

# ISRAEL

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CHRISTIANS FOR  
**ISRAEL**  
NEW ZEALAND

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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The site of the Nova Music Festival in the Re'im forest near the Israeli-Gaza border. | Photo: Yossi Aloni/Flash90

## Two Years On: Peace After 7 October?

Two years have passed since the horrors of 7 October 2023. In the early hours of that day, on which the Jewish people celebrated *Simchat Torah* (Rejoicing in the Law), Islamist *jihadi* extremists from Gaza invaded Israel, and brutally slaughtered all innocent people they could find, Jews and non-Jews. Over two hundred individuals, including babies and Holocaust survivors, were taken hostage into Hamas tunnels. It was the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. A turbulent period followed, creating deep social and political divisions within Israel, devastating much of Gaza, ending the 'peace process', and reshaping the Middle East. In the months that followed, Israel moved to defeat long-time enemies it held responsible for the 7 October attack. In a series of meticulously-executed military operations, it has all-but destroyed Hamas in Gaza, wiped out Hezbollah in Lebanon, removed the

threat of Iran and Russia in Syria, and destroyed Iran's nuclear weapons programme.

But the cost has been huge. Many of the hostages and Israeli soldiers were killed. Social divisions within Israel have deepened. Antisemitism has surged globally, and Israel's public image has suffered. Israel is universally accused of committing 'genocide'. An increasing number of states have withdrawn their support of Israel and even thought it appropriate to recognise a 'State of Palestine.' Pressure has grown on Israel to reach an agreement to end the conflict.

The latest development was the announcement at a ceremony in the White House on 29 September by US President Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu of a 20-point peace plan for Gaza.

Key aspects of this proposal involve the immediate

release of the remaining Israeli hostages, the disarming of Hamas, which will have no role in Gaza's future governance, gradual and total Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the introduction of regional Arab and international peacekeepers, reform the Palestinian Authority and facilitate reconstruction of Gaza. The plan is supported by a wide group of nations, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, and even Pakistan. The US will play a key role. Iran and Russia are being isolated. But, will it bring peace?

President Trump warned Hamas it would be 'obliterated' if it rejected the proposal. On 3 October, Hamas said it would release Israeli 'prisoners' if 'field conditions' allowed and was ready to negotiate the details. Talks were scheduled to begin in Egypt on 6 October 2025. But will Hamas accept the conditions? And how far will Israel, the US, and others go to secure peace?

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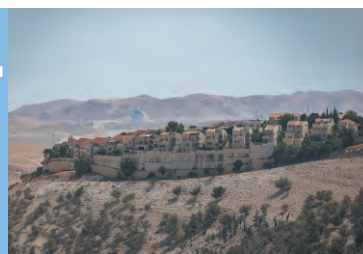
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## Colophon

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

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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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# The Trump Peace Plan Cannot End Islamist *jihad*

## ■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The peace plan announced on 29 September is the closest thing to a realistic peace plan we have seen in the last two years. It ushers a breath of hope in the midst of despondency. It is a masterful piece of diplomatic craftsmanship.

On its face, the proposal looks like a win-win for both Israel and the Palestinian people. All Israeli hostages will be released. Hamas will have no role in Gaza's future governance and will be disarmed. Israel will gradually withdraw from all of Gaza (except a buffer zone), and regional Arab and international forces will act as peacekeepers to ensure reform of the Palestinian Authority and facilitate reconstruction of Gaza.

Hamas has been cornered. If it agrees, the war 'will immediately end'. Hamas will lay down its arms and commit to deradicalisation and peaceful co-existence. But if Hamas refuses to agree or does not release all hostages, Israel will retain the full right to continue its current military campaign, the aim of which is to dismantle Hamas and ensure the release of the hostages. Either way, international peacekeepers are to begin operating in those parts of Gaza currently controlled by Israeli forces even as the war continues to remove Hamas from the remaining 30% it still dominates.

In order to create a 'New Gaza', a technocratic government will be set up under leadership of President Trump and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. An economic plan will be created to redevelop Gaza. Independent monitors will oversee the demilitarisation of Gaza. An



Protesters call for an end to the war and release of Gaza hostages outside the US Embassy. | Photo: Flash90

International Stabilisation Force (ISF) will train and provide support to vetted Palestinian police forces in consultation with Jordan and Egypt.

But while the plan looks good on paper, in the Middle East not all is as it seems.

Even if Hamas accepts, the war will of course not come to an end. It will be a ceasefire at best. That is because Israel is not fighting a war against Hamas, but against a death-cult ideology financed by hostile Islamic states like Iran and Qatar that has spread like a cancer around the globe. Organisations adhering to this death cult operate covertly not only in Gaza but also the Arab parts of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (the 'West Bank'), Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, as well as Iraq, Iran and Turkey. This Islamist *jihad* ideology does not think in terms of conventional warfare. It never accepts defeat.

As military analyst Andrew Fox has remarked, "Hamas has consistently employed a long-term strategy. Its

leadership knows that surviving to fight another day is itself a victory. After absorbing punishing losses, the group will be effectively conceding the battlefield to preserve its existence. By agreeing now, Hamas avoids total annihilation and secures the release of hundreds of its members from Israeli prisons. Any 'surrender' of arms and fighters will be nothing but theatre. A ceasefire means Hamas can regroup, reconstitute under the radar, even rebrand, and pivot to its next phase. Hamas will use the months and years after the end of hostilities to melt back into Gaza's social fabric and prepare for an insurgency or revival further down the line.... Do not be surprised if many fighters temporarily disappear into the population or slip into Egypt—patience is a virtue for the Muslim Brotherhood. By agreeing to this deal, Hamas does not embrace moderation; it has simply gained breathing space. This is a tactical pause, not a rejection of its ideological aim of '*jihad*' against Israel."

## Prayer Points

### Israel

- Pray for the release of all hostages still in captivity. Pray that those hostages who are still alive will survive until the moment of their release.
- Pray for deep inner healing for the people of Israel. Many carry heavy trauma, have lost someone in the war, or live in tension every day, waiting for loved ones to return safely from the front. Pray for restoration, supernatural peace, and God's comforting presence.
- From 22–24 September, the Jewish people celebrated *Rosh Hashanah*, the beginning of the Jewish New Year. Pray for peace, health, and for God's favor to be upon families and communities throughout the coming year.

### Israel and the Nations

- Pray that more and more people will recognise and reject the propaganda spread by Hamas about the war in Gaza. Time and again, falsehoods are presented as truth in the mainstream media, often echoing Hamas's narrative. Pray that lies will be

exposed, that Israel will not be continually vilified or unjustly accused, and that truth and clarity will break through the confusion.

- Although recent attacks from Israel and the United States have weakened Iran, the threat has not disappeared. The regime remains in power and continues to pursue Israel's destruction. Pray for Israel's protection against the demonic hatred and schemes rising from Iran, and ask that every plan of darkness would be exposed and defeated.

### Christians for Israel

- Pray for the affiliates of Christians for Israel International worldwide. Pray that the good news of Biblical prophecies being fulfilled and God's people coming home, will be heard all over the world.
- Give thanks for the work that Koen and Ira Carlier, together with their team do in Ukraine for the Jewish community. Pray that many people will receive help.

For daily Prayer Points, go to: [www.c4israel.org.nz](http://www.c4israel.org.nz)



# The Gaza Famine Lie

## ■ Jonathan Feldstein

Since 2004, I have lived in Israel, but Princeton is my legal US address from which I and my family file taxes, vote, and to which we get notices for jury duty. Princeton is in the New Jersey 12th district, represented by Congresswoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman. I receive her monthly updates about issues that she cares about, and how she's allocating federal dollars to projects in the district.

I used to think that Rep Watson-Coleman was just misguided. I have lobbied her office and written to her as well. Except for one staff member responding once, I have never heard back.

The ignorance which I used to attribute to her is clearly more than that. She's made it a point of not only walking out of or boycotting the Congressional address of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, but featuring that as a major policy issue.

Last year Congresswoman Watson-Coleman disseminated a brazen lie, misrepresenting the number of deaths in Gaza since the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack and massacre. The number she quoted was higher than even the Hamas-controlled 'Gaza Health Ministry' was brazen enough to claim. I addressed it then, writing it off as simple ignorance, and being sucked into the propaganda fraud that the terrorist organisation projects to the world. Of course, she ought to be intelligent enough to check facts before reporting them, and especially as a congresswoman.

But hey, what's several thousand dead Gazans among friends if we can make Israel look bad, and in doing so conflate the number of people who have died of natural causes, the thousands of terrorists killed on 7-8 October 2023, and the tens of thousands targeted and killed since then.

This week I received Watson-Coleman's latest update. Under the heading 'Famine in Gaza,' in 200+ words, the Congresswoman perpetuates numerous unproven allegations and outright lies. She should be ashamed.

She claims that "Gaza is a humanitarian disaster beyond measure." Does she forget humanitarian disasters and wars throughout Africa and Syria in the past two decades alone. Does she not remember famine so bad in Africa that the 1985 *Live Aid* global concert and \$245 million campaign which sought to alleviate that?

"Aid agencies have warned for over a year that a famine was coming, and now it's here." Really congresswoman? "Where's the famine?" is about as legitimate a question as "Where's the beef?" Aid agencies and the UN perpetuated these claims, even the idea that if something didn't change "14,000 babies would die"



Palestinians carry flour after aid arrives via Kerem Shalom crossing, Khan Yunis, 24 July 2025. | Photo: Flash90

immediately. That never happened. It's the worst lie because it's based on a fraud.

"The aid distribution system in Gaza is failing by design." Come on Congresswoman. Have you been there? Have you seen it? Do you know that the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation has provided more than 91 million meals since May 27 (for a population of 2.3 million)? That's about 1.5 million meals a day. Sounds to me like working by design. Or that Israel has renewed air drops of food and humanitarian supplies right into Gaza, hopefully into the hands of the Gazans and not their Hamas masters.

This Watson-Coleman lie really got me. "Aid trucks are stuck at the border..." Congresswoman, I hope you're not as unreliable in all your other work representing New Jersey's 12th as you are on this one. The only aid trucks "stuck at the border" were nearly 1000 such trucks, **on the Gaza side of the border**. Until embarrassed to do something this week, the UN was literally letting the aid rot in the sun.

On the Israeli side of the border, on one day alone this month, as many as 166 trucks entered Gaza, with 180 more scheduled. Even on the slowest days, as few as 29 truckloads are reported to have crossed into Gaza. Averaging the high and the low, that's 97 truckloads per day, or 2900 per month.

"Since May, over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces while trying to reach aid." It's a war and people are tragically dying, but how does she know Israeli forces killed 1,000 "trying to reach aid"? It sounds like she's repeating Hamas propaganda and spreading falsehoods. This should be investigated.

My Congresswoman claims that there is "continued ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people." Of course that's a baseless lie as well. As grave as the human

suffering is, and as tragic as the death of any one innocent civilian truly is, the population of Gaza in the context of a war to eliminate Hamas that's deeply embedded among the civilian population, and return 50 hostages who have been in captivity for over 600 days, has not been ethnically cleansed. There is no genocide. Even with the unproven Hamas death toll, there's been a similar increase in births. The variable is 100,000+ who have left Gaza, which all Gazans should be allowed to do for their own safety and well-being. Getting civilians out of a war zone happened in Ukraine, Syria, and between African nations at war. Why is it that only Gazans are prevented from such protection in neighbouring Arab countries?

The worst part of Watson-Coleman's 200+ word diatribe, is that not once does she mention the hostages. Not once does she mention Hamas, her patrons of 'truth.' Not once does she mention that Hamas has hijacked the distribution of aid throughout Gaza and is opposed to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's aid because it circumvents their control. Not once does she mention that if Hamas had not started this war, conducted the massacre, and kidnapped more than 250 people, there would be no war, no suffering, and no allegations of starvation, ethnic cleansing, or other fraudulent claims that she perpetrates.

The answer is as glaring as her lies. Because if you cannot blame suffering on the Jews, there's no news. As she notes in conclusion, we should not "have the privilege to look away." Indeed Congresswoman. Your lies are in the spotlight for all to see, and your credibility is nil.

*Jonathan Feldstein, president of the Genesis 123 Foundation and RunforZion.com, builds bridges between Jews and Christians. He hosts the 'Inspiration from Zion' podcast and edits the forthcoming book, Israel the Miracle. He and his family moved to Israel in 2004 and can be reached at FirstPersonIsrael@gmail.com.*

## Short News

### Mega Deal



Israel and Egypt signed an important gas agreement. It concerns the biggest export agreement in Israel's history. The value of the agreement is 35 billion US dollars. The gas is extracted from the Leviathan gas field, one of the world's largest deepwater gas fields near the Israeli coast, and then exported to Egypt.

It is expected that the deal will be operational next year and runs until 2040. | Photo: Flash 90

### Mental Health Crisis

The longer the war drags on, the more Israelis suffer from sleep disorders, fatigue, anxiety and restlessness. This is evident from a survey conducted among 1,100 Israeli. The Israeli attack on Iran in June has aggravated these health problems.

Half the population indicated that they are not getting enough sleep to function well. Twenty percent described its mental condition as moderate or poor and thirty percent needs mental support. In addition, 25 percent of the parents reported a deterioration in their children's behaviour.

### Antisemitism 'Normal'



Antisemitism in the UK appears to be increasingly 'normalised', according to a survey conducted on behalf of the main umbrella organisation of the local Jewish community. One of the researchers: "We are shocked by the increasingly normalisation of many more extreme, personal and at times life changing actions against individuals, purely and simply because they are Jewish." Antisemitism occurs mainly in the national health service, higher education and in the artistic sector. | Photo: Shutterstock.



# Qatar's Duplicity Exposed

■ Hussein Aboubakr Mansour  
Egyptian-American Analyst

The American-managed order built around the Israel-Palestine Conflict functioned with a single, overriding imperative: to ensure the continuity of the management game. The logic of this system was not to resolve conflicts but to maintain a sustainable equilibrium. For decades, it thrived on calibrated and controlled violence. Flare-ups in Gaza and skirmishes on the Lebanese border were less failures than mechanisms of self-regulation—contained ruptures that revalidated brokers, refreshed alliances, and allowed the choreography of crisis management to resume.

Within this order, Qatar built its foreign policy on the systematic cultivation of ambiguity. Lacking the military weight of its larger Gulf neighbours, it turned vulnerability into leverage by positioning itself as indispensable to all parties. By funding and hosting Islamist actors such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, it ensured it could not be bypassed when Washington, Jerusalem, or others needed a channel. By maintaining ties with Iran while hosting the most important US air base in the region, it made itself unavoidable in any conversation about Gulf security. Through *Al Jazeera*, it extended this indispensability into the world of media, narrative, and radicalism, amplifying Islamist, leftist, and anti-Western voices that could then only be countered through engagement with Doha. Through its deep investment in the fiefdoms that are the American universities, it also managed to be on the good side of the new papacy. For Washington, this duplicity was not a liability but a function of system maintenance. Qatar's contradictions were valuable to the State Department, the intelligence community, and much of the Beltway. Qatar has eager, all too eager, fans and cheerleaders in Crystal City, Foggy Bottom, and Langley. They allowed the US to outsource opposition management, keeping channels open to actors it could not formally recognize, while preserving the fiction of stability. As long as the United States required both Al-Udeid and a broker for Islamist opposition, Doha's position was assumed secure.

Thus, Qatar's rise was inseparable from the neoliberal order. It financialised politics through endowments to Western universities, investments in think tanks, and the purchase of visibility in sports and media. It outsourced security by inflating its small size through contradictions while taking on the outsourced tasks of opposition management and elite patronage for the West. Its influence rested on a narrative economy, with *Al Jazeera* functioning as both commodity and ideological export. The power Qatar amassed was, in a thoroughly neoliberal fashion, the power of the network. It was not concentrated in a single form—military or economic—but dispersed across transnational nodes and supply chains of influence. The very structure of this network allowed Doha to appear indispensable, embedding the logic of the regional order in its survival, and in doing so becoming an embodiment of liberal world management.

The recent Israeli strike in Doha cuts directly across that logic. It is the first time a major US ally has bombed another on territory so tightly bound to the American presence. However the details unfold, the



UK newspaper covers the day after Israel's strike on Hamas leaders in Qatar. | Photo: Shutterstock

fact of the strike itself demonstrates that the system of managed incoherence has reached a revision point. That President Trump almost certainly gave at least tacit approval reinforces a pattern already visible in his foreign policy: *impatience with the permanent management of contradictions, and a preference for outcomes over process, even at the cost of rupture.*

The strike may mark the revision of a system, exposing the contradictions on which Qatar's indispensability rested as increasingly unsustainable. Al-Udeid was meant to guarantee immunity, to shield Qatar from retaliation, and to ensure its ambiguity could continue without consequence. By striking in Doha, Israel has shown that even the presence of American military infrastructure can no longer protect Hamas leaders or the state that hosts them. What once made Qatar valuable—sheltering Islamists under the US umbrella—has now become its vulnerability.

For Washington, this marks a potential shift. The management model allowed the United States to extend influence at relatively low cost, deferring the risks of decisive action. A turn toward outcomes introduces uncertainty: allies may be forced into sharper choices, and the architecture that relied on Doha's duplicity may not be easily replaced. Yet the strike indicates that Washington is willing to accept those uncertainties. In effect, the United States is testing whether an order once sustained by contradiction can be preserved, or remade, through shock.

