock until Trump is out of office. The Islamic Republic insists that its nuclear programme is only for peaceful purposes. But why does a nation that has ten percent of the world's oil reserves need a nuclear energy programme? And if it is only for peaceful purposes, why do they insist on enriching uranium themselves rather than accepting enriched uranium from a second country?

So, Trump, the master negotiator, chose to negotiate with Iran directly. It did not work. So after many years of military planning, Israel launched the Twelve-Day War in June 2025 against Iran's nuclear facilities. America launched a single and stunningly successful raid on Iran's underground nuclear facilities, which along with Israel's set back the Iranian nuclear programme by years.

Trump consistently supported Israel diplomatically and economically. The grand achievement was the Abraham Peace Accords of 2020 between Israel & four Arab countries: Bahrain, the UAE, Sudan, and Morocco.

Qatar

This underpopulated Gulf Sheikdom is drowning in cash, and they are using it to buy influence. It has been estimated that they have invested USD 100 billion in the US alone. They also built and paid for a US military base, plus they are now one of the top contributors to Trump's 'Invest in the USA' campaign.

But Qatar is heavily influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the oldest and largest Islamist group in the world. Qatar heavily supports the Palestinian branch of the MB, namely Hamas. They are home to the media outlet *Al Jazeera*, which has a broad reach. The network has been accused of being political



Large billboard in Tel Aviv reading "Mr. President, Finish the job!", June 2025. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

activists disguised as journalists, advocating Islamism in their Arabic language broadcasts while conveying a moderate stance in English.

General Arab Reactions

Some say that America is walking into the Middle East trap. Others, such as Hamas, claim de facto recognition by America because of direct negotiations over the Israeli hostages. Others say he is unintentionally aiding and abetting Islamists. The Houthis see Trump's direct deal with them as a green light to continued attacks on Israel. Nirvana Mahmoud said, "Trump may go down in history as the American President who

The grand achievement was the Abraham Peace Accords of 2020 between Israel and four Arab countries: Bahrain, the UAE, Sudan, and Morocco. By all measures, this was a masterful achievement. Until now, Trump has been an energetic warrior against antisemitism and backs his words with action.

All this was part of his first term. In the second term, there were question marks over Trump's fidelity to the Jewish state. But his bombing of Iran's underground nuclear facilities, brokering an Israel-Hamas—Hamas international ceasefire, and the freeing of the last of the twenty living hostages have earned for Trump Israel's undying gratitude.

Understanding Trump

Despite the perception that Trump is erratic and unpredictable, his transparency and consistency say otherwise. Here are a few points:

1. Trump hates war and killing: In his first term, no new wars were started. He is eager to get ceasefires in Ukraine and the Middle East so the killing will stop. That is also why he chose to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear programme, hoping to come up with a settlement. He does not want to be needlessly drawn into a war in the Middle East. Yet he is not afraid to show strength and restraint, as he did when bombing Iran—a strong but limited military action.

2. Trump the deal-maker: He would rather talk than fight, that's why he dealt directly with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un, Russian president Vladimir Putin, and Iran's foreign minister. His motto: "I have no enemies," meaning he will talk to anyone.

3. America First Agenda: A fierce opponent of globalism, Donald Trump will do what he believes is best for America. Every nation has vital interests that are not totally identical, even with friends like the US and Israel; hence, the different approaches to Iran. For example, Israel wanted to take military action against Iran long before the Twelve-Day War; Trump wanted to negotiate first, even though there was pessimism about its effectiveness.

4. Goodwill: Trump may have strong opinions and a sharp tongue, but he has publicly said he wants to see Gaza (minus Hamas), Iran (minus nuclear weapons), and Syria prosper.

Trump's American-First MAGA base does not want to get involved in Middle East affairs, wars, and nation-building. While it is important to adhere to a robust domestic agenda that meets the legitimate concerns of the electorate, Trump also understands that the unsolvable conflict must be deftly managed with statecraft of the highest order. Otherwise, the entire world could be staring at the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

If you are a praying person, then pray for international leadership (1 Timothy 2:1-4) to be uncorrupted, wise, discerning, and courageous, bringing stability and deterrence in the Lord's land and region.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

¹ How Arabs see Trump's 'separate peace' and deals with Islamists by Khaled Abu Toameh, *Israel Today*.