For Qatar, the implications are existential. Its ruling family built foreign policy on the belief that ambiguity would always be tolerated. That assumption has now been broken twice in the same year, first by Iran and now, much more drastically, by Israel. Even so, Iran's earlier strike on American targets was symbolic, absorbed into the long-standing cycle of hostility between Washington and Tehran, and could be spun by *Al Jazeera* for its Islamist and leftist audiences. Israel's action was categorically different: it tried to assassinate Qatar-protected Hamas leaders in Doha itself, puncturing Qatar's promise of sanctuary and exposing the contradiction on which its entire role in the system depended.

Doha's indispensability rested on two pillars: providing

sanctuary for Islamist actors and serving as mediator acceptable to both radicals and the West. Both have been compromised. Hamas leaders were struck in the heart of the capital, and Qatar was unable to protect them. It is no longer clear that Doha can convene negotiations without appearing vulnerable, or that Washington will shield it from retaliation.

This forces choices Qatar has long avoided. It can move decisively toward alignment with the United States and Israel, scaling back its sponsorship of Islamists and attempting to reinvent itself as a conventional Gulf partner, alienating the networks it has built through media and educational patronage. Or it can double down, presenting itself as the victim of external violation and clinging to its Islamist ties—a path that risks isolation and exposure. Neither preserves the delicate balance that previously defined its strategy.

The broader system is also exposed. For decades, Qatar's role and the irresolution of the Israel–Palestine conflict were treated as permanent fixtures. They appeared to serve everyone's interests: Doha gained leverage, the United States preserved channels, Islamists secured patronage, and Israel tolerated the arrangement so long as Hamas could be contained. 7 October shattered that premise. The scale of Hamas's crimes crossed a threshold Israel could not accept, sparking an international effort to restrain Jerusalem and preserve the system. Yet Washington ultimately backed Israel and, in doing so, revealed the limits of managed incoherence.

What seemed like a durable equilibrium was in fact a contingent design, sustainable only so long as contradictions remained manageable. Once they became intolerable—once Hamas's presence in Qatar was judged no longer useful—the arrangement collapsed. The same logic applies to the wider conflict. What has long been presented as insoluble but stable may, under new strategic preferences in Washington and Jerusalem, become subject to revision rather than endless maintenance. Under Trump, especially, the American role could be shifting from endless management to the pursuit of outcomes, even if those outcomes fracture the very system Washington once laboured to preserve.



# Trap Ahead in Egypt Talks?

**■ Yaakov Lappin**  
JNS

As Israeli and Hamas delegations head to Egypt to negotiate the details of the US-led plan to end the two-year war, Hamas faces a stark choice: accept a deal that would begin with the near-immediate release of all Israeli hostages and culminate in its eventual disarmament, or face the alternative—a renewed, full-scale Israeli military campaign aimed at forcibly removing it from power in Gaza.

Brig Gen (res) Yossi Kuperwasser, director of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS) and former head of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate's Analysis and Production Division, said that the first test of the plan will come in the context of the hostages.

"Is Hamas going to release all of them in the time frame decided upon, or not? I think that Hamas understands that if they are not going to deliver, the alternative is that Israel is going to get a green light from President Trump to finish the job, as he was describing it, and get Hamas out of power in Gaza by force. And this alternative is not very attractive for Hamas," he added.

Kuperwasser assessed that Hamas has the capability to locate and release all 48 remaining hostages—20 living and 28 bodies—within a few days. However, accepting the deal would amount to admitting that the 7 Oct. massacre was a catastrophic mistake for which it has paid a heavy price, he argued. "Giving up control of Gaza is a huge loss for Hamas, and the disarming of Hamas is a major setback," Kuperwasser noted.

The plan is performance-based, not timetable-based, said Kuperwasser. All of its clauses following the hostage release—including the establishment of a Palestinian technocratic government, the deployment of an International Stabilization Force (ISF), and a massive reconstruction and economic

programme for Gaza—are contingent on Hamas verifiably disarming.

Israel, he added, will in any case retain security control over the Gaza perimeter and the Philadelphi Corridor —separating Gaza from Egypt—to prevent the Strip from being rearmed. Kuperwasser said regional powers including Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt are exerting intense pressure on Hamas to accept the deal, both to 'save Hamas' from annihilation by the IDF and to advance their own interests with the United States.

Kuperwasser: "What worries the Qataris was that Israel was getting closer and closer to removing Hamas from power by force. The military move that Israel carried out was a major incentive for everybody to hurry up and convince Hamas to accept the deal. Continuing the attack on Gaza City would mean that many more buildings in Gaza City are going to be destroyed and the damage to the Palestinians and to the Palestinian infrastructure is going to be much more immense than it is already. And we have to remember, until now we did very limited damage to the areas at the heart of Gaza City. So, when they saw the buildings, the high-rise buildings in Gaza, falling apart, that clarified to them what's going to happen and why it's necessary to move fast and make Israel stop before everything turns into rubble."

Regarding Turkey, he added, Ankara has regional ambitions to become a hegemonic power in the Middle East, supported by a strong military and Qatar's financial backing. "They believe that this axis of the Muslim Brotherhood can gain more power. When Hamas is under pressure, it's not good for the axis of the Muslim Brotherhood, and that's why they try to save Hamas. They understand that, in order to save Hamas, they have to support the deal," said Kuperwasser.

"On top of that, both Qatar and Turkey are very close to the United States. They need American support, and the Turks are, of course, expecting to get the F-35 from the United States and other benefits. They are also suffering some sort of economic crisis, so they need American support. Trump is more than ready to help, provided the Turks supply something in return," he added.

Col (res) Moshe Elad, lecturer at Western Galilee College in Acre, warned that Hamas is likely setting a 'trap' for Israel and the United States, and that its apparent acceptance of the deal is a deceptive manoeuvre.

"It is clear that if Hamas is willing to release the hostages for only terrorists in return, it is in trouble. It has run out of 'ammunition,' and therefore I am doubtful this will work," Elad told JNS.

He pointed out that Hamas have already announced they do not agree to demilitarisation and the expulsion of its operatives, and that they want to participate in the future control of the Strip—three points out of 20 that are an explicit rejection of the agreement's clauses.

Elad elaborated that Hamas is trying to create the impression of flexibility while fundamentally refusing to concede on the issues that matter most: its weapons and its power. He argued that the terror group's goal is to draw Israel into a process that ends the war on Hamas's terms, allowing it to survive and rebuild, thereby claiming a historic victory. Elad cautioned that Israel and its allies should not fall for this ruse, as Hamas's ideology and long-term goals remain unchanged.

"It seems that President Trump has not yet internalised that in the Middle East, every agreement, every idea, and every negotiation has the character of a Turkish bazaar. What happened during the 48 hours from the time the plan was made public and until Hamas's 'agreement,' is that big words met a complex reality," he said.

## Short News

### Judea and Samaria



Eight American states come up with legislative proposals that oblige government agencies to call the Israeli territory occupied by Jordan from 1948 until 1967 (since then known as the West Bank), Judea and Samaria again. By calling this territory by its proper historic and Biblical name, the Jewish ties are emphasised, according to the initiators. | Photo: Shutterstock

### Tech Injection

The American technology giant NVIDIA plans to build an enormous technology centre in the North of Israel. The construction involves several billions. This will make the company the biggest employer in the high-tech sector of the country. This also strengthens the position of Israel as the leading technological centre in the region that is plagued by unrest. According to Dror Bin, director of Israel's Innovation Authority is this decision a clear sign of trust in the Israeli tech industry.

### Breakthrough

Israeli scientists have developed a remarkably accurate method to ascertain a person's age based on a small DNA sample. The tool is called MAGEnet and can predict the chronological age with an average error margin of only 1.36 years for persons under 50 years of age. In contrast to previous models that demand tens or hundreds of generic markers, MAGEnet only needs data from two specific areas in the genome.

### Nearly Bankrupt



The port of Eilat in the South of Israel, is struggling to survive. Since 7 October the port had to halt ninety percent of its activities. Because the Houthis attack ships in the Red Sea, only a few ships arrive to unload their cargo in Eilat. The port has asked the Israeli Government for help, as there is a short-term threat of closure. | Photo: Flash90

Facts Speak

## Humanitarian Aid to Gaza

Since the resumption of aid entry in May



| Source: COGAT (Coordinator of the Government Activities in the Territories). <https://govextra.gov.il/cogat/humanitarian-efforts/home/>



## Behind the Scenes

### ■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

The war in Gaza, or rather Israel's war on seven fronts, has captured global attention for two years now. Israel is in the spotlight. And the whole world is watching.

Everyone seems to have an opinion. In the past, I was a naval chaplain in the submarine service, and one of the things I learned is that there is much more going on behind the scenes in politics than people realise. We carried out missions unknown to the media. And I think that is still the case in politics.

In *Numbers 22*, we read that God's people, on their way to the Promised Land, arrive in the fields of Moab. We read about King Balak, the prophet Balaam and about God intervening and demanding that Balaam not curse Israel. We see how Balaam requires the

king of Moab to bring offerings as a prelude to the curse he is supposed to pronounce. But it does not happen; instead, Balaam blesses them, saying: "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed?" (*Numbers 23:8*). He speaks of Israel as a people who are unique and different among the nations, and at the end he sees a star heralding the great King of the Jews (*Numbers 24*).

### Promises

Meanwhile, Israel remains unaware of this. God intervenes on behalf of His people, and it happens behind the scenes. That is where the Lord decides the course of events! This remains true today. We know that there are great promises in the Bible. For example, in *Psalms 28*: "Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever." So when you read God's Word, it does give you a glimpse behind the scenes.



Illustration of a Hebrew Bible. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

**"Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever." *Psalms 28:9***

## Israel's Leaders Lulled by Hamas 'Stability' Myth Before 7 Oct.

### ■ Ryan Jones

Israel Today

**The 7 Oct. catastrophe was no surprise attack—it was the price of delusion, a 'conceptzia' that infected Israel's entire ruling class.**

It is now nearly two years since Hamas's genocidal assault on southern Israel, and the revelations keep piling up. Each one is more damning than the last. The latest: a Mossad position paper, published a mere two weeks before the slaughter of 7 Oct., confidently declared that Hamas "was not interested in a military confrontation with Israel."

Let that sink in. Just days before terrorists stormed across the border, burning, raping, and butchering, Israel's premier intelligence service, and one of the most revered and feared spy agencies the world, publicly assured the country that Hamas had been deterred and was seeking 'stability.'

The report, exposed by Israel's *Channel 12*, painted Hamas as cautious and defensive. Its military wing, the Mossad paper suggested, was merely on alert for targeted assassinations, not planning an assault of historic proportions. "It is clear that the Hamas leadership in Gaza is not interested in a military confrontation with Israel at the present time," it stated flatly.

How could such a conclusion have been drawn? Even then, Hamas was launching incendiary balloons into Israel. Gaza was boiling with preparations—training exercises, weapons smuggling, tunnel expansion.

And yet, in the halls of power in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the ruling class saw only what it wanted to see: relative calm.

This wasn't just an intelligence misfire. It was a systemic failure, rooted in what Israelis have come to call the 'conceptzia.'

The term dates back to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israel's leaders clung to the false assumption that Egypt and Syria would not dare attack. The *conceptzia* blinded them to reality, lulled the country into complacency, and left the IDF flat-footed on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Fifty years later, history repeated itself—only this time the enemy struck on *Simchat Torah*, the final day of the biblical *Sukkot* holiday.

What is most galling is how deep the rot went. Four months before the massacre, Mossad chief David Barnea reportedly urged then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to approve a programme of benefits for Gaza in exchange for 'long-term quiet.' The strategy was simple: buy off Hamas with Qatari cash, work permits, and economic incentives, and hope they stayed satisfied.

This was not unique to the Mossad. The entire political and military establishment—from prime ministers and defense ministers to generals and intelligence chiefs—subscribed to the same delusion. The 'management' of Hamas, rather than its defeat, became policy. The wolf at the door was treated as a partner to be pacified.

*Channel 12* journalist Omri Maniv rightly skewered the Mossad's attempt to disclaim responsibility. The agency



Israel paid dearly for preferring illusions over hard truths. And not for the first time. | Photo: Flash90

rushed to say it had no official mandate over Gaza assessments. Yet if that were so, why publish a detailed, confident position paper? "If you don't know what's going on there," Maniv asked, "why are you issuing such a document?" The answer is obvious: the *conceptzia* was all-encompassing. No branch of Israel's leadership escaped it.

This failure must not be downplayed as hindsight nitpicking. It is not about blaming one agency or one minister. It is about a political culture that prefers illusions over hard truths. Hamas did not 'hide' its intentions. It declared them daily. It trained openly. It dug its tunnels, amassed rockets, and broadcasted its genocidal ambitions. Israelis simply refused to believe that the worst could happen.

7 Oct. shattered that illusion. And yet,

the lesson has not fully sunk in. Even now, as some in Israel's political class consider temporary truces, international trusteeships, or 'reconstruction frameworks' for Gaza, one wonders: is the *conceptzia* reconstituting itself in real time?

The price of delusion is written in blood. The mothers and fathers slaughtered in their homes, the children burned alive, the hostages still languishing in tunnels—all are testimony to what happens when leaders fall captive to their own assumptions.

Israel cannot afford another *conceptzia*. Not in Gaza, not in Judea and Samaria, not against Hezbollah in the north, not with Iran on the horizon. The Jewish state must relearn a bitter truth: when an enemy swears to destroy you, believe him.



## “Never Lose Hope”

### Renkse Lankman

Christians for Israel Netherlands

**“Share our story, be our ambassador, because there is too little attention for the hostages.” This heartfelt plea comes from released Israeli hostage Omer Wenkert. Omer recently shared his story about his captivity in Gaza. A story filled with fear, pain, and sorrow, but also one of hope and faith.**

On the morning of 7 October 2023, Omer arrived at the Nova music festival with his best friend Kim. When the large-scale rocket attack from Gaza suddenly began, Omer and Kim flee in their car and decide to take cover in a bomb shelter along the side of the road. “At one point, we heard someone shout ‘Allah Akbar’ and a grenade was thrown inside. Then another and another. There were human body parts everywhere. Then the terrorists tried to set the shelter on fire. That’s when I knew: this is the end. I didn’t want my family to have to bury a burnt body, so I ran out of the shelter. I expected to be shot, but instead, I was handcuffed. I wet my pants from fear.”

### Rock Bottom

Within an hour, Omer was trapped in the tunnels of Gaza. “I said to myself: ‘Omer, this is your life now, there’s nothing you can do about being kidnapped. Your family is waiting for you at the end of this road.’ For the first fifty days, I was held captive with other hostages. After that, I was confined alone for 197 days. Yet I never felt alone, and this was really because of your prayers.” To keep himself sane, Omer decided to be grateful for everything he received, no matter how small. “I decided to look at what I did have and not at what I didn’t have. That’s when I started to feel stronger mentally, until May 2024. Negotiations between Israel and Hamas stalled during that period, and my guards took it out on me. They beat and kicked me every day. That’s when I reached the lowest point in my life. I thought the end was near.”

### Favourite Movie

Things began to change when Omer was brought together with three other hostages shortly afterwards. “We established a routine to remain human



Former hostage Omer Wenkert. | Photo: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90

in inhumane circumstances. For example, we had a ‘movie night’ every evening, where one of us had to talk about their favourite movie.”

### Better Days

In the final months before his release, Omer was barely fed and lost twenty kilograms. After 505 days, Omer was finally released and reunited with his parents, who had given up everything since 7 October to fight for their son’s

return. His mother shares: “I never lost hope. I believed that Omer would come back. So never lose your hope and faith, because better days will come.”

*Editor’s Note: In February 2024, we shared Omer’s story with our readers. His grandmother, Holocaust survivor Tzili Wenkert, made a heartfelt plea, urging people to pray for her grandson and all the hostages. “Prayers have power,” she insisted, a sentiment that has resonated with many. Today, as we share Omer’s story, we reflect on the power of prayer, the perseverance of the families, and the grace of the Almighty.*

## Emotional Return: First Nefesh B’Nefesh Flight Since 7 October 2023

### Menachem Wecker

JNS

It wasn’t lost on Ofir Sofer, the Israeli *Aliyah* and integration minister, how unusual it was for someone of his prominence to fly to another country solely to board a charter return flight full of new immigrants.

“Flights like this—a big group of *olim* that come in one day to Israel is a strong message that is conveyed to our people that is not just happening today. It’s happened since 7 October.” Sofer told JNS aboard the first Nefesh B’Nefesh charter flight since the terrorist attacks in southern Israel on 7 October 2023.

JNS spoke with the minister after he recited the evening prayer and as the El Al crew dimmed the lights and the plane flew over the ocean, Tel Aviv-bound. A sea of blue T-shirts, many customised with family names, filled the plane. 225 people made *Aliyah* on the flight—its 65th to date—that landed in Israel on 20 August.

The 45 families, 125 children, and 10 single immigrants ranged in age from nine months to 72 years. Before departing JFK, they sang *Hatikvah* under the watch of heavily armed Port Authority officers.

Despite rising Jew-hatred in the United States necessitating such guards at US

airports, Sofer said that the new immigrants were motivated to move to Israel rather than fleeing from North America. “I talked to a few families. They told me that they thought about *Aliyah*. I asked them when they decided. They decided in the last year, but they thought about it for eight years, decades,” he said. “7 Oct. pushed them to make the decision.”

“Our responsibility as the government of the State of Israel is to care that every Jew can be in any state in the world, especially with our allies,” Sofer said. “After that, I say that our home is in Israel. People who decided now to make *Aliyah* write the history of Israel with their feet.”

### “Abba, is it Safe?”

Dovid and Shoshana Tauber flew with their four children after five years near Philadelphia. Dovid, a medical school graduate from Israel, plans to work as a pediatrician. The flight also included five physicians, nurses, psychologists, and physical therapists, part of Nefesh’s push to bring medical professionals to Israel.

7 Oct. didn’t change the family’s plans, but it “surely does make the decision feel different,” Tauber said. “You don’t see people moving from a relatively safe area to a war zone, and yet here we are with 45 families making *Aliyah*.”

Tauber worried more about his



Rabbi Joshua Broide, wife Simone, and their children arrive in Israel on the first Nefesh B’Nefesh charter flight since 7 Oct., at Ben-Gurion Airport, 20 Aug 2025.

children’s education than their safety, though he found their fear of anti-Jewish sentiment in the US jarring. When he put an Israeli flag on his car on *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, (Israel’s Independence Day) his daughter said, “Abba, is it safe to do that?”

He looks forward to the ‘oneness’ in Israel, where he noted that buses wish a *Shabbat shalom* on Friday afternoon and billboards offer well wishes ahead of Jewish holidays. “That’s the next level,” he said. “Every step and breath we take in Eretz Yisrael is a breath of freedom and godliness.”

### Fulfilling a Dream

Elizabeth Snyder of New York, one of the single travelers, said she felt a lifelong connection to Israel. “The flight was exciting and emotional because everyone was coming here for the same reason,” she said.

“Today’s charter flight is more than symbolic—it’s an investment in Israel’s future,” said Tony Gelbart, Nefesh B’Nefesh co-founder. “These *olim* are fulfilling their dream of making Israel home, and we’re honored to help make it happen.”

*First published in JNS (abridged by editor).*



# Biblical, Historical and Comfort for Israel

## ■ Jordan Raphael

Christians for Israel Fiji

It has been some time since I last contributed an article to *Israel & Christians Today* on behalf of Christians for Israel Fiji. Since then, there has been a significant and heartening development in Fiji's relationship with Israel: Fiji has now established its Embassy in Jerusalem. To God alone be the praise and glory.

What began in 2010 as a dream deeply etched in the hearts of Christians for Israel Fiji—to see an Embassy established in the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish State of Israel, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem)—has now come to pass after 15 years of toil. Along the way there were speaking engagements with churches, prayers with families, groups and other denominations, and the 70th Anniversary March for Israel in Suva, Fiji, in 2018. I gratefully acknowledge the persistent Fijian brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone before us, who prayed and envisioned this day, and I praise God for their lives.

At the end of 2022, a new three-party coalition government was formed through democratic elections—an outcome in which we believe God moved mightily, working through the voice of the people and the power of the pen.

One of the non-negotiables agreed upon by the three political parties—the People's Alliance, the National Federation Party, and the Social Democratic Party—was the establishment of Fiji's Embassy not in Tel Aviv, but in *Yerushalayim*, the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish State of Israel.

After more than 12 months of maneuvering, the Fijian Coalition Government, through Cabinet, announced its decision to establish an Embassy in *Yerushalayim*, the capital of



PM Netanyahu congratulates PM Rabuka at the opening of Fiji's Embassy in Jerusalem. | Photo: C4I Fiji

the State of Israel—a bold and courageous move. From a biblical standpoint, this was only natural. We praise God for this move, and as Rev Willem Glashouwer often reminds us, when we witness a divine act, we see 'God in Action.'

A date was set, and on 17 September 2025, history was made. A government delegation, led by Fiji's Hon Prime Minister Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka—who previously served as a Fijian Military Officer, Senior Plans Officer on UNIFIL peacekeeping duties in Lebanon (1980–1981), and Commanding Officer with the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai Peninsula (1983–1985)—travelled to Israel, for this historic and moving occasion to officially establish the Fijian Embassy in *Yerushalayim*. PM Rabuka, who previously served as Prime Minister from 1987 to 1999, is now serving his second term in office. After 23 long years, we believe God resurrected PM Rabuka's political career, culminating in this historic decision. For Fiji and its Christian community, this

represents a significant achievement for both the government and the nation as a whole. The move also reflects Fiji's commitment to enhanced cooperation with Israel in climate resilience, agriculture, security, and technology.

In the news, we often hear of wars, rumours of wars, and even shootings in *Yerushalayim*, yet the Fijian Government was undeterred—not even a siren warning upon our arrival on 16 September 2025 delayed Fiji's plans.

The event was attended by the Hon Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, who also blessed the Embassy by placing a *Mezuzah* on the right side of its front entrance.

PM Netanyahu was also accompanied by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Moshe Saár, Deputy Personal Assistant Sharen Haskel, Israel's Ambassador to Fiji His Excellency Roi Rosenblit, Fiji's Honorary Consul to Israel Rafael Dayan, and members of Friends of Israel.

A historic event indeed. As Hon PM Netanyahu noted, Fiji's Embassy is

located near the walls of the ancient city where biblical prophets spoke and kings of Israel once ruled. Fiji is the seventh nation to recognise *Yerushalayim* as Israel's capital—a biblical truth fulfilled—and the number seven holds special significance in Jewish tradition.

A significant move by our Fijian government, one that reminds me of *Isaiah 40:1*: "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.

The timing was significant. We did not come to show our friendship during a time of celebration or dancing in the streets of *Yerushalayim*. Rather, we came to establish our Embassy while Israel was at war on several fronts, mourning the soldiers lost during the conflict in Gaza, and while 48 hostages were still held captive by Hamas terrorists.

That, in my view, reflects true friendship—not only in good times, but also in times of war, when Israel needed comfort and camaraderie.

I believe that now it's a completely different ball game. We need to ensure that our votes at the United Nations count in support of Israel.

Furthermore, there is a shift in perspective, for if your feet are in *Yerushalayim* (the centre of the earth—*Ezekiel 5:5*), the farthest piece of land from *Yerushalayim* is Fiji. This move, therefore, completes a full circle. Our Lord and Saviour *Yeshua* told His disciples to "spread the Good News of the Gospel from *Yerushalayim* to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*Acts 1:8*). Our beloved Fiji truly sits at the ends of the world.

As I see it, the establishment of Fiji's Embassy in the Holy City—the City of the Great King, *Yerushalayim*—directly connects the centre of the earth to its farthest ends.

## Standing for Israel in New Zealand

### ■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

There is a very small Jewish population—less than 10,000—living in the beautiful paradise of New Zealand, a mere blip in the modest 5 million population. The portion of Jews who are Israeli is smaller still. Although somewhat sheltered from the university occupations and the rabid riots seen in the northern hemisphere, antisemitism is rising. Once almost completely unseen, politely hidden at worst, antisemitism is now paraded down the streets behind various pro-Palestinian flags. A recent conversation with the chair of Ebenezer Operation Exodus revealed that—for the first time ever—they were in discussion with Jewish people in New Zealand, looking to assist them to make *Aliyah* to the safety of Israel.

A recent protest organised by Palestinian supporters in Auckland, New Zealand, attracted a crowd of approximately 12–14,000 people. Promotion in the media, along with several local incidents, brought caution and reservation from the normal opposition to this group—especially those supporting Israel. Two small but vocal groups of Israel supporters—and Hamas opponents—braved the crowds as they marched throughout central Auckland (New Zealand's largest city). Although this brave group numbered hundreds, and not thousands, they stood firm and demonstrated their opposition to the pending UN discussion over recognising the terrorist state of Palestine. It was observed, however, that for those who look to the heavens, a different message flew through the skies above the crowds. Much to the delight of the



few, but stirring great mirth from the crowds who were supporting the terrorist regime. That message was very simple: 'BRING THEM HOME NOW—free the hostages.' | Photo: Christians for Israel New Zealand





# Will Peace Finally Come?

## ■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

Welcome to another edition of *Israel and Christians Today*, thank you for joining us, and for supporting us, as we stand together for Israel!

As I pen this editorial—the third or fourth rewrite—there is huge tension. We have all become somewhat jaded by ‘false alarms’—possible peace talks that never brought peace. But right now, what certainly looks to be the most promising opportunity for a lasting ceasefire—and peace—is unfolding. In Israel, our friends are waiting in stomach-churning anticipation, in the hope of getting their loved ones back home.

**All this excitement, but gripping caution, causes extreme tension. So we must pray, more than ever.**

The list of nations who have formally supported President Trump’s proposal is interesting in itself. India has welcomed the plan, but some of the next on the list are somewhat surprising. French President Macron, not famous for rational and objective commentary on the Gaza/Israel situation, said “I expect Israel to engage resolutely on this basis. Hamas has no choice but to immediately release all hostages and follow this plan.” Russia has backed the plan, and China. Italy also, and even Pakistan. Even the

UK, arguably a prominent turncoat in recent times, and struggling with its own rising Islamic extremism, has supported the plan. Similarly struggling with growing ethnic/immigrant and extremist issues, the EU’s European Council has commended the plan. The German Foreign Minister also expressed great hope for the plan.

But then it gets even more interesting. In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Jordan, the UAE, Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt welcomed Trump’s ‘leadership and sincere efforts’ to end the war in Gaza.

As for the 20-point proposal itself, well, it had my attention from point 1, “Gaza will be a de-radicalised terror-free zone

that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.” Jump to point 4 “Within 72 hours of Israel publicly accepting this agreement, all hostages, alive and deceased, will be returned,” and you’ve pretty much summed up all Israel has been asking for, for nearly two years.

Unfortunately, we cannot tell how the negotiations will proceed. Hamas indicated before even agreeing to meet, that they would not accept any condition that saw the end of Hamas and its control over Gaza. At the same time, as

President Macron observed, “Hamas has no choice but to immediately release all hostages and follow this plan”. Given that so much of the upper echelons of Hamas has been destroyed, maybe a modicum of common sense and self-preservation may prevail?

All this excitement, but gripping caution, causes extreme tension. So we must pray, more than ever.

The most significant point, for me anyway, is the loudest and most tyrannical voices that you can’t hear. It seems those who march, yelling and screaming, demanding a ceasefire, now don’t know what to do. We wait for the various outspoken leaders of the anti-Israel movement in New Zealand to announce their support of a ceasefire deal.

So far? Nothing.

As New Zealanders, regardless of their political affiliations and leanings, congratulated our Minister of Foreign Affairs for making the right decision at the UN—not supporting a Palestinian State right now—we also saw other New Zealanders calling for blood. Mr Peters’ house has been targeted, at all hours of the day and night, by disgruntled campaigners. They have temporarily stopped calling for ‘death to the IDF’, long enough to demand New Zealand government intervention following the arrest of several NZ citizens... who defied specific instructions not to join the selfie-ship flotilla... but did... and

broke international law... and got arrested... and now want the NZ taxpayer to rescue them.

It appears Mr Peters feels about as sympathetic as most of us.

The seemingly relentless idiocy that we hear all around us, can become very tiresome. As we look through all the noise, it is also good to pause and remember how we got here. As this newspaper goes to print, we are engaging in various commemorations around New Zealand, remembering those who lost their lives on 7 October 2023—and those who have remained a hostage ever since. Please take a moment to support our Jewish cousins during this particularly difficult time, in the midst of the High Holy Days.

The past two months have been exhausting, but we see God’s hand at work. In just a few weeks, a group of New Zealanders will join Australian cousins for a Study and Solidarity Tour of Israel (there are still some places available if you’re keen!). We continue to stand with Israel, we continue to encourage and inspire our Christian brothers and sisters to look deeper into God’s word, to recognise His hand at work. If we can be of assistance to you, or a prayer group, special interest group at church etc, please feel free to make contact. We are here to help!

The end is in sight. And we know who wins! Thank you for your support.

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# Recognising Palestine as a State Undermines International Law

## ■ Prof Gregory Rose

Senior Fellow | thinc.

Many states have decided to recognise a State of Palestine. This decision undermines international law and established norms for defining statehood.

Unilateral recognition violates the Oslo Accords, a treaty that remains binding on both parties. The Accords defer determination of borders to final status negotiations and preclude actions that prejudice either party's rights in this regard. Disregarding the Accords for the sake of symbolic recognition sets a troubling precedent that treaties—as legally binding instruments—can be cast aside for political expediency. This risks undermining the rule of law and treaty obligations everywhere—a cornerstone of stable international relations.

Recognition does not confer statehood; in order to qualify as a state, and entity must satisfy the established criteria under international law. This is essential for maintaining stability and coherence within the international system. 'Palestine' fails to meet the established legal criteria for statehood under Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933). The four legal requirements are: permanent population, defined territory, effective government, and capacity to enter foreign relations.

The requirement for defined territory does not necessitate perfectly settled borders, but it does require a consistent, identifiable area over which a state exercises sovereign authority. The Oslo Accords constrain the Palestinian Authority's (PA) ability to exercise sovereignty over defined borders by granting it only limited self-governance in certain areas, pending a negotiated settlement—until then, the borders remain disputed.

Additionally, as per the Accords, Israel still exercises control over parts of the West Bank. Meanwhile, the Palestinian territories have been divided since Hamas overthrew the PA and took control in 2007. These factors prevent the PA from functioning as a unified and effective government over a defined territory.

Moreover, while the PA engages in some diplomatic activities, its divided governance and limited authority in areas under Israeli control also hinder its capacity to consistently conduct foreign relations as a sovereign entity.

International law recognises self-determination as a fundamental



| Photo: Unsplash

**The requirement for defined territory does not necessitate perfectly settled borders, but it does require a consistent, identifiable area over which a state exercises sovereign authority.**

principle, but it does not guarantee statehood as an outcome. In fact, a wide variety and range of national self-determination practices and precedents are implemented and recognised under international law. Its variables include qualified international sovereignty, non-fully independent defence and security arrangements, reduced participation in the United Nations bodies, subordination of international trade to other managerial bodies, dependency on foreign currencies for financial transactions, and geographically non-contiguous territories.

The Oslo Accords made leaps towards arrangements that would achieve such Palestinian self-determination while preserving Israeli sovereign security. It is arguable that, by establishing the Palestinian Authority to govern autonomously in prescribed territories over the Palestinian Arabs, the Oslo Accords have already gone a long way to implement Palestinian self-determination without state sovereignty.

Further development of Palestinian self-determination could take different forms. External self-determination could take the form of qualified statehood in relation to military, trade, currency or international relations. Internal self-determination could take

the form of a regional independence within the sovereignty of Egypt, Israel or Jordan, or joint sovereignty, that provides for Palestinian autonomous control of regional resources, cultural, linguistic and political life. Palestine might be regarded as a non-sovereign self-governing territory under Israel and/or Jordan or Egypt but not incorporated into either, or another arrangement might be to establish a pact of federation of Palestine with Israel or Jordan or Egypt.

For example, as recently as 1 June 2025, UK and Morocco issued a joint communiqué that proposed local self-government under Moroccan sovereignty, by the Saharawi people, in the Western Sahara. This proposal is supported by Portugal, Spain, the USA and France. The communiqué states that:

"The UK, in encouraging the relevant parties to engage, urgently and positively with the UN-led political process, considers Morocco's autonomy proposal, submitted in 2007 as the most credible, viable and pragmatic basis for a lasting resolution of the dispute."

A comparable internal autonomy regime might be appropriate for an Arab population in disputed Palestine. Various arrangements for self-determination can include federation,

consensual provisions for geographic regionalisation with devolved autonomous government under a central sovereign state, as well as provisions for multiple distinct languages and financial currencies within a state.

Cultural and political regional autonomy within a sovereign state is also well-established in state internal practice. Political systems distinct from the national governmental system operate in Québec, Canada; Hong Kong, China; Puerto Rico, USA; and Dutch Caribbean special municipalities. Countries with multiple official languages include Bolivia, Canada, Belgium, India, Israel, Singapore, South Africa and Switzerland. Two countries even have multiple heads of state under one sovereignty: San Marino (2) Switzerland (7).

Non-sovereign self-ruling territories tend to take two forms: unincorporated self-ruling territories, or incorporated state territories. The former include the British Channel Islands and Isle of Man, the Danish Faroe Islands and Greenland, New Zealand's Tokelau, and American self-ruling unincorporated territories (American Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico). The latter incorporated state territories are island territories that have been incorporated into states, as is the case in Australian, British, Dutch French and Spanish island territories.

It is remarkable that international discourse has ignored the multitude of other possibilities than full statehood for Palestinian self-determination in circumstances where they are so obviously needed. This is a likely result of the half-century long zero-sum diplomatic offensive against the legitimacy of the State of Israel as a Jewish state, organised by the Arab League and Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, in broad coalition with regional neighbours, economically dependent clients and some predominantly hostile allies. This gambit posits Palestinian Arab statehood as a strategy opposed to Jewish statehood.

The legal concept of statehood and the integrity of international law are collateral damage in the Palestinian statehood diplomatic offensive.

*Gregory Rose is a Professor of Law at the University of Wollongong, Australia, and Chair of its Academic Senate. A member of the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), he specialises in international law, focusing on marine, environmental, and counter-terrorism issues.*



## Culture and Control: *Haredi* Draft—Part 6

### Joanna Moss

Traditionally, Jews are divided into *Ashkenazi* (Central European in origin) or *Sephardic* (originally from Spain) as they follow different traditions and have remained separate over the centuries. Israel had a chief rabbi from each tradition from the early inception of the state. European-originated *Haredi* groups in Israel fall into two major categories—*Hasidic* (spirituality focus) or *non-Hasidic*—*Mitnagdim* who focus on scholarship and ritual study. Later a third group emerged—*Mizrahi Haredim*.

### Chart

Many groups are *Hasidic* as shown. *Ashkenazi non-Hasidic* are *Litvakes* (from Lithuania), *Yeshivish* and *Mir* (from the Mir area in Jerusalem).