² https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/how-arabs-see-trumps-separate-peace-and-deals-with-islamists/?mc_cid=cb59a2cd29&mc_eid=d1b6bb8fbb

Short News

Ties Gaza-flotilla and Hamas



The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) state that the confiscated documents from the Gaza-based terrorist organisation Hamas show that Hamas was involved in organising and financing the 'Gaza-flotilla'. This flotilla wanted to break through the Israeli Gaza blockade, but was intercepted early October by the Israeli navy. Members of Hamas's foreign arm, the PCPA are said to have organised multiple flotilla actions in recent years and also own dozens of boats participating in these actions. | Photo: Flash90

Lawsuit Dismissed

An American judge has ruled against the families of about one hundred victims of the 7 October 2023 massacre. They filed a lawsuit against UNRWA, the UN organisation for Palestinians, and demanded one billion US dollars compensation. The judge dismissed the lawsuit because the organisation enjoys impunity. The families announced an appeal.

Ancient Winepress Uncovered

Archaeologists have uncovered Israel's oldest known winepress during groundwork for a new road in the Jezreel Valley. The 5,000-year-old winepress was carved into the rock with a sloping treading floor and collection vat. It was found along with other Canaanite artifacts at Tel Megiddo and offers new insight into daily life and worship in the region before the arrival of the Israelites in the region.

Tax Break for New Immigrants

Israel is considering a 2026 tax reform that would grant new immigrants and returning residents a two-year exemption from income tax. The proposal of the Finance Ministry is aimed at encouraging *Aliyah* and helping newcomers integrate more easily into Israeli society and the economy. Finance Minister Bezalel Sofer described the measure as "a major and meaningful component of our national effort to encourage *Aliyah*."

Ancient Synagogue Unearthed in Golan Heights

JNS

An archaeological excavation in the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve in Israel's Golan Heights has uncovered the remains of a synagogue that once served a thriving Jewish community more than 1,500 years ago.

The discovery, reported by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the University of Haifa in October, sheds new light on ancient Jewish settlement in the region, which the Jewish state recaptured from Syria during the Six-Day War in June 1967.

The dig, led by Haifa University's Zinman Institute of Archaeology in cooperation with the Department of Land of Israel Studies at Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, found decorated basalt fragments, lintels and column sections confirming the existence of the house of worship.

Mechael Osband, who led the dig for the Zinman Institute, told Hebrew media that although over 150 architectural fragments from the Byzantine period had previously been documented in the Golan Heights, the synagogue's exact location remained unknown.



Israelis hike the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve, Central Golan Heights. | Photo: Flash90

"The breakthrough came when we noticed an unusual concentration of column sections and decorated stones along a path in an abandoned (Syrian) village," Osband said, adding that "once we started to dig, we uncovered dozens of architectural elements and, to our surprise, the southern wall of the building with three openings facing Jerusalem."

The uncovered structure, which is approximately 13 metres wide and at least 17 metres long, was built in the

basilica style that characterised ancient synagogues, with rows of columns and built-in benches.

According to Dror Ben-Yosef, an archaeologist with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, the discovery is a "powerful testament to Jewish settlement in the Golan more than 1,500 years ago, during a period when Jewish life flourished in the region."

The archaeologist noted that about 25 other ancient synagogues have been found across the Golan Heights, serving not only as houses of prayer but also as centers of learning and community life.

The excavation, which is also supported by the Hecht Foundation and the Yehudiya Forest Nature Reserve staff, will continue in hopes of eventually restoring and making the site accessible to visitors.

In December 2024, a synagogue was inaugurated in Kibbutz Merom Golan—the first house of worship in the traditionally secular northern village.

"The establishment of the synagogue in Merom Golan came following a request from Doron Bogodovsky, a member of the *kibbutz*, who heard from members of a nearby *kibbutz*, Sde Nehemia, about a synagogue we had built there," stated Rabbi Shlomo Raanan, chairman of the Ayelet HaShachar organisation, which is behind the establishment of many synagogues in *kibbutzim* and remote communities throughout Israel.