### History

During the time of the Russian Empire, Eastern European Jews were confined to a rookm wide zone, extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, called the Pale of Settlement. Jews had limited contact with non-Jews. Only a few were allowed to live in major cities, generally professionals or those with key roles. During the Enlightenment (1685-1804) Jews had three choices; leave their traditional faith and way of life and embrace modernism, follow *Haskalah*, a movement embracing both the Jewish faith and secular modernism, or remain and follow a stricter form of Judaism. **Thus, *Haredim* emerged as Jews that rejected modernity.** Reform Judaism, a compromise between modernity and traditional Judaism began in Germany, later took root in America. Zionism also emerged as an alternative, but it was heavily frowned upon by *Haredi* leaders as only the *Messiah* could rebuild Israel and Zionists were secular Jews, which only confirmed their skepticism.

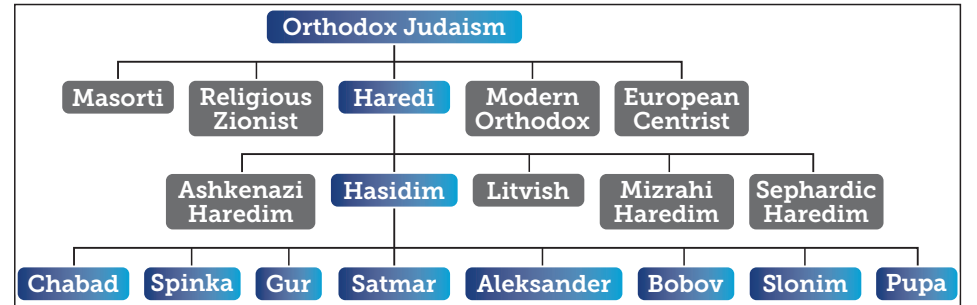
*Haredi* Judaism's key tenets are hierarchy and community control, especially over information, purity and righteousness via strict observance of Jewish law (*Halakha*). As with a cult, you are either inside or outside and forbidden to have contact with those outside. The world was seen as sinful, enticing and corrupting Jews, and thus to be avoided. Fear was employed. Later the mystical movement swept across Eastern Europe and new streams of mystical Judaism (*kabbalah*) emerged based on particular rabbis, despite the occultic prohibitions in the *Torah*. Thus the *Hasidic* movement took off within the overall *Haredim* movement.

### Holocaust

The Holocaust devastated *Haredim*. Interestingly, most of the Jews who died were Orthodox. Jews who fled Europe to the UK and beyond, survived. Many had embraced modernism, saw and heeded the warning signs. **The *Haredi* response to the Holocaust was to rebuild, not to examine the causes and reform.** Their desire to rebuild fell on soft, receptive ears with PM David Ben Gurion when they were few in number, seemingly facing extinction. He began the state funding model of synagogues and selection of *Haredim*. Adherents were encouraged to have large families to replace the lost Jews. It was seen as a community duty. Financing large families was irrelevant. Additionally, communal leaders played on diaspora wealth and diaspora survivor guilt to fund the rebuilding. Today *Haredim* represents 14% of the Israeli population overall and 25% of kindergarten students, moving from minority status to a significant part of the population.

### Culture

*Haredim*'s strict culture engenders personal and communal stability and security. Everyone has standing. It



Each sect has differing views and practices under a dominant Rabbi.

stresses the correct nature of the movement and religious righteousness. Jewish tradition drives values. Their society is ordered and structured. Men and women have distinct roles and know the rules. Families, the building block of any society, are strong. It has much to commend it. But fear and control keep the members within. Those who leave are ostracised. *Torah* study, meaning mostly *Talmud* (rabbinical commentaries) study, is revered and seen as a valuable occupation for men. Meanwhile, women work to support their husbands to study, provide and take care of large families. They too value men's *Torah* study.

### Military Service

Although *Haredi* served in the military up until the 1970s, such service now is frowned upon. The rabbis believe that service in the IDF corrupts men. This is mainly because many who serve leave the community. As a group they actively fight against conscription. By religious instruction, they believe that *Haredim* fulfill an important and unique role and thus don't need to serve in the IDF. Their role is to 'sacrifice and serve' the nation providing spiritual protection by conducting *Torah* study.

### Control

It's not hard to see why the religious shun secular Israeli society. Their solution is to keep the world out. *Haredim* are not allowed smart phones and only use their phones for texting

and phoning. Those with access to the internet have blocks on their systems to prevent 'straying'. News is provided on community noticeboards.

Leaders of synagogues exercise enormous power both within the community and within Israel. The *Rabbinate*, a group of orthodox rabbis, control marriage, divorce, conversion procedures and recognition and other aspects of faith within the state overall. There is no civil marriage. This is why the American Reform and Conservative movements face a brick wall in Israel. *Haredi* rabbis also control their flock through in-house loans.

As *Haredi* numbers increased, their leaders recognised they needed political support to gain government funding for their movements and adherents. Being part of the government became highly desirable, almost essential. *Haredi* Jews are told to vote for their parties to maximize their political power. Thus in 1984 *Shas* (*Sephardi and Mizrahi*) and in 1992 the exclusively *Haredi*, United *Torah* Judaism(UTJ) political parties were formed led by religious leaders. Aryeh Deri heads *Shas*. It had a maximum of 17 seats in 1999, now 11 seats. UTJ is led by Yitzchak Goldknopf and has seven seats from a base of four seats. Thus as *Haredim* numbers increased, so did political power with wide-ranging benefits and subsidies, and continued military draft exemption.

## Ruth's Pledge & Minority Rights

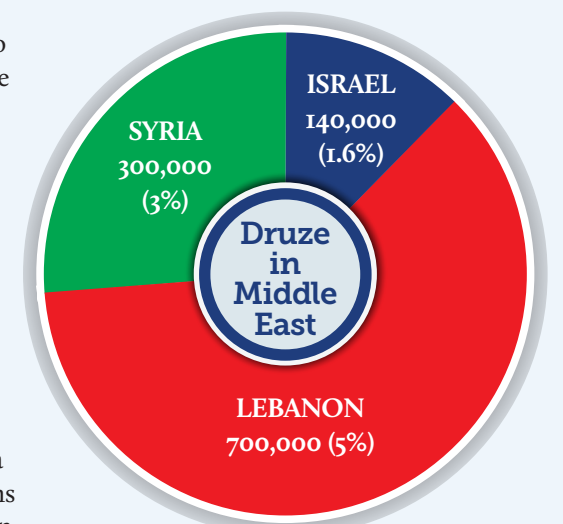
Many people were surprised when Israel came to the rescue of the Druze in Syria. After all they are not citizens of Israel, so theoretically there is no duty of care. But should there be? Does the way Israel treated the Druze in Syria have a biblical basis?

In the Exodus, God gave the Hebrews specific instructions in three ways regarding the treatment of strangers. "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing amongst you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt." *Leviticus 19:33-34*

Druze are spread over three countries in the Middle East—Lebanon, Syria and Israel with the majority in Syria located near the southern border and based around the Mountain of the Druze. Many Druze in Northern Israel are not actually citizens of Israel. They did not become citizens due to the uncertain legal status of the Golan Heights and the potential for the area to return to Syrian control. However, they are closely related to the Druze in Syria. Israel was also mindful of the Druze's military service and their desire to protect their fellow Druze. Many stormed the border. The Syrian regime was unwilling to protect the

Druze. Israel offered air support to thwart the intended massacre. The Druze aren't the only minority in Syria.

In the *Book of Ruth* her pledge was two-fold, "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God." (*Ruth 1:16*) The Druze meet the first, but not the second requirement. In the case of the Christians who were rescued from Northern Lebanon—they fulfill both criteria since there are Maronite Christians within Israel. But it was more of an act of compassion.



Druze populations with their (minority percentage).





# When Medicine Becomes Political

What do you expect when you visit a doctor? How should doctors act to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the medical profession? Is neutrality a given? Or is there a line between personal views on public issues and public expression? What about patient safety? These questions and related principles were sorely tested in an Open Letter published in *The NZ Doctor* magazine that elicited a response from the authorities and from the general readership. The Sydney nurses saga, one of whom claimed to be a doctor, came on the heels of this letter.

The Open Letter was published on 17 October 2023; a mere ten days after the invasion of Israel. It was penned primarily by a group of Maori doctors who listed all their tribal affiliations; which were extensive, far more than the names themselves.

The signatories claimed they were siding with people of colour oppressed by White colonialists. Really? Since when are Israelis white and colonists? The truth is that they are a mixture of colours and most are brown. Rather than colonisers who came from somewhere else and who conquered, they are doing the exact opposite. In reality, Jews were kicked out of most countries as unwanted, and they now live in a recognised state which is their ancestral land. But back to the Open Letter. Ostensibly, the signatories make claims in four areas:

1. Concern for genocide,
2. Problems they face on ancestral land,
3. Offer of solidarity with Palestinians,
4. Condemnation of racism, colonisation, anti-Muslim racism and hate.

Genocide is a buzzword claimed by many protestors.

But what exactly is it and is it applicable to the situation in Gaza? What makes the claims egregious is that genocide has a specific meaning and the origins of the word are linked to Nazi Germany. **Many readers will realise that the Nazi regime used the expertise of doctors and medical scientists to carry out the genocide. So, it is all the more incumbent that doctors use such a pejorative term accurately.** Was it chosen to rile Jews? Genocide has two aspects; the systematic murder of a significant number of a particular group in conjunction with the aim of annihilating that group. In fact, two-thirds of European Jewry was wiped out. Neither applies to Gaza.

The signatories assume the Palestinians live on ancestral land and for them to meet the Maori definition of indigenous. But do they? What was Gaza like in 1500–1800's? Interestingly, Gaza is part of the land allotted to the tribe of Judah, so it's Jewish land, and is not the ancestral land of the Palestinians.

It seems odd that a group of Maori doctors and related health workers would offer solidarity to a people they have nothing in common with. How about offering solidarity with Pacific islanders or Africans instead? What is the Open Letter seeking to achieve? How sincere is it? In particular, are the signatories willing to go to Gaza and stand with the Palestinians? I doubt it.

By condemning the four areas, they deliberately ignore antisemitism and assume there is anti-Muslim hate and hate in general. But where is the evidence for that? Put simply, the signatories are ignoring the realities of war where one side attacks and the other responds. It is as if the whole thing is one-sided. So apart from condemning

hate, none of the other claims can be substantiated. Does it matter if they get the facts wrong? Does it inspire trust?

## Response to the Letter

The magazine comments section was full of condemnation, calling out hypocrisy. Professor Jerry Coyne noted the one-sided nature of the letter highlighting the lack of concern for Israel, the omission of the atrocities of 7 October, the kidnappings and the rockets fired by Hamas. He rightly contrasted the anti-Muslim hate with the absence of antisemitism. Others commented on the curious use of tribal affiliations.

## Professional Response

The previous Medical Council Chair, Dr Curtis Walker responded by stating that he came through the MAPAS scheme (Maori and Pacific Admission Scheme). So, does that mean we have two classes of doctors and two standards? Surely that is irrelevant. Then he goes on by stating a commitment to health equity and diversity in medicine claiming that health equity is achieved through culturally safe medical practice.

Was the Open Letter a serious breach of conduct? Was the professional response ethically correct and sound? Why weren't they called to account on the matter of facts as well as conduct? Given that integrity and trust are foundational to the medical profession, shouldn't the Open Letter have demonstrated truth and impartiality? It appears neither. For safety reasons, does this now mean patients will have to decline care from doctors who have different political leanings? Finally, consider whether a similar open letter would have been tolerated if it had been penned by a non-Maori doctor about another group in society?

## Ambassador Urges Christians: Tell the Truth

### ■ Heather Moore

The Israeli ambassador, Alon Roth-Snir addressed a gathering of Christian supporters of Israel in Wellington in July. He urged the audience to "Please counter the media reports and tell the truth of what is really going on in Gaza". His Excellency encouraged those who knew the truth of what was happening to keep speaking out at every opportunity. "The situation in Gaza is horrible, but who is doing it? Israeli soldiers are not shooting civilians deliberately." He commented that Israel has been vilified since 1948 and he could not remember one day where Israel had not been fighting for its life.

"It's been said time and again that Israel is not fighting the people of Gaza, they are fighting Hamas."

He said that what we are seeing is history being distorted and truth weaponised. He quoted the scripture, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20).

"There is a war for the control of people's perceptions. What happens when perception is distorted?" He said the faked casualty numbers coming out of Gaza shaped global opinion before the facts were even known. Pictures circulating of 950 aid trucks being held up by Hamas were not being believed.

"The frightening thing is that even though the story is in front of everyone people don't believe. Facts are obscured by a cloud of misinformation". He said that

in the past with the wars against Isis and Al Qaeda, the media did not report the numbers of casualties. "Now they have no problem misreporting the numbers that Hamas is sending."

He said the world had forgotten that on 7 October it witnessed one of the darkest days in modern history. "How quickly the moral memory fails, trading hashtags for verified facts."

He said it was dangerous when people took complex issues that required years of study and explained them in 30 seconds on TikTok. "Young people are being shaped by emotion not education. They do not have the knowledge to build a moral base"

He said in the past newspapers reported facts. But today we are reading what writers and editors are thinking about a particular subject. "The source is not reliable any more. Truth is up for negotiation."

"We are now reaching a point where we don't know any more what is truth and what are lies". "What is our role here?" he asked. "To tell the truth time and again, not just for the sake of Israel but for the sake of the truth."

Event organiser, Joanna Moss, commented that the evening was a chance for church leaders and Christians from across denominations to meet the new ambassador and convey to him the support of the Christian community.

She said the ambassador chose to come to New Zealand for his final posting after a diplomatic career



Pastors and church leaders at the Wellington Ambassadorial welcome.

characterised by challenging posts in Jordan, the EU and Norway. A first posting to Cameroon had left him with a deep love for Africa.

He has been in the country about six months and had faced some difficult situations. She hoped this event would come as a welcome relief. "Let's leave a positive impression of Christians in New Zealand and in the Wellington region in particular."

It was 50 years this July since Israel began the process of opening up an Israeli embassy in New Zealand with impetus coming from then PM Norman Kirk who had a soft spot for the miracle of Israel and the Israeli people. Jubilee events will be held from January next year.



## ‘Not Yet and Not Until’

### ■ Dr Sheree Trotter

On 19 August, a delegation of leaders, led by Pastor Nigel Woodley, met with government officials to discuss New Zealand’s stance on recognition of a Palestinian state. They sought to convey a simple message—‘Not Yet and Not Until’.

Recognition of a Palestinian state at this time would be premature, inconsistent with international law, and contrary to New Zealand’s longstanding foreign policy principles. The necessary preconditions for statehood—a defined territory, a functioning and unified government, and the ability to engage coherently in international relations—are absent. Instead, there exist two rival Palestinian authorities: the Palestinian Authority (PA) in parts of the West Bank, and Hamas in Gaza, with considerable support in the WB. Hamas is a designated terrorist organisation under New Zealand law and continues to reject peace, pursue Israel’s destruction, and employ terrorism, hostage-taking, and incitement as political tools.

Unilateral recognition would directly contradict the Oslo Accords, which stipulate that Palestinian statehood can only be achieved through negotiated settlement with Israel. Granting recognition outside of this framework would reward avoidance of negotiations, undermine commitments to disarm militias and end incitement, and erode the credibility of peace processes.

Recognition now would also set a dangerous precedent in international law: that statehood can be conferred as a political gesture rather than earned through responsible governance and negotiated agreement. This would weaken New Zealand’s credibility when it advocates for rules-based, negotiated outcomes in other regional disputes, including in the Pacific and Asia.

Far from advancing peace, recognition would remove incentives for Palestinian leaders to make the necessary compromises with Israel. It would entrench division, legitimise violence as a political strategy, and embolden those opposed to peaceful coexistence. This is confirmed by US Ambassador to the United Nations, Dorothy Shea, Security Council on 10 August, who

stated that as one of the parties ‘in the room’ negotiating with Hamas they saw that most recent round of negotiations collapsed because Hamas drew encouragement from efforts to target Israel with libels and lies, and unilateral announcements regarding recognition of a Palestinian State.

For New Zealand, recognition at this stage would represent a misalignment with our values and a departure from our commitment to a rules-based international order. It would place New Zealand in the company of states that have recognised Palestine for ideological, domestic or political reasons, rather than on the basis of law, diplomacy, or the practical realities on the ground.

The prudent course is to withhold recognition until the essential conditions for responsible statehood and lasting peace are in place.

### Key Points

- Premature and legally problematic.
- No agreed borders, no unified government.
- Contrary to the Oslo Accords.
- Rewarding violence and terrorism.
- Dangerous international precedent.
- Undermines peace negotiations.
- Misaligned with New Zealand’s foreign policy values.
- The Palestinian Authority’s (PA) Ineffective Governing.
- Recognising Palestine right now, without the complete dismantling of Hamas and without a sound leadership in the West Bank could lead to a repeat of the 2007 Gaza takeover by Hamas, in which Hamas gained power through a violent and bloody civil war.
- Recognising Palestine right now could lead to a repeat of 7 October 2023, which was the culmination of 20 years of investing international aid into building a terrorist entity from which to attempt to annihilate Israel, rather than establishing a successful thriving Singapore of the Middle East.
- Recognising Palestine right now would achieve little beyond virtue signalling and would be rewarding division, dysfunction, and violence—not a legitimate, unified, peaceful state.



Christian and community leaders met with officials at Parliament on 19 August to discuss NZ’s stance on Palestine. (L-R): Dr Ate Moala, Dr Sheree Trotter, Ps Nigel Woodley, Bryce Turner, Hon Alfred Ngaro.

### Conclusion

New Zealand should withhold recognition of a Palestinian state until:

- A unified Palestinian government exists, committed to peaceful coexistence with Israel.
- Defined borders are agreed through negotiations.
- Commitments under the Oslo Accords are met.
- Leadership is chosen by free and fair elections.
- There is renunciation of violence and dismantling of terror networks.
- There is commitment to coexistence with Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
- The end of institutional antisemitism and glorification of martyrdom.

Premature recognition would damage NZ’s credibility, undermine international law, and hinder rather than advance the prospects for peace.

The full Briefing can be found on the following websites:  
<https://fortheProtectionofzion.com/not-yet-and-not-until/>  
<https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/08/delegation-urges-government-not-yet-and-not-until-on-palestinian-statehood/>  
<https://www.indigenouscoalition.org/articles-blog/recognition-of-a-palestinian-state-not-yet-and-not-until>

## New Zealand’s Two-State Policy: Steady Principles, Rising Pressures

### ■ Greg Bouwer

Many nations endorse a ‘two-state solution’ to the Israel–Palestinian conflict, but their definitions and conditions vary widely. For New Zealand, the policy has been in place for decades—rooted in UN Resolution 181 (1947) and reiterated in modern diplomatic statements—yet global momentum in 2025 is putting Wellington’s caution under scrutiny.

### From Partition to Policy

New Zealand voted for the 1947 UN Partition Plan, supporting separate Jewish and Arab states. In its current form, the policy calls for secure and recognised borders, self-determination for both peoples, a demilitarised Palestinian state, and direct negotiations between the parties. It has supported steps toward Palestinian representation—observer status for the PLO in 1974, recognising the Palestinian Information Office in 1988, and voting for non-member observer state status in 2012—but has consistently withheld full diplomatic recognition until core conditions are met.

### Conditions and Realities

Those conditions have been steady: representative governance, renunciation of violence, and security guarantees for Israel. Given Hamas’s control of Gaza, the 7 October atrocities, and the Palestinian Authority’s instability, many question whether such conditions can be met in the foreseeable future. Recognition without them, critics warn, risks legitimising terror and undermining Israel’s security.

### Commonwealth Influence

New Zealand’s foreign policy often aligns with sister Commonwealth nations. In recent months, the UK, Canada, and Australia have joined France in signalling readiness to recognise a Palestinian state, with stipulations such as excluding Hamas from power and holding democratic elections. These moves, especially from close allies, increase the diplomatic pressure on New Zealand to match their steps.

### Helen Clark’s Intervention

Former Prime Minister Helen Clark has publicly

criticised New Zealand for ‘lagging behind’ in recognising Palestine, citing humanitarian crises in Gaza and even repeating claims of ‘genocide’. She is currently a member of ‘The Elders’ group of former world leaders, but her record warrants scrutiny.

From 2009 to 2017, Clark served as Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—an agency that, during her tenure, worked alongside UN bodies such as UNRWA which have been repeatedly accused of allowing aid diversion to Hamas and employing staff linked to the terror group. While Clark denies any tolerance for such abuses, her time in UN leadership coincided with years in which Hamas entrenched itself in Gaza, in part by exploiting international aid networks.

Critics argue that Clark’s current calls for recognition ignore the lessons of this period: that without firm preconditions and strict oversight, aid and diplomatic recognition can be manipulated by Hamas to entrench its control and continue its war against Israel.

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## From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli  
Ambassador to New ZealandGaza and Global  
Perceptions

It is August and like every August in our part of the world, temperatures soar, and humidity makes life miserable. Yet, the climate is the least of our worries. Every day that passes drives us stubbornly towards the two-year mark since the nightmare of 7 October 7 and reminds those who need, that even as I write these lines Hamas terrorists still hold 50 hostages, 20 of them are still alive and Israeli soldiers are still engaged in operations against the terrorists in Gaza.

I have no doubt that our readers are aware of the challenges Israel is facing in the realm of public relations. Unfortunately, across the globe Israel comes under vicious attacks organised and promoted by Palestinian and anti-Israeli elements. Besides the marches against Israel, we are now faced with the situation whereby Israeli tourists are harassed and even attacked by anti-Israeli activists. Unfortunately, anti-Jewish attacks have also increased. All these phenomena are a product of a malicious campaign which aims to erase the true cause of the war in Gaza-Hamas terrorism.

I am writing these lines a few days after the latest decision by the government to push ahead in Gaza. This decision has deepened the divide in our society. Although the ruling coalition still maintains a majority or at least a plurality in the Knesset (Parliament), public opinion as expressed in media articles supports a different line of action. So many of us feel it is high time to push for a deal that will free all our hostages—the living and the deceased. The images of two of our hostages who look emaciated to the point of resembling Holocaust survivors, only reinforce the conviction that all should be freed and now. So many of us are concerned with the worsening image of our country abroad. Although countries may hold different and sometimes opposing views on different issues, it is becoming quite worrisome to see how positions are becoming increasingly divergent.

As I conclude this message, may I just add the following thought. However furious it may be, I honestly believe that the path for a more positive future is there to be followed. Our people have gone through turbulent and menacing experiences throughout our history and yet we are still here. We shall overcome!

Yael Holan: Reflections on Her  
First Diplomatic Posting

Yael Holan began her career as a teacher, caring for lone students who had come to Israel to study. But a diplomatic path soon beckoned. After rigorous testing, she was accepted into the cadetship program at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. Her first posting: Wellington, New Zealand. There, she served as Deputy Chief of Mission, Consul, and Head of Administration. Now back in Jerusalem, Yael reflects on her time here in New Zealand.

**What were your thoughts when they told you your first post was Wellington?**

To be honest, I was completely shocked. In addition to English, I also speak French and Russian, so I assumed I'd be sent to a French-speaking country in Africa or a Russian-speaking nation. The only thing I knew about Wellington was that it's very, very far away.

**How much did you know about New Zealand?**

Almost nothing. I immediately contacted Kasa, who had served in Wellington as Deputy Ambassador. She gave me a virtual tour of the city via *Google Maps* and pointed out some great spots, like the *Backbencher* pub. She offered helpful advice and connected me with key contacts. For some reason, she also told me that Wellington isn't so cold in the winter.

**What goals did you have for your mission?**

Personally, I've always wanted to live abroad and experience a different lifestyle. My goal was to learn as much as I could about the country, explore its diverse landscapes, and meet interesting people.

Professionally, since this was my first assignment, I had to learn three roles from scratch—political, consular, and administrative. My goal was to master each of these and perform them to the best of my ability.



Yael Holan. | Photo: Embassy of Israel in New Zealand

I feel I achieved those goals. I got to explore stunning places far from home—New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, and the Cook Islands. I never imagined I'd visit such remote destinations, and I'm deeply grateful that I did. I met remarkable people who taught me valuable life lessons and helped me discover new sides of myself. The Pacific will always hold a special place in my heart.

At the Embassy, the journey was challenging and never dull. The staff did an incredible job, and I had the privilege of working with them for three years, learning from two ambassadors—Ran Yaakoby and Alon Roth-Snir.

Leaving New Zealand was heartbreaking, which only proves how meaningful my time there was and how deep the connections became.

**How important was it for your family to visit New Zealand?**

My parents' visit was a highlight of my posting and a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Before they arrived, I often spoke about my apartment, the Embassy, and places around Wellington—names that meant little to them. It

was exciting to finally show them these places in person, knowing that future conversations would be grounded in that shared experience.

Spending a month together was incredibly special, including a week traveling in a campervan through the South Island. We saw breathtaking landscapes, met wonderful Kiwis, and created unforgettable memories.

**What kind of contact did you have with Christian communities?**

I want to thank everyone who supported Israel and me during my three meaningful years in New Zealand. I connected with many different communities, each contributing in their own unique way. I'm deeply grateful to the friends of Israel who play a vital role in maintaining and strengthening ties between New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Israel.

The love and support I received from them throughout my posting filled my heart, lifted me during challenging moments, and gave me the strength to carry on. May you be blessed.

*Yael Holan is now working at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem.*

Continued from page 5

Her comments came as New Zealand signed a joint statement with 14 other countries expressing willingness to recognise Palestine. But Foreign Minister Winston Peters stressed this was conditional on progress toward representative governance, non-violence, and security for Israel—warning that premature recognition could be seen as 'a reward... for acts of terrorism.'

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon maintains the focus should be on delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza

rather than pursuing recognition debates now. Whether New Zealand holds its cautious line or moves with its Commonwealth partners will determine if the country remains a steady advocate for negotiated peace—or joins a recognition wave whose ability to deliver real peace remains deeply uncertain.

**NZ's Two-State Policy Timeline**

- 1947—NZ votes for UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181), supporting separate Jewish and Arab states.
- 1974—Grants observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

- 1988—Recognises the Palestinian Information Office in Wellington.
- 2012—Votes in favour of UN Resolution 67/19, granting Palestine non-member observer state status.
- 2016—Co-sponsors UNSC Resolution 2334, condemning Israeli settlement activity as an obstacle to peace.
- 2025 (July)—Signs joint statement with 14 countries expressing willingness to recognise Palestine, subject to strict conditions: representative governance, renunciation of violence, and security guarantees for Israel.



## God Is Watching: The Nations, Antisemitism and the Prophetic Clock

■ **Rev Nathan Williams**  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
| Bridges for Peace

As part of our foundational training at Bridges for Peace, I teach new volunteers about the ancient, persistent hatred of antisemitism. I describe it as a virus—sometimes dormant, other times erupting into a raging fever. History bears witness to this recurring disease: from Persia to Nazi Germany, from the Middle Ages to today.

Since 7 October and the war in Gaza, I've been shocked by how quickly antisemitism has gripped the Western world. In just months, hatred of the Jewish people has erupted—on social media, university campuses, in the streets of America, Australia, and Europe, in parliaments, and tragically, even parts of the Church. Holocaust survivors still walk among us, yet antisemitism thrives. These are extraordinary and sobering days.

Scripture declares that nations will rage against Israel, but the Lord, enthroned in heaven, watches and prepares to judge. Derek Prince once said, "The Jews are the minute hand on God's prophetic clock." If that is true, today's hostility is not random but a warning—a clarion call to nations and the Church.

Hostility against the Jewish people signals that the prophetic timeline is advancing before our eyes. The question isn't whether the Lord will keep His covenant—He will—but whether we will awaken, discern the times, and align with Him in this critical hour.

### An Everlasting Covenant with Israel

From the start, the Lord bound Himself to Abraham and his descendants through an everlasting covenant. *Genesis 12:3* declares: "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." In *Genesis 15*, God makes a fourfold covenant:

- 1. Descendants:** Abraham's offspring would be as numerous as the stars (*Genesis 15:4–5*).
- 2. Exile and Deliverance:** His descendants would sojourn in a foreign land but be delivered with great possessions (*Genesis 15:13–14*).
- 3. Land Inheritance:** "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (*Genesis 15:18*).
- 4. Divine Guarantee:** In a dramatic ceremony, God alone passes between the pieces (*Genesis 15:17*), swearing by Himself (*Hebrews 6:13*).



| Photo: Shutterstock

Derek Kidner notes, "God was signing both parts of the contract, binding Himself unconditionally." Walter Kaiser adds, "God pledged His own being as security for His word." This covenant remains unconditional and everlasting, defining God's relationship with Israel and their land today.

### Is the Modern State of Israel the Israel of the Bible?

Some claim modern Israel is not the Israel of Scripture, but God's covenant is tied to a people and a land. *Romans 11:1–2* declares: "Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!" *Jeremiah 31:35–37* affirms that as long as the sun, moon, and stars endure, so will Israel.

History confirms this. No other nation has lost its land, endured centuries of exile, and returned. Israel's rebirth in 1948 was not chance but God's promise fulfilled.

Despite its flaws, modern Israel remains the vessel of God's plan. The same God who scattered Israel also promised to gather them (*Ezekiel 36:24*). Today, we witness prophecy unfolding.

### Not Colonialism, But Covenant

Claims that Israel's restoration is colonialism distort both history and Scripture. In *Genesis 15:18*, God Himself promised Abraham's descendants the Land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Israel has never fully possessed it, underscoring that the ultimate fulfillment is prophetic.

Amos foresaw Israel restored, never to be uprooted (*Amos 9:14–15*). Ezekiel promised regathering "for the sake of My holy name" (*Ezekiel 36:22–24*). This restoration is about God's reputation, not Israel's merit.

When critics accuse Israel of being a

settler-colonial state, they miss the divine narrative: this people is indigenous to this Land by covenant decree. For Christians, recognising this truth is essential. God's promises to Abraham's descendants are not metaphorical but literal, reaffirmed repeatedly by prophets and by Jesus Himself.

Derek Prince summarised it well: "As the nations have treated the Jews, so the Lord has treated the nations." History affirms this: empires that persecuted the Jewish people have crumbled. God's covenant has outlasted Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Caesar, Hitler, Stalin and will outlast today's adversaries too.

### The Lord Will Judge the Nations

Modern antisemitism, cloaked as anti-Israel sentiment, is not mere prejudice; it is rebellion against God's covenant. *Joel 3:2* warns: "I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel... They have also divided up My land."

Jewish theologian David Kimhi explained: "He will judge them for how they treated Israel in exile. They divided the land and dispersed the inhabitants." Charles Spurgeon added more than half a century before modern Israel's establishment: "The restoration of the Jews is certain; opposing nations will find themselves contending with the Lord."

This warning is not theoretical. Since 7 October, antisemitism has surged worldwide. Influential voices spread conspiracy theories and deny Israel's right to exist. Media outlets publish distorted narratives, fueling hostility. And the victims are not governments but Jewish individuals attacked and even

murdered in cities like Washington, London, Paris and Sydney.

God has made clear that these actions are recorded in heaven. Nations are being weighed in the balance, and judgment is coming. The rising tide of antisemitism reveals spiritual rebellion on a global scale, but it also shows us how close we are to the fulfillment of God's prophetic plan.

### Standing with Israel

This carries a sobering message for Christians: to oppose Israel is to oppose a covenant God made with Himself. The Lord is calling a remnant to stand with His people amid growing hostility, to refuse compromise even when cultural pressure intensifies.

In *Matthew 25:31–46*, Jesus describes the judgment of the nations. Scholar Thomas Constable notes this judgment hinges on how Gentiles treat Jesus' 'brethren,' understood as the Jewish people, revealing true faith. In times of Jewish suffering, the Church is tested: Will we stand with the Lord's people or turn away?

This choice is not hypothetical. Congregations worldwide are already being forced to take a stand. Some may lose friends, funding or influence for supporting Israel, but Scripture is clear: "Those who bless you I will bless." God is looking for believers who will act courageously and prophetically, even at personal cost.

### God Is Watching

Antisemitism today is not new, only repackaged. Yet God's covenant remains unchanged. The same promise that preserved the Jewish people through exile, persecution and dispersion now calls Christians to respond with courage, love and discernment.

God is watching the nations—and His Church. Israel is His prophetic timepiece, and our response reveals our alignment with Him. May we be among those who bless, pray for and stand with His covenant people until Messiah returns and Jerusalem is called the City of Truth (*Zechariah 8:3*).

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# Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity—Part 3

■ **Dr Sheree Trotter**  
Historian

**In this third article addressing Tina Ngata's attack on Maori and other indigenous support of Israel, Dr Sheree Trotter considers her claims and demonstrates the absurdity of the settler colonial model when applied to Israel.**

Settler colonialism is a relatively recent political construct that seeks to dismantle the structures of nations it deems fit its model, such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the USA. Israel is considered the archetypal settler colonialist project in this ideology. Settler colonialism is a totalising worldview that ignores historical realities to push a divisive and destructive political agenda.

In her article *Make No Mistake—There is no Indigenous Support for Israel*, Tina Ngata states, “The most obvious issue is that the nation-state of Israel is a product of Western colonialism, which is the source of all Indigenous oppression around the world. Were it not for the systems of Western colonial domination put in place through the Doctrine of Discovery, Israel would not have been able to establish itself as a nation-state”.

It will not be possible to properly address these false assertions in a single article. However, it must be said that such statements reveal the paucity of Ngata's grasp of history. Ngata makes much of the Doctrine of Discovery, but her claims are not backed by historical evidence. The 15th century Papal Bull of the Catholic church opened the door to Catholic Europe's colonisation of certain non-European lands, but had no direct impact on the protestant British colonisation of New Zealand. Further, it had absolutely no influence on the establishment of Israel. Even a rudimentary familiarity with the historical Jewish experience in Europe would make obvious the absurdity of Ngata's claim. Indeed, Jews in the 15th century experienced extreme persecution by the Catholic church and were expelled from Catholic Spain. For many centuries Jews in Europe were marginalised, discriminated against, treated as inferior and often slaughtered.

The settler colonialism paradigm, when applied to Israel, becomes absurd indeed. Jews are Indigenous to the land of Israel, with a continuous presence spanning over three millennia. That is a far cry from the experience of other so-called settler colonial states, which involved strangers laying claim to foreign territories. Rather than being driven by a metropole or mother country, the return of Russian and East European Jews to their ancestral land in



Dr Sheree Trotter. | Photo: Perry Trotter

the nineteenth century was largely in response to the persecution and antisemitism experienced in those nations. The political Zionist movement which began in the late 19th century, likewise a response to antisemitism, was supported by small Jewish communities all over the world, including in New Zealand. The Zionist movement struggled for many decades. Few, if any, in that period doubted that Jews had a right to a home in their ancestral land. Even Arab leaders admitted as much. Indeed countries like New Zealand preferred that Jews return to British Mandate Palestine rather than immigrate to New Zealand. Jews did not return as powerful white Europeans—they were considered ‘other’ in those countries, and they were certainly not white enough for Hitler. These factors sharply distinguish Zionism from settler colonial projects motivated by economic expansion or imperial ambition.