The building's inauguration, which came after residents were displaced for over a year due to the war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, was held with the enthusiastic participation of *kibbutz* members, returning residents, local politicians from the region, and security forces during the eight-day holiday of *Hanukkah*, marking a significant moment of renewal for the community.



Aerial view of the Byzantine synagogue at the Yehudiya Nature Reserve. | Photo: Dr Mechael Osband



Architectural pieces from the Byzantine synagogue. | Photo: Dr Mechael Osband

“Always in God’s Hands”

Released Hostages Talk About Their Faith in Captivity

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

How does one’s faith survive in the darkest depths of despair? Even more remarkable is the question of how someone can find faith while being held captive and chained in a tunnel 50 metres below ground. Former Israeli hostages share extraordinary testimonies of faith and resilience reminiscent of the experiences of Biblical heroes such as King David, Daniel, Esther and Paul.

For the Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas in Gaza, there were many reasons to hope that a higher power was watching over them as they endured unimaginable hunger, beatings, abuse, physical and mental torture, interrogations, sexual assault and humiliation. They were stripped of all their freedoms, but amid these incredible atrocities, there was something their captors could not take away from them, even though they restricted it or tried to prevent it—their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When they began to share their individual experiences after their release, there was a common ‘thread of faith’ that ran through many of their stories.

Bar Kupershtein (23)—Always in the Hands of the Creator

Released hostage Bar Kupershtein survived more than two years in cramped, dark tunnels with little food and regular beatings by clinging to his faith and believing that he was ‘always in God’s hands’. Bar was working as a security manager at the Nova Festival on 7 October 2023, helping the injured as a paramedic until the very end, when he was abducted and taken to Gaza. On 13 October 2025, he was released as part of a ceasefire along with 19 other hostages in exchange for around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Kupershtein reported that he was held with five other prisoners in a very small tunnel room. They supported each other, even after being beaten. The hostages learned Arabic but resisted attempts to convert them to Islam; every Friday evening they secretly recited the *Shabbat* blessings.

One of the worst moments was when a guard demanded that the hostages decide which of them should be killed—a threat he did not carry out. Bar prayed at the time, “I am in your hands, God.” He later learned that his mother had said the same sentence to a Hamas terrorist who had contacted her by telephone while her son was being held captive. She said: “My son is not in your hands,

he is in God’s hands, and you are in God’s hands too,” she had replied to his threats. It became the family motto.

After his release, Bar presented Defence Minister Israel Katz with a bracelet bearing the Hebrew phrase: “Always in the hands of the Creator.”

Omer Shem Tov (23)—A Hanukkah Miracle in the Tunnel

Omer was held captive in the tunnels of Gaza for 505 days. He recalls a miraculous moment when a small bottle of grape juice he had brought with him and used for *Kiddush*, the *Shabbat* blessing, never ran out nor spoiled. He compared it to the *Hanukkah* miracle, when the oil that was meant to last for one day lasted for eight days. “This is just one of many stories that showed me how good God is, of how He was there with me.” Back in Israel, he said in an interview, “During my captivity, I felt every prayer you said for me, and even in the darkness, I had light.”

Eli Sharabi (53)—“The Power of Faith Is Amazing”

Eli was held captive in Gaza for 491 days. Although he had never been religious, his imprisonment led him to pray. “I am not a religious person, but from the first day of my abduction I recited the ‘*Shema Yisrael*’ every morning—something I had never said before in my life. The power of faith is incredible. There is something watching over you.”

The *Shema* is one of the holiest prayers in Judaism and appears in the *Fifth Book of Moses*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.”

Keith Siegel (65)—“I Found Faith in the Tunnel”

Siegel also began to pray during his 482 days in captivity. He began to say blessings over the little food he received, something he had never done before, and recited the *Shema* prayer for the first time. “Even in the tunnels, I found ways to feel His presence,” he said, thanking God repeatedly for his survival. After his release, his daughter asked him what he would like for their first *Shabbat* meal together. His answer surprised her: “Do you know what I want most? A *kippah* and a *Kiddush* cup.”