## Colonisation of the Middle East

The inadequacy of the settler colonial model becomes starkly obvious when applied to the Middle East. In analysing Israel-Palestinian dynamics it cherry picks (or fabricates) information deemed to fit the model, and ignores historical and geo-political realities that do not. Ideologues ignore the fact that the major colonising force in the Middle East is Islam. If the predominance of language is an indicator of imperial power, then Arabic provides strong evidence to support this assertion. As a result of the Islamic conquests of the 7th to 9th centuries, Arabic spread to North Africa, the Middle East, Central and Western Asia, and even to parts of China. Peoples across the region were made to submit to the new religion, Islam, and the language of the Islamic imperialists was imposed on native inhabitants. Many Indigenous languages

were banned and some were subsequently lost. Although Indigenous groups such as the Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Amazighs resisted assimilation, continued to live on ancestral lands, and tried to maintain their language, culture and heritage, they were placed under the rule of Arab leaders. The Yazidis are an indigenous group that experienced the same kind of radical Islamist attack through ISIS, that Israel faces with Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and others. To this day, these Indigenous Peoples in the Middle East face discrimination and persecution, and the suppression of their languages. Settler colonialism is based on the idea of interrogating power relationships and its proponents will paint Israel, supported by America as the superpower, as the oppressor of Palestinians. This ignores many middle eastern realities including the very real multiple existential threats to which Israel is subject in her ancestral homeland. The world Jewish population is 15 million, with approximately 7 million in Israel. The worldwide Islamic population is 1.9 billion. This numerical imbalance alone helps to explain the enormity of the security challenge faced by Israel. Muslims who have rejected their religion tell us that Jew hatred is taught and cultivated in their societies. Some of the strongest advocates for Israel are former Muslims who grew up hating Jews: Lebanese-Syrian, Rawan Osman; Lebanese, Brigitte Gabriel; Somali born Ayaan Hirsi Ali; Mosab Hassan Yousef, son of Hamas; Yemenite Luai Ahmed and Gazan born, Nonie Darwish, to name a few. In terms of the power differential, Hamas is part of a network of entities across the Middle East that embrace radical Islamist views; groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, all backed by Iran, the spiritual leadership and Qatar, the

funding arm. Hamas leaders were billionaires, who lived in luxury in Qatar. Recent research has revealed that millions of dollars of Qatar funding to US universities has contributed to the rise in antisemitism on those campuses.

Radical Islam sees no place for Jews in the Middle East. The Hamas charter states explicitly that it does not recognise any Jewish state and seeks to wipe it out. “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is a direct call to eradicate the state of Israel. Israel completely withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Because of Hamas's insistence on firing rockets into Israel, a military blockade on the border was put in place, deemed justified by the UNSC, to try to stop the flow of weapons into Gaza. What did Hamas do? They diverted a significant portion of Gaza's economy into building a tunnel network, spanning an estimated 500 km at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. These tunnels, primarily used for military purposes, are fitted with reinforced concrete, ventilation systems, electricity, lighting, communication lines, multiple entrances and exits and booby traps. Imagine if instead of turning Gaza into a terrorist entity they had built the ‘Singapore of the Middle East’.

While Israel's detractors have falsely accused Israel of genocide, the actual genocide took place on 7 October when Hamas and its accomplices set out with a clear intention to murder every Jew and Israeli they could lay their hands on and to take hostages. Not only has there been a rush to accuse Israel, but there have been attempts to redefine genocide in order to apply it to the IDF's actions. Meanwhile, military experts concur that Israel takes unprecedented measures to protect civilian life, even while Hamas fires rockets from schools and hospitals and uses its people as human shields. The IDF has achieved a remarkably low civilian to combatant casualty rate in urban warfare, close to 1:1, and Israel has enabled the transport of thousands of tonnes of humanitarian aid into the strip. Driven by the decolonisation narrative that entrenches the false view that Hamas is the victim and can do no wrong, and Israel being strong can do no right, the media and world court of opinion prefers to imbibe Hamas' propaganda and castigate Israel. As Norman JW Goda argues, “The accusation of genocide... is political, designed not so much to describe a crime, but to place Israel, its military, its citizens, and its supporters as outside the realm of decency and human values”.

The ideology of settler colonialism was created and developed in western universities.

*Continued on page 9*



# The Power of Academia

## ■ Dr Sheree Trotter

As I prepare for this year's Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem (IEJ) Academic Symposium, I'm reminded again why this work is so important. Earlier this week the International Association for Genocide Scholars, touted by media as 'The world's leading genocide scholars' association', passed a resolution stating that the legal criteria had been met to establish that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. This statement duly headlined in major news outlets locally and internationally.

However, upon closer examination, the IAGS statement quickly crumbled. It was discovered that the IAGS pushed through the resolution without the standard procedure of holding a debate. The group's leadership refused to have a transparent, critical discussion. Dissenters were deliberately silenced. The resolution cites organisations that have reinterpreted the definition of genocide to force it to apply to Israel.

The group's spokesperson, Melanie O'Brien, claimed that the resolution passed with nearly 90% support. However, investigation revealed that in fact the resolution was passed by just over 20% of the organisation's approximately 500 members. Further it was discovered that the IAGS is open to anyone who pays a membership fee. Bogus memberships were found, such as 'Adolf Hitler,' listed as a Gaza City-based 'genocide scholar'. It turns out that the IAGS is not an exclusive body of scholars but a group susceptible to manipulation by activists. The whole exercise turned out to be an act of academic fraud.

This is not the first time that academics have issued statements accusing Israel of one crime or another. Indeed various declarations, public letters and statements have been issued by academic institutions in New Zealand and beyond accusing Israel of various crimes, which later prove to be libels.



A compilation of most of the speakers at Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem Academic Symposium 2024.  
| Photo: Perry Trotter

## This is not the first time that academics have issued statements accusing Israel of one crime or another.

Greg Bouwer notes that, "This is not just a problem of political imbalance. It is a collapse of academic integrity. Universities are no longer demanding intellectual rigour from their staff or students when it comes to the Middle East—especially when Israel is the subject. Allegations of apartheid are made without legal grounding. Historical claims are flattened into slogans. International law is cited only when it serves the predetermined conclusion. Critical scrutiny disappears, and with it, the university's role as a place of learning".

We are witnessing a phenomenon whereby academic bodies and individuals can throw libelous claims at Israel whilst hiding behind a facade of legitimacy. They bend practices and definitions to promote the libel. Academic papers are produced in volume, drawing on one-sided biased

reports. These are quoted repeatedly, further adding to the veneer of legitimacy. By the time truth surfaces, the libel has taken hold and captured the public imagination. The academy has fallen prey to the age-old propaganda technique and structural antisemitism posing as antizionism.

So, it is as important as ever to push back with solid scholarship and to keep raising the banner of truth, for those willing to hear it. With that in mind, I am thrilled to be gathering another world class cohort of international academics to address the theme of 'Zionism and Indigeneity versus Settler Colonialism and Historical Revisionism' at this year's symposium. If you're in Israel, please join us on 4 November 2025 at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem.

*Dr Sheree Trotter has been accepted as a Fellow with the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism.*

## New Zealand's Ambassador



Ambassador of New Zealand, HE Greg Lewis, presenting his credentials to Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel.  
| Photo: MEAT

Greg Lewis is NZ's latest Ambassador to Turkey and cross-credited to Israel, Azerbaijan and Jordan. He has held many Middle Eastern roles including as Ambassador to Egypt (2019-2022), twice in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt plus short term assignments to the New Zealand Embassies in Baghdad and Abu Dhabi. His role included being the NZ representative to the Palestinian Authority.

What makes Ambassador Lewis unique is that he is an Arabist, someone who specialised in Arabic history and culture and having studied Arabic in Cairo 2005-07. This makes him very different and aids in understanding the role of religion and the complexities of the Middle East. Prior to taking up this appointment he was seconded to the Minister of Foreign Affairs' office in Parliament and he has a particular interest in the Israel Palestine conflict.

Although posted in March, he did not present his credentials to the head of state in Turkey until May and then only recently to President Hertzog in Israel.

Continued from page 8

## Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity—Part 3

Attempts to apply it to the Middle East situation, all the while ignoring radical Islamic fundamentalism, the elephant in the room, become truly farcical. The settler colonial ideology ignores the specificity of the Middle Eastern context and ironically pushes a western-centric perspective. It's no coincidence that the major settler colonial theorists are predominantly based in universities in Australia and Canada. For proponents, Palestine has become a symbol of all that

is evil in the modern world, despite the lack of resemblance to facts on the ground. This is why politicians like Te Pahi Māori leader, Debbie Ngarewa-Packer can state, "Palestine is the last bastion of resistance against global Western colonisation. If Palestine is not free, neither are we". Violence is implicit in these words. In the case of 'Palestine', 'resistance' means the murder of Jews. 'Freedom' means the eradication of the Jewish state. It's not entirely clear what Ngarewa-Packer and Ngata's demands for 'freedom' means for Aotearoa New Zealand, but it clearly involves destruction of society's structures and institutions,

including the very fora in which they propagate their dangerous ideas.

Adam Kirsch writes, "The great appeal of radical ideologies has always been this promise of a final solution". He argues that it's not only a sign of ignorance but also ideological malice to turn any country into a symbol of evil, stating, "And ideologues who 'preach vengeance and murder from an ivory tower', in Rodinson's words, should be rebuked for their inhumanity, not praised for their idealism." In the case of Tina Ngata, I hope it is simply ignorance rather than malice that drives her attack on Māori

who support Israel, and on Māori who value the freedoms and opportunities afforded by our own society. Be that as it may, followers would do well to consider the necessary implications of a settler colonial ideology, which seeks the destruction of Israel as well as the overthrow of our own society and government and the rejection of our most cherished values.

Footnotes:

1. <https://isca.indiana.edu/publication-research/research-paper-series/norman-jw-goda-research-paper.html>
2. Kirsch, Adam, *Settler Colonialism: Ideology, Violence & Justice*, 2024.





# Hebraic Prayer Secrets—Part 4: Conforming to God's Will

## ■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

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

In this last and final instalment of our teaching series on Hebraic prayer, we discover that prayer is not about making God conform to our wishes, but rather about us conforming to His Will.

A family member of ours is deeply into new age teachings. Over the years she has witnessed God answering the prayers of my Mum and I, so now whenever she faces a crisis she is quick to come to us, asking for prayer. In a nutshell, her prayer requests are about making God bring about her own plans for her life and family. And this is the essence of much of the new age/occult world, where the worshipper attempts to do certain actions or say certain prayers in order to make the spirits/gods do what they want.

Christian prayer should not and cannot be like this. Here in Acts four, the disciples give us an amazing example of a very different approach to prayer.

### Your Kingdom come, Your Will Be Done...

The disciples were facing intense threats of persecution, jail, torture and even death. Yet remarkably they didn't pray for their own safety, nor did they pray that the persecution will stop. Their prayer was centred around God's will being done, specifically that the preaching of God's Word would not stop.

In other words, the disciples knew it was God's will for them to preach the Gospel and this was their unshakeable and primary commitment. However, they also knew their own human weakness in the face of these threats and looked to God to enable them to do His will.

Too often prayer has been treated as an opportunity to present wish lists to God. Yes it is true that Jesus encouraged the disciples to ask that they might receive, but the focus of prayer should not be asking for our own blessings. Rather our prayers should be about committing ourselves to God's will and seeking Him for then enablement and empowerment to obey His call.

Western Christians today are shocked as they hear of increasingly anti-Christian laws and sentiments in our societies. But first century believers, in the words of Peter, did not 'consider it strange' (1 Peter 4:12). Maybe this is another reason they did not pray against persecution? After all, they knew persecution would be coming (see 2 Timothy 3:12), and they would already have counted the cost when they decided to follow Jesus.

And the result of their prayer? The Bible tells us that God heard their prayer and the place they were in shook as they were filled afresh with His Spirit. Fresh boldness and power came upon the disciples, enabling them to continue to speak the Word of God without fear or hesitation.

Many of us wish to see such powerful answers to pray. But if we are to start see similar results to our prayers, we have some serious adjustments to make. Our prayers must be centred on the fulfilment of God's will.



### Summary

In this series on Hebraic prayer, we have learnt how the early disciples modelled prayer that is:

- God focussed rather than problem focussed
- Scripture Based
- More corporate than personal
- Conformed to His Will above all else

And as we pray like this, in line with God's will, the answers will certainly follow. Let us close with these words from John the Apostle:

*"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (1 John 4:14-15).*

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



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## Encounters with Antisemitism

### ■ Dennis McLeod

Representative | Christian Friends of Israel NZ

My first encounter with antisemitism was here in New Zealand, before we lived in Israel. It came from a visiting minister of a church based in Jerusalem. Through his words—though I didn't fully understand them at the time—he was trying to convey to the audience that the Jewish people should not be in Israel. A few years later, while serving in Bethlehem, I witnessed clear antisemitism among several of the expats working in the area. On one occasion, an American expat angrily confronted me for learning Hebrew while living in an Arab region. She went so far as to openly declare that there should be no Jews in the area. Penny, my late wife, calmly replied, "There would be no Jews here if they hadn't tried to drive them out." The woman stopped talking.

After leaving Bethlehem, we joined a ministry called Christian Friends of Israel and looked forward to serving the Lord in this new capacity with joy. However, a Christian Arab acquaintance from Bible College—someone I had considered a friend—told me I should ask them to change their name. In other words, he believed Christians shouldn't be friends of Israel, a sentiment sadly shared by many Hamas-supporting Christians today. I have been cursed at and even told I am unsaved because of my support for the Jewish people. When I began my new role with Christian Friends of Israel, the very first question I was asked was, "Why does New Zealand always vote against Israel at the UN?" At the time—back in 1994—I was completely unaware of this. That moment marked the beginning of what has now been a thirty-year journey of learning about Israel and its place in the history of the Middle East.

We have often been asked, "What are you doing for the Arabs, both in Israel and in my home country?" Yet during the 18 months we spent working among the Arabs in Bethlehem, not once did anyone ask us, "What are you doing for the Jews?" Back in New Zealand, we met a Jewish woman who, as an eight-year-old in the 1920s, was called a 'Christ killer.' She had to ask her mother what those words meant. I also encountered two men I knew who turned out to be Jewish, but they were reluctant to open up to me until they learned what we had been doing in Israel.

While we were in Bethlehem, there was no security barrier. At that time, Jewish rubbish collectors stopped entering the area because of repeated attacks. A Jewish truck driver delivering petrol was



Jews light candles in a Star of David at the site of a deadly shooting in Jerusalem, 2021. | Photo: Flash90

### Since 7 October, the rise of antisemitism in New Zealand has been appalling—from ordinary people on the street right up to the Prime Minister.

shot dead. Jewish guards on work sites were killed. In Jerusalem, a man was murdered while waiting for a bus, girls were attacked in their schoolyard, and Christians were assaulted in Bethlehem. Shortly after we moved into Jerusalem, the bus bombings began—first in Tel Aviv, then Jerusalem, and soon across the country. People waiting for buses, dining in restaurants, celebrating in pizza parlours and public gatherings—men, women, and children were killed or left maimed for life. And the list goes on. These are only some of the events we witnessed in our time. They do not begin to cover the violence of the last 100 years, long before Israel was re-established in its ancestral homeland, nor the suffering we have seen during our years of working with and for the Jewish people in Jerusalem.

At first, the Arabs used terror in an attempt to prevent the Jewish people from returning to Israel. When that failed, they turned to war and intifadas—but these, too, did not drive the Jewish people from the Land. A new tactic was needed: to claim the land for themselves. After the Six-Day War, Arafat realised he could not win on the battlefield, so he turned to the media. There, he declared that he and his people were the true 'Palestinians.' He relied on the fact that few people understood the history of the land—or how and when the term 'West Bank' came into being. (That's another paper in itself.) This strategy has proved very effective over the years. And today, we see the same tactic playing out in different arenas.

Hamas attacked with the goal of destroying Israel. Yet Iran's wider plan—using Hamas, Hizballah, the Houthis, and others—failed. Having been defeated militarily, they turned instead to winning the hearts and minds of the public through the media. First came the accusation of genocide. But with no evidence of such acts in this war, they once again had to find another narrative—one that would tap into the antisemitism simmering just beneath the surface of society.

They have one final ace up their sleeve—the hunger card. By convincing the world that Israel is to blame for the suffering in Gaza, they use false pictures and false narratives, while hiding the fact that they themselves are preventing food distribution—often with the help of the UN, as mounting evidence now shows. And sadly, it is working. Why? Because when antisemitism hovers just beneath the surface, it takes only a slight tug on the heartstrings to bring it out. They have learned well from history. The old mindset remains: yes, it is happening, but since Jews are involved, they must be at fault.

Since 7 October, the rise of antisemitism in New Zealand has been appalling—from ordinary people on the street right up to the Prime Minister. Calls for witch hunts against the Jewish people have been made openly, while the government's silence has been deafening. In 1947, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, voted yes to the

UN Partition Plan, recognising the Jewish people's need for a safe homeland. By contrast, Opposition Leader Sid Holland would have voted no, influenced by trade with Arab nations. Sadly, our government today seems to be following Holland's lead. Are they being swayed by trade deals? Could Hamas be exploiting this through lies and misinformation to secure better arrangements for their supporters? Too often, governments blinded by prejudice against the Jewish people fail to grasp how negotiations truly work in the region—or to recognise that, in Islamic teaching, deception of non-Muslims is permitted, especially in times of war.

It is important to remember what has been said by Arafat, Hamas, and others: "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people." They have also declared their intent to fly their flag over every synagogue and church in Jerusalem. Arafat himself admitted that the Oslo Accords were only a temporary measure until their strength increased. They have warned us before, and they continue to warn us now, about their plans for Israel—and for the world.

Having lived in Bethlehem at the time, I witnessed firsthand what unfolded after the signing of the Oslo Accords. There were victory celebrations—by adults and children alike—not in the spirit of peace, but as triumphs signaling something very different. The rhetoric and actions I observed made it clear: no peace treaty was seen as genuine. Instead, each was viewed as a temporary lull, a chance to regroup and prepare for the next phase of conflict. This mindset has since been clearly demonstrated by Hamas since coming to power in Gaza. Islamic leaders have openly stated: "Give it five years or fifty years—time is on our side. We will take over." I urge global leaders to pay very close attention to such rhetoric. These are not empty words—they are intentions.

In the last fifty years, no agreement signed by the PLO, Hamas, or similar groups has been truly honored. Several peace offers have been made, yet destruction is all that has been returned. When will it end? That is a question many have asked. Perhaps peace will come when Hamas lays down its arms and releases the hostages. Or perhaps it could come when Israel lays down its arms. But history has shown the results of that approach. When Israel believed the border had quieted and stepped back in the hope that peace might settle in, Hamas responded with renewed aggression.





# Meaning of ‘Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem’

■ **Yaakov Ben Yehoshua**

Director | Beth Melekh International

*Psalm 122* is a song of ascent. The theme of the psalm concerns pilgrims going up to the House (tent, sanctuary) of the Lord in joy, petitioning Him for the manifest peace and everlasting establishment of Jerusalem (Judah, Israel, the Jews).

The isolated phrase ‘Pray for the peace of Jerusalem’ is often misrepresented by well-meaning and ignorant people who employ it as some kind of mantra for peace between Israel and her Palestinian (so called) Arab enemies. But that’s not at all what the context of this psalm denotes. In fact, in many ways it teaches the exact opposite. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem in the context of this psalm means praying for the defeat of Israel’s enemies.

At the time of David’s writing *Psalm 122*, Jerusalem was the capital of the united tribes of Israel under king David, God’s anointed King and the progenitor of the coming King *Messiah Yeshua* (Jesus).

David places his focus firmly on the Lord and seeking Him on the mountain where He has placed His Name (Mount Zion in Jerusalem). God’s name is also placed on the Jewish people, His title included in the name of Israel (*Yisra* [wrestle and overcome]—*El* [in God]).

This psalm is written with the company of all the faithful among the tribes of Israel in mind, and is intended for use throughout the ages as a call to ascend the mountain of the Lord for each of the Pilgrimage Festivals (*Pesach* [Passover], *Shavuot* [Pentecost], *Sukkot* [Shelters]).

To pray only a few decontextualised verses of this psalm as a petition for some vague universal peace that reflects a post enlightenment humanitarian utopian ideal, is an abhorrent misuse of the psalm and an affront to God and His chosen people Israel (ethnic, religious, empirical).

The intent of *Psalm 122* is to honour YHVH, the city of God, Jerusalem, and therefore the sum of that city, the chosen ethnic people of God, Israel (Jews) under the reign of king David’s greater Son the King *Messiah Yeshua* (Jesus), *Sar Shalom* (Prince of Peace), who establishes peace for Israel and for those among the nations who go up with her as ‘devoted friends’ and companions in the worship of the God of Israel (*ref. verse 8*).

## Some Key Contextual Elements in Psalm 122

**122:1**—This song is intended for use by Jewish (all the tribes of Israel, ethnic, religious, descendants of Jacob) worshippers who make *Aliyah* (go up) for the three Pilgrimage festivals *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*.



Verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 122 engraved in Hebrew and English on a rock in Tzahal Square, outside the Walls of Jerusalem. | Photo: Wikipedia Commons

## David, by the Holy Spirit speaks a blessing of prosperity over all who pray for peace in Israel and her capital, peace for the Jewish people.

Those who reflect David’s transcendent joy are his Jewish brothers and sisters and those devoted friends/companions who honour the God of Israel and therefore also honour the Jewish people (*ref. verse 8*).

The House of the Lord was, at the time of David’s authoring this psalm, the Tent of Meeting called *Beit Hamikdash* (the Sanctuary). The psalm therefore also points to the then yet to be built Temple of Solomon, which in turn points to the manifest dwelling of God Himself at the descent of the New Jerusalem at the end of days.

The goal then is YHVH the Lord, and meeting in and with Him in *HaMakum* (the place) of meeting, the everlasting capital of Israel, as established by the Lord, that is, Mt Zion in Jerusalem.

**122:2**—Those who agree with David come together to stand within the city where God has promised peace will abide in His Name.

We note here the Hebrew spelling of Jerusalem is *Yerushalam*, a singular form that lacks the intense plural ending ‘*ym*’ used in the post first century spelling of *Yerushalayim*.

This is significant given that while the newer spelling is generally used as referring to the singular city, it is nonetheless written in a Hebrew plural form denoting more than one Jerusalem.

There is of course the present earthly city of Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem that will descend from the heavens and

converge with the existing city, the old being renewed and the two becoming one, the sum of their inhabitants (*Isaiah 54:11-12; Revelation 21:1-3*).

**122:3**—The outpouring of peace is established in a specific location where heaven and earth will converge through the King *Messiah*’s atoning work.

A city is the sum of her inhabitants. At the time of the writing of this psalm the inhabitants of Jerusalem were predominantly made up of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and three times a year all the tribes of Israel inhabited the city. It is written to reflect David’s experience among his Jewish brothers and sisters during one of the Pilgrim Festivals.

The city therefore, being the sum of its inhabitants (Jews, Israelites) is joined together, meaning all the tribes of Israel are joined together within her walls during the Pilgrimage Festivals.

**122:4**—The branches are the tribes of Israel. Under David’s rule they approach together. They will approach together again. In fact, that later approach began in 1948 and will reach its fullness at the redemption of the entire remnant of the ethnic, religious, chosen, empirical Jewish people (*Romans 11:25-26*).

The branches (tribes) of Israel are seen here rooted and ‘joined together’ in Jerusalem (a flood of peace) (*ref. verse 3*).

Note that the unity of the tribes of Israel in worship on Mount Zion is a testimony of God’s goodness.

**122:5**—Jerusalem was then (during David’s reign) and will be in the future, a place of judgement. The thrones of judgement are of the house of David, upon which the tribes of Israel will be judged. The throne of the greater Son of David the King *Messiah Yeshua* (Jesus) is also prophetically inferred here as being the ultimate throne of judgement over Israel and the nations (*ref. Matthew 19:28*).

We note that *Yeshua* (Jesus) tells His disciples (who were from a variety of tribes in Israel) that they would one day, at the establishment of His Kingdom, sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. *Yeshua* (Jesus) gives this authority to them as the Greater Son of David and rightful heir to the throne of David (*Matthew 19:28*).

**122:6**—David admonishes his Jewish brothers and sisters and those devoted friends who accompany them in going up to worship the Lord, to plead with God for the peace, wholeness and wellbeing of the unified tribes of Israel, the sum of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

David, by the Holy Spirit speaks a blessing of prosperity over all who pray for peace in Israel and her capital, peace for the Jewish people.

**122:7**—David further speaks a blessing over the unified tribes of Israel gathered in Jerusalem for the Pilgrimage Festivals. This peace is to permeate every part of the city and every person.

**122:8**—David, by the Holy Spirit declares the promised outcome of peace over the unified tribes of Israel gathered in Jerusalem their everlasting capital, in God through *Messiah*.

In addition to David’s brothers and sisters (fellow Jews), accompanying devoted friends of the nations are also welcomed to go up. These Gentile worshippers qualify in the atoning work of God and because in love for YHVH through *Messiah*, they also love the Jewish people with the devotion of brothers and sisters. Gentiles who claim *Messiah* but nonetheless side against the Jewish people, do not qualify (*John 4:22*).

**122:9**—The House of YHVH and the place where it resides are signs pointing to Him. His purposes working out redemption for the repentant toward everlasting living.

Therefore, the purpose and goal of God’s house (both physically as a shadow of the heavenly things (*ref. Hebrews 8:5*) and spiritually, as the living stones, (*ref. 1 Peter 2:4-7; Ephesians 2:19-22*) the unified tribes of Israel and those God fearing Gentiles who are devoted friends of Israel) is right relationship in Him through the *Messiah Yeshua* (Jesus) unto eternal life and perpetual intimacy and unity in God.



## Simchat Torah—Two Years After 7 October

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

Two years have passed since 7 October 2023—the day *Simchat Torah* in Israel was transformed from a festival of joy into a day of horror. What should have been a celebration of Jewish continuity and joy became the scene of the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. The scars are still raw, the grief still sharp. But the spirit of the Jewish people—the covenant between a people and their *Torah*—endures.

This *Simchat Torah*, in 2025, Jews around the world will once again lift the *Torah* scrolls high, circle their synagogues in joy, and sing ancient words. But behind every dance step is a shadow. Behind every song, an echo of screams. *Simchat Torah* is no longer only a celebration. It is a reckoning. A resistance. A reaffirmation.

### The Day That Changed Everything

On 7 October 2023 (*Simchat Torah*) Hamas launched an unprovoked attack on Israel. Over 3,000 heavily armed terrorists breached the Gaza border and rampaged through Israeli towns, *kibbutzim*, and music festivals. They slaughtered over 1,200 men, women, and children—often with barbaric cruelty. They raped women and burned entire families alive. They desecrated bodies. They abducted more than 240 hostages, including babies, Holocaust survivors, and foreign nationals.

It was not a military assault. It was a pogrom. And it occurred not in 1941, but in 2023—on the very day Jews were meant to be rejoicing with the *Torah*.

**To celebrate *Simchat Torah* in 2025 is to declare: Jewish memory matters. Jewish life matters. And we will defend both.**

Synagogues across Israel, especially in the south, fell silent. Many never even opened. Families who had planned to dance with the *Torah* instead locked themselves in safe rooms. Others never made it out alive. *Torah* scrolls were stained with blood. And while the world watched, too many turned away. Too many justified, excused, or denied.

### Simchat Torah as Resistance

*Simchat Torah* (literally ‘Rejoicing with the *Torah*’) marks the completion of the annual cycle of *Torah* readings and the immediate beginning of the next. It is a powerful symbol of continuity: the Jewish people never stop, never pause, never abandon their story. Even in exile. Even in war. Even after tragedy.

In that spirit, *Simchat Torah* has always been an act of defiant joy. Jews have



Jewish men carry Torah scrolls as they dance during *Simchat Torah* celebrations at Rabin Square, Tel Aviv, on 24 October 2024. | Photo: Flash90

danced with the *Torah* in concentration camps, in the *gulags* of Siberia, and in the shadow of persecution from Spain to Iran. In 2023, that spirit was tested again—and it did not break.

To dance with the *Torah* in 2025 is not to forget. It is to remember through rejoicing. It is to say: We are still here. We will not be erased.

The joy is no longer naïve. It is informed by pain. But it is no less real.

### A Dance with the Dead—and the Living

This year, Jews will dance not just for the *Torah*, but with the memories of those who were taken. Every scroll held aloft will carry the weight of those murdered in Be’eri, Kfar Aza, and Nir Oz. Every song will remember the silence of those

who can no longer sing. Children orphaned by Hamas’s violence will circle the *bimah* clutching scrolls heavier than their small arms. Survivors of the massacre will join the procession with tears and resilience. Hostage families will dance with empty spaces beside them—praying for loved ones who may still be alive in Hamas captivity.

To celebrate *Simchat Torah* in 2025 is to carry both the joy and the grief of our people.

It is a day of paradox: of ecstasy and ache. Of eternity and urgency. Of ancient verses and modern wounds.

### Scroll and Sword

There is an old image in Jewish tradition: the scroll and the sword. The *Torah* represents law, morality, continuity, and holiness. The sword

represents necessity—the sometimes bitter requirement to defend Jewish life from those who would extinguish it.

Since 7 October, more and more Jews have understood that both are required.

Young Israelis who once held *Torah* scrolls in their arms now shoulder rifles. Not out of bloodlust, but out of obligation. Because there is no joy without security. No survival without strength. No *Simchat Torah* if Jewish lives are left undefended.

The war that began on 7 October is not merely a battle over land. It is a battle over moral clarity—over whether the world will permit terror to be justified in the name of politics, whether Jewish life will be considered expendable once again, and whether memory still matters.

To celebrate *Simchat Torah* in 2025 is to declare: Jewish memory matters. Jewish life matters. And we will defend both.

### A World Turned Upside Down

Perhaps what has been most shocking since 7 October is not only the massacre itself, but the global response to it.

Instead of a moral reckoning, much of the world offered moral relativism. “Context,” they said. As if anything could justify the slaughter of infants. As if raping women and parading their naked bodies through Gaza were a legitimate act of resistance. As if hostage-taking were a negotiation strategy.

In the weeks and months that followed, Jewish students were harassed on university campuses. Synagogues were vandalised. Calls for Jewish genocide echoed in Western cities—often cloaked in the language of ‘liberation’. And the world that so often lectures on human rights remained, at best, ambivalent.

In such a world, dancing with the *Torah* is an act of political and spiritual resistance.

It is to say: You will not shame us into silence. You will not frighten us into hiding. We will live. We will sing. We will remember. We will teach our children to do the same.

### The Torah Is Not Just a Scroll

Why do Jews celebrate *Simchat Torah* so passionately? Because the *Torah* is not merely a text. It is the spine of the Jewish people. The covenant. The story. The moral compass. The collective memory. The divine whisper passed from generation to generation.

When we finish the last verse of Deuteronomy and immediately begin Genesis again, we affirm something profound: that our story does not end. Even when chapters are filled with exile, pogroms, crusades, ghettos, or 7 October—the next verse still begins. The people still continue.

**That is *Simchat Torah*. That is Jewish history. That is Jewish hope. This Year, We Dance Differently**

*Simchat Torah* 2025 is not like those before it. It is not simple. It is not innocent.

But it is sacred.

It is the sacred act of remembering our dead and celebrating our survival. It is the sacred act of teaching our children to love life and defend it. It is the sacred act of showing the world that even after unimaginable cruelty, Jews do not answer with hatred, but with joy.

We dance. We sing. We circle. We cry. We remember. We begin again.

This year, the scrolls are heavier. But our grip is firmer.

### Am Yisrael Chai

Across Israel and the diaspora, Jews will declare three words that have carried us through centuries of fire: *Am Yisrael Chai*—the people of Israel live.

We live not in spite of the *Torah*, but because of it.

We live not to forget, but to remember.

We live not in victimhood, but in victory—not the kind that conquers others, but the kind that refuses to be conquered.

This *Simchat Torah*, we hold our *Torah* scrolls close.

We carry our dead with us.

We sing louder.

We dance harder.

And we begin the cycle again—because we are still here.

**Am Yisrael Chai. The Torah lives. The Jewish people endure. And we will keep dancing.**





# Modern Israel: Heir to Ancient Israel—Part 6

## ■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

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

Controversy raged in April 2020 over a Danish Bible Society translation of the Bible—*Bible 2020*. In it the translators had removed ‘nearly every mention of Israel’. It was reported that 59 of 60 references to Israel in the New Testament had been removed from the original text. The Danish Bible Society, defending its new translation, said “it did not want to confuse its readers into thinking the Land of Israel in biblical times was the same as present-day Israel” (Danish Translated NT wipes out Israel references).

The controversy, reported in Israeli media, drew the attention of the Rev Dr Petra Heldt, Director of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Jerusalem. Heldt pointed out some of the Bible references which have been changed. In *Matthew 2:21*, the ‘land of Israel’ has been changed to ‘home’. In *Jeremiah 33:7* ‘the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel’ has been changed to ‘the fortunes of all my people’. In *Isaiah 43:1* we read, “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not. For I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.’” ‘O Jacob’ and ‘O Israel’ have been removed. Heldt summed it up by saying:

Above all, the Danish Bible Society separates Israel from its Land. Apart from other key issues of the faith, it denies the reader the knowledge of the intrinsic connection between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and between Israel and its Land. It falls in the trap of which the Apostle Paul warned, “It is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you” (*Romans 11:18*). (International Outrage over Denmark’s Fake Bible).

It seems the Jewish people do not have a problem knowing their own heritage. The same sort of controversy raged over a similar incident in 2019 when Israeli media reported that certain Palestinians involved in the political debate were claiming that Jesus Christ was a Palestinian. It was very heartwarming to see the Jewish people from different influential sectors of Israeli society coming out and claiming Jesus as their own: “A History lesson...Jesus Christ, regardless of whether or not you believe he was the Messiah, was born Jesus son of Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Nazarene, or Jesus of Galilee, and he identified as a Jew from birth to death” (No; Jesus of Nazareth was not a Palestinian).



| Photo: Unsplash

## The Jewish people have kept their identity down through the ages, whether by their Jewish customs or by Judaism—the religion unique to the Jewish people.