Agam Berger (20)—“I Chose the Path of Faith”

The female observation officers (guardians) of the Israeli Defence Forces, Agam Berger (482 days in captivity) and Liri Albag (477 days in captivity), kept their faith during their captivity. They had been abducted from their guard post at Kibbutz Nahal Oz, together with five other young women, and taken to Gaza. While being held in a terrorist’s house, they learned the Hebrew date from Israeli television. This helped them calculate the Jewish holidays so that they could observe them. They were given hardly anything to eat, yet they fasted on *Yom Kippur* and *Tisha b’Av*.

Agam Berger made a profound spiritual decision during her time in Gaza when she also began to observe *Shabbat*. After her release, she wrote on a blackboard: “I chose the path of faith, and on the path of faith I returned.”

She asked her captors for a *siddur* (Jewish prayer book) during her captivity. One of them laughed at her request. But she prayed to God, and two days later he returned with a *siddur* he had found in Khan Yunis.



Former hostage Agam Berger visits Jerusalem’s Old City with family, a month after her release. | Photo: Flash90

“Your God loves you,” he said to her. The prayer book had probably been left behind by a soldier in the Israeli Defence Forces.

Berger said that observing the *Sabbath* gave her strength: “I simply refused to light a fire on the Sabbath.”

Rom Braslavski (21)—“I was Asked to Convert to Islam”

Rom Braslavski had been held captive by Palestinian Islamic *Jihad* alone and had been taken to the tunnels just two days before his release. His captors told him that if he converted to Islam, he would receive more food.

He refused and was severely abused, tortured and starved. He kept telling himself: “I am a Jew, I am strong, I will not break down.”

Rom and other hostages found their Jewish faith during this difficult time, and it gave them the strength to survive.

Matan Angrest (21)—“Prayers Helped me Through Captivity”

Matan prayed three times a day using a prayer book he had requested from his captors and received from a senior Hamas official. He was moved from place to place. His conditions were very harsh and he suffered torture because he was a soldier.

Matan Zangauker (25)—“Psalms Became My Anchor”

Zangauker told his relatives that he had found a worn book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) underground and prayed from it every day. In a place with little air and almost no daylight, the steady rhythm of these verses became a routine, then an anchor.

Omer Wenkert (23)—Psalm 121 on the Day of His Release

Omer Wenkert was held captive for 505 days. On the day of his release, as he and the other hostages sat there handcuffed and blindfolded, they began to sing a verse from *Psalm 121*:

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

These hostages found God in the tunnels of the Gaza Strip. They are a great inspiration to the people of Israel, who must recover with them from the trauma of war and captivity.



Former hostage Bar Kupershtein and dozens of Jewish men lay *tefillin* at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, 31 October 2025. | Photo: Flash90

“I Realise I am Not Alone”—Rita (86)

Rita Savchuk is 86 years old and lives in Kiev. Widowed, childless, vulnerable—and she felt completely alone. Time and again we had to remind her that she did have family: a brother, sister-in-law, cousins, and their children in Israel. Thanks to Christians for Israel, much of her family had emigrated to Israel long before the war. But Rita stayed. When the large-scale war broke out in February 2022 and the bombing of Kiev began, we again helped Rita’s relatives to flee. Everyone who knew her begged her to finally make *Aliyah* and join them in Israel. Yet each time, Rita found a reason to stay in Ukraine.

A year and a half ago, we helped her gather all the necessary documents, just in case she would decide to leave. A year ago, we even accompanied her to a consular inspection at the embassy.

But even then, she didn’t dare take the step and had excuses not to go. Until a few weeks ago.

During one of the most intense rocket and drone attacks, a projectile struck the apartment next to Rita’s. The explosion, the panic... for the first time in a long time, she was truly terrified. The next morning, she called Natalia (our *Aliyah* worker) with a trembling voice and said, “Take me to the embassy. I want to apply for a visa.”

And now it has happened: the visa has been issued. Rita’s first words after hearing the news were:

“I realise I am not alone.”

Her family in Israel was overjoyed. They are eagerly awaiting her arrival, especially now that Hanukkah is approaching—the festival of light and hope.

The Situation’s Worsening Daily

The drone and missile attacks continue. Infrastructure is being severely damaged, while winter has set in. Concerns are growing and, to be honest, we are pessimistic about what lies ahead—although we sincerely hope we are wrong.

The dark clouds over Ukraine are getting darker.

But thanks to your support, we can continue to bring light—to people like Rita, who can now finally return safely to her family.

Thank you for standing by their side.

Nataliya, Aliyah Field worker
| C4I Ukraine

Flee from the land of the north and save yourself to Zion! See Zechariah 2: 6 & 7



Rita after receiving her visa for Israel.



The flat where Rita lived. | Photos: C4I



Natalia with Rita’s brother and his wife, who were evacuated from Kiev by C4I in the early days of the war.

Spreading Hope: Christmas Packages for Arab families

This winter, Arab pastor Saleem Shalash (pictured in the middle) and his congregation are once again spreading light and hope across Nazareth and the surrounding areas. As part of their outreach efforts, they are distributing food parcels to Arab families in need.

“Through these parcels, we aim to provide essential groceries to 500 families,” says Pastor Shalash. “But it’s about more than just food. It’s a message

of hope, love, and we also share the gospel.”

In Bethlehem, Rev Naim Khoury and his wife Elvira are also making a difference by distributing Christmas packages to impoverished families and elderly residents. Their outreach provides much-needed support during the holiday season, and your contributions are deeply appreciated.

| Photo: Home of Jesus the King Church



To support these efforts, please complete the donation coupon on the back page (select Arab Christians). Together, we can bring light.
Will you help? Any amount helps.

Bracing for Winter
Ukraine Food Parcel Campaign Begins

Donate a food parcel for poor Jewish families and elderly people.
Winter in Ukraine is approaching, and with it, the harsh challenges that come with the season. The effects of the war are felt everywhere. While we're doing our best not to dwell on the challenges that may come this winter, we're preparing for the worst. We're stockpiling essential supplies now to ensure we can keep helping when things become even more difficult. In the photograph, you see Alexander, who lives alone in the Ukrainian village of Stare, located in the province of Sumy, close to the war zone. The struggles he faces have taken a toll on his mental health. Alexander has little family; only his cousin helps him as much as she can. She helps with the tasks he can no longer manage—cooking, cleaning, laundry, and picking up his medications. But despite her dedication, life remains incredibly difficult. His pension is only about \$148 a month—barely enough to cover basic needs, let alone his medications. And with winter fast approaching, conditions are growing even more challenging. The freezing temperatures make this season particularly hard in Ukraine, and with the ongoing war, frequent power and gas outages have only exacerbated the situation. In the midst of all this uncertainty, the support we provide to Alexander is truly a lifeline. The food parcels

and regular home visits not only offer him relief, but also bring him a sense of hope. These acts remind him that there are people who care, who think of him, and who keep him in their prayers.



Alexander



Yelena with her food parcel. The food parcel features the logo of Christians for Israel and the text from Psalm 121:4: "Behold, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

- 2 kg pasta
- 1 kg grits
- 1 kg rice
- 1 kg bulgur
- 1 kg sugar
- 2 kg flour
- 500 gm oatmeal
- 1 can of peas
- 1 can of corn
- 1 litre cooking oil
- 1 can of fish
- 1 pack of coffee
- 1 box of tea
- 1 bar of chocolate

One \$26 parcel contains:

Will you join us in offering your help and prayers too for our work in Ukraine? Our goal for this winter: 50,000 parcels.

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL NEW ZEALAND

Form containing donation options, essential resources, and a table with columns QTY and PRICE. Includes checkboxes for various donation types and a list of resources with their prices.

Check out our website for a full list of essential resources. NB: Supporter Numbers located on address label of this newspaper. December 2025 | Israel & Christians Today

Thank you for supporting Christians for Israel. If you are donating via online banking for the first time, 'thank you!', please don't forget to put your name as the reference. If you receive the paper via a group or church and you are not on our database, please give us a call or email us so we can allocate a supporter number to you. It saves administration time if we have all the details and allocate your donation correctly. Note: Donation statements are generated annually at the end of the financial year. Christians for Israel NZ does not currently qualify for charitable status.

Form for completing donation details, including fields for Name, Address, Phone, Email, and Supporter Number. Includes checkboxes for Credit Card and Internet Banking.