The attempt to separate the Jewish People from their historical land is not working. Today, Jews from India are returning to the Land of Israel. They are the *Bnei Menashe*—sons of Manasseh. They claim descent from the tribe of Manasseh, which was sent into exile by the Assyrians in the Eighth Century BC. (*Bnei Menashe*). Ethiopian Jews, an ancient community of 2,500 years—attributed to the exiled tribe of Dan after the destruction of the first temple (586 BC) have been returning to their historical, biblical homeland since 1984. The Jewish people have kept their identity down through the ages, whether by their Jewish customs or by Judaism—the religion unique to the Jewish people.

### Who Are the Jews?

The first occurrence of the word ‘Jew’ in the Bible is in *2 Kings 16:6*, “At that time Rezin King of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath”. This was written about events in the 8th Century BC when Ahaz was King of Judah. It is referring to the Syrians driving the people of Judah from their southernmost port on the Red Sea—Elath. As early as the 8th Century BC the word Jew was already being used. It was referring originally to the Israelites who descended from the tribe of Judah, as Jew in Hebrew is *Yehudi* and Judah in Hebrew is *Yehudah*. *Yehudi* comes from *Yehudah*, i.e. a Jew comes from, or out of, Judah. This is the literal meaning of a Jew.

As time went on the word Jew became synonymous with any of the Israelites, no matter what the tribe, who remained faithful to the religion of the people of Judah, whose temple was, or had been, in Jerusalem. Judaism, that faith of the Jewish people, has remained throughout the centuries the glue which has kept the people of Israel together as a unique people group and preserved them for the great restoration we are now witnessing in the last days. There is no doubt that many of the Israelites were assimilated into the communities they were exiled to, and they lost their Jewish heritage and identity altogether. But those who remained faithful to the God of Abraham throughout the centuries, have made it onto the stage of God’s end-time purposes for Israel. Even though many Israelis today have become secular in their outlook, God has preserved them as a unique people up till now for such a time as this.

Even the return from Babylon to Jerusalem in the Sixth Century BC, recorded in *1 Chronicles 9*, included Israelites from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Levi. They were all referred to as ‘Jews’ in *Ezra chapters 5 and 6*. Throughout the book of *Ezra* ‘Jews’, ‘people of Israel’, and ‘all Israel’ seem to be synonymous. So, there is clear evidence that those Israelites, despite their tribal affiliations, who remained faithful to the God of Judah, whose temple was in Jerusalem, were all called Jews. That is why Mordecai the

Benjamite in *Esther 5:13* was called ‘Mordecai the Jew’. And further we read, “Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes” (*Esther 3:6 NIV*). I am sure ‘all Mordecai’s people, the Jews’ is a reference to all the scattered Israelites who still knew their identity because they still worshipped the true God of Israel whose Temple had been in the territory of Judah. We also read that in New Testament times Paul, a Benjamite, was a Jew (*Philippians 3:5, Galatians 1:14; 2:15*).

Jews today are Jews by two things—race and/or religion, and a direct line connecting them to the Jews of the Bible can be made. It is right to say then that the people of Israel today, Jewish people living in the Jewish State are the descendants of ancient Biblical Israel. Although there are other members of other races now part of modern Israel, like the Arab citizens of Israel, and the Druze community etc., yet, overall, the majority living in the Jewish State are Jews. Modern Israel is still Biblical Israel.

Notice Paul’s summary of the Jewish people in *Romans 9:3-5 (NIV)*:

“For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. *Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen*” (emphasis mine).

Key words are ‘Theirs is’ and ‘Theirs are’. This is present tense. God has not cast aside his covenant people. ‘Theirs’ still ‘is’.

So, having established the fact that the Jewish people today are indeed the descendants of historical, Biblical Israel, and therefore heirs to the promises given them through their great patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we can then affirm that modern Israel is still Biblical Israel. The Bible story continues today in the form of Israel’s prophetic story being told.

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## In Search of the Palestinians—Part 2

### ■ Dr Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

In Part 1 of this three part series, we searched for record of the Palestinian people over the nineteen centuries from the 1st Century AD to the beginning of the British Mandate. We found remarkably little. Of course, there were many different peoples living in the Land over the centuries, but near zero trace of a distinct Palestinian identity. By contrast, the Jews and the Samaritans retain their distinct identity throughout.

In Part 3 we will look at the current anointing of the Palestinian people as a people chosen to symbolise a global struggle and pitched specifically against Israel: God's chosen people and their claim to the Land of Israel. In Part 2 here, we consider how the Palestinians emerged from near invisibility as a distinct identity that is now being elevated toward their latter day anointing.

After WWI, the main cry of Arabs in the Land is for unity with Syria. However, the British Mandate for Palestine is recognised in 1920 and approved by the League of Nations in 1922. The Palestine Mandate brings the term 'Palestine' into the lives of everyone, but neither rich nor poor turn to a specifically Palestinian heritage. Raashid Khalidi, in his influential book *Palestinian Identity* finds occasional references to an Arab Palestinian nation in the (small circulation) Arab newspapers. He has to scramble hard to produce further evidence, such as a geography schoolbook that refers to Syria and Palestine separately. (Another writer points out that the schoolbook presents Filastin as part of Syria.) Given the political reality of Palestine and the Zionist issue, one might expect stronger expression of a distinct identity.

The 1922 Churchill White Paper on Palestine states that "all citizens ... shall be Palestinian." Jews, Arabs and the British indifferently use the term 'Palestinian' for local residents. Jews receive Palestinian citizenship; the English language, Jewish newspaper is *The Palestine Post*; the New York 1939 World Fair has a 'Jewish Palestine' pavilion; American Jews use the slogan 'Free Palestine' to support the Zionist cause against the British; they form the American League for a Free Palestine and a Palestine Independence Fund. The UN 1947 resolution 181 on the 'Palestine Question' refers to a future 'Jewish State' and 'Arab State' and to citizens of either as 'Palestinian citizens'.

Arab leader Awni Abd Al-Hadi insists to the Peel Commission "There is no such country as Palestine. 'Palestine' is a term the Zionists invented." The UN Mediator in Palestine, Folke Bernadotte, remarks that "The Palestine Arabs have at present no will of their own. Neither have they ever developed any specifically Palestinian nationalism." When the Arab League forms a volunteer army in 1947 to fight the Jews, its commander complains that Palestine Arabs make up less than 20% of his force and the majority desert. He notes "a rise in factionalism and local alliances among Palestinians [that] has pitted them against one another." A minority of local Arabs are involved in offensive activities; villages often have peace deals with nearby Jewish settlements.

The invading Arab armies in 1948 intend to carve up the territory between their respective states. The Jerusalem grandee Musa Alami writes that "the people are in great need of a 'myth' to fill their consciousness and imagination."

From 1948 to 1967 Arab states control both Gaza and the West Bank. They grant little or no self-government. Egypt puts Gaza under military rule. An 'All-Palestine Government' has nominal jurisdiction but minimal influence and is dissolved in 1959. Jordan's parliament proclaims the complete political union between the two sides of the Jordan River and bans use of the word 'Palestine.' Jordan loses the West Bank in the 1967 war and renounces its claim in 1988. From 1958 to 1961, Egypt and Syria form the United Arab Republic to emphasize their shared identity as a united Arab nation and their intent to swallow up the annoying country that lies between them.

In 1956, Ahmed Shukairy (representing Syria) tells the UN Security Council "It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but southern Syria." In 1964, Shukairy becomes first chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Its charter introduces the term "the Palestinian people." Article 2 ties Palestine to the boundaries of the British Mandate; Article 24 renounces any claim to the West Bank (under Jordanian control at the time) and Gaza (under Egyptian control.) Thus, the PLO charter limits its interest to Arab people within Israel's borders. The PLO's liberation is directed against the State of Israel, not uniting a wider Palestinian people. Yasser Arafat (PLO chairman 1969-2004) repeatedly states that it is "only by military actions that we (can) fix the Palestinian identity."

Today, the PLO's successor, the Palestinian Authority, runs the West Bank and seeks to regain control of Gaza – the exact reverse of the PLO's previous geographic focus. What of the PLO's original target for liberation: the Arabs in Israel? Today, they number some two million. In 2024, when asked what is the 'dominant element' in their personal identity, 33.9% state Israeli citizenship, 29.2% religious affiliation and 26.9% their Arab identity. 9% respond Palestinian. Other surveys (and political behaviours) confirm the point. The great majority want neither 'Palestinian' identity nor 'liberation' from Israel's supposed oppression. The PLO's mission and actions are rejected by the very people it once claimed to serve.

After the 1967 Six Day War, the term 'the Palestinian people' is more widely taken up and in 1974 UN resolution 292 declares "the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people." Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's comment in 1969 that "there is no such thing as a distinct Palestinian people" is later denounced as 'Israeli denialism'. Yet Zuhair Muhsen, military commander of the PLO, states in 1977 "The Palestinian people does not exist ... the existence of a separate Palestinian identity exists only for tactical reasons." In 2012 Hamas minister of the interior, Fathi Hammad, slams Egypt for not helping Gaza, saying "Who are the Palestinians? ... Half of the Palestinians are Egyptian and the other half are Saudis."

Academics grasp at every straw for evidence of an emerging Palestinian identity. Sociologists Kimmerling and Migdal discover a "growing Palestinian identity" in the 1930, then a community "groping towards its own distinct identity," and only after 1967 that Palestinians "developed a self-identity." Khalidi in *Palestinian Identity* argues that various factors combine together in a moment of crisis to bring about a swift change in society and personal identity. Whether those arriving swiftly at such an identity are descendants of families long settled in the land is another matter.



Golda Meir, Israeli Prime Minister 1969-1974  
"There is no such thing as a distinct Palestinian people."

These movements and statements show a concerted attempt to build a distinct Palestinian identity. For the political interests of Arab states and the religious drives of Islam, this narrative provides a point of unity and marks Israel as the oppressor of Arab people and the intruder on Muslim lands. For the West, there are oil interests. The actual Arab people of the Land are secondary to this. The inconvenient Arab citizens of Israel are ignored. Mostly, the Arab nations where refugees from Palestine are scattered do not assist or encourage them to integrate with their new home. The UN's specialist agency UNRWA records their descendants as refugees in perpetuity, with entitlement to ongoing support—unlike the handling of all other refugee groups aided by the UN.

In Part 3 of this study we will look at the flowering of this prolonged campaign.

These articles draw on material from Dr Simon Smelt's new book 'From the River to the Sea: the Land in History and Prophecy from the 1st to the 20th Century.' See the advert on this page, our website, or the resources listed on the back page. The book includes extensive foot notes.

### From the River to the Sea: the Land in History & Prophecy from the 1st to the 20th Century by Dr Simon Smelt

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# Flowers, Tears and Gratitude



(Left) At the richly laid table, the survivors talk about the terrible experiences during the Holocaust that they will never forget. (Middle) The fact that his story is not forgotten means the world to Michail, aged 95, shown with Dana Nowak. (Right) Gita Koifman (center) smiles as she learns from Anemone Rüger (right) that C4I wants to increase its support for Holocaust survivors. | Photos: C4I

## ■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

It's only in recent years that a specific group of Holocaust Survivors in Israel has received due attention: Those whose native language is Russian and who couldn't make *Aliyah* until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Once they arrived in their old-new homeland, they were unable to build up a financial cushion for their retirement and have become increasingly dependent on external help. Gita Koifman, herself a *Shoah* Survivor, has dedicated her life to supporting them. Dana Nowak and Anemone Rüger (Christians for Israel Germany) met the group in Gita's living room.

The two of us have just enough hands to carry all the flower bouquets, little giveaways and greeting cards up the elevator to Gita's apartment. Her guests are already sitting expectantly in a circle: Ruth and Genya, Roman and Rachmil and Yefim; from Czernowitz and Bratslav and Briceni. All their places of origin are familiar to us from our visits to the Jewish communities in Ukraine and Moldova. But these Holocaust survivors chose Israel in the 1990s.

Rachmil can communicate with us quite well in Hebrew. Ruth speaks to us in German. "That's my mother tongue—I was born in Czernowitz, which used to be Austria." But everyone is most familiar with Russian. After a round of introductions and a brief discussion about our work, the survivors begin to tell their stories one by one. How their fathers had to go to the battlefield, how their mothers tried to escape with them and were caught by the Germans, and how the Moldovan *shtetl* residents were humiliated and tortured by Romanian troops allied with Nazi

Germany, before being driven north across the Dniester. Those who were still alive arrived in the overcrowded *shtetls* of southern Ukraine, where a long ordeal began. Years later the survivors returned to their depopulated hometowns and searched for the houses where their childhoods had begun.

### We Can't Afford to Remain Silent!

Yefim must talk about Pechora, the death camp near Vinnitsa from which very few people survived. When he can't speak any more, I sit down next to him. I put a hand on his shoulder until he regains his composure. As hard as it is to remember the horror, the stories must be told. "That's why we exist in our survivors' association," says Genya as we remind them that we don't want to pressure anyone to share their stories. "It's so important to us that people find out what happened back then! Antisemitism is on the rise again everywhere. We cannot afford to remain silent!"

"As long as we live, we will speak out and bear witness to what we experienced and saw," says Gita. "We will speak, shout and scream if necessary."

I remember the heart-shaped waffles that my mother had baked in Germany for the survivors and that I had individually wrapped in gift bags the night before. With a careless movement, they had all broken at the door. But that was probably meant to be, I suddenly realised. "Our hearts are broken, along with yours," we tell the survivors. "What a privilege for us that you share these difficult memories with us! We want to be by your side for as long as we can."

"We've met so many times," says Genya, turning to Gita. "But there's never been anything like this! We've never felt such warmth and love from Germans

before!" "Yes, it really is like that," says Ruth in German, almost disappearing behind her bouquet of flowers as she struggles to hold back her tears.

All eyes are on us. Over tea and biscuits, the survivors soak up all the good news that we have brought with us from the many Christians who are actively supporting Israel. Rachmil, aged 96, keeps asking questions. He has a lot to process. "I've never met people like you in my entire life!"

"It's so important for us to preserve the memory of the Holocaust," Gita concludes. "Normally we do this through the newspapers, through the internet. But the most important place where these stories need to be preserved—that's you! You are the link to the next generation. There are many good people who express their compassion. But not many have the courage to translate it into action and show it publicly. You have that. I believe that your tears and your words will outlive us." There are hugs, and then more hugs. There is so much to catch up on.

When I tell Gita that Christians for Israel has increased the budget to better support the needs of the increasingly frail survivors, Gita cries with joy. "You know, these people didn't have a childhood. And I know what it was like for them. I'll do anything for them for as long as God gives me strength. I almost can't believe that we are together in this circle today. When I was two, I was in the way. I should have been killed too. And today I have so many friends in Germany. I can hardly believe it!"

Kindly join us in supporting the many Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in Ukraine.  
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# The God of Israel is their Strength

## ■ Rev Willem Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel International

*"But you, O Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham My friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are My servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish..." (Isaiah 41:8-11)*

If you follow the news about Israel and the Jewish people, fear can strike your heart. Almost exclusively negative, everyone is pointing the finger of blame at Israel.

Hatred against Israel is hatred against the God of Israel, says *Psalm 83:1-5* "...O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still. See how Your enemies are astir, how Your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against Your people; they plot against those You cherish. 'Come,' they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.' With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against You..."

Trampled on for centuries, the Jewish people have been beaten, plundered, ridiculed, driven to the margins of society or crammed into ghettos, boycotted, and falsely accused, hunted down, driven away, and systematically murdered. For no other reason than being Jewish.



| Photo: Shutterstock

Jerusalem, the third holy city of Islam after Mecca and Medina as its capital, between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free" is their politico-religious slogan.

The United Nations adopts an endless series of anti-Israel resolutions, almost unanimously declaring statehood of 'Palestine' upon the land that the Lord God promised to the people of Israel. All these plans

**Ultimately their only true friend is their Heavenly Father, the Lord God of Israel. As *Psalm 68* says, it is the God of Israel who gives strength; from Him comes the strength of the people [Israel].**

Today Jews are boycotted in the fields of sports, from academic institutions like schools and universities, from participation in the Eurovision Song Festival and sports events like the Vuelta in Spain. 'Pro-Palestine' demonstrators all around the world intimidate the general public, Church-going-people, governments, and Parliamentarians. They are inspired by a demonic, unbridled Jew-hatred and they want to wipe Israel from the map of the Middle East. Their goal is to establish an Islamic State of Palestine in its place, with

for division of the Promised Land will invoke His fierce anger upon the nations of the world, says *Joel 3:1-2*:

*"...In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem [which is happening right before our very eyes already for over 100 years] I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to My inheritance, My people Israel, because they scattered My people among the nations and divided up My land..."*

## So Where Are the Jewish People to Find Help? Who Can Give Them Strength?

Ultimately their only true friend is their Heavenly Father, the Lord God of Israel. As *Psalm 68* says, it is the God of Israel who gives strength; from Him comes the strength of the people [Israel]. He is bringing His people Israel back to His land of Israel (*Leviticus 25:23*), "with all My heart and soul" (*Jeremiah 32:41*). "The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace..." (*Psalm 29:11*).

The God of Israel is their strength. Israel can trust in Him. May they pray, as David did:

*"Praise be to You, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks and praise Your glorious Name. Glory and wealth are from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are power and might; You determine the destiny of the nations..." (1 Chronicles 29:10-13).*

## Temptation

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

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Similar to the previous section of the Lord's Prayer, this one also has two parts. Each part is formulated as a contrast ('but'). You can understand it to mean that the second part explains the first.

What is meant by temptation? Temptation has a negative ring. A more neutral translation would be testing (see the footnote in the NIV), or you might also use the word 'trying'. God tried Abraham (*Genesis 22*). God tested him. According to Jewish

tradition, Abraham was subjected to ten trials, all of which he passed. Was it to see where Abraham stood; whether he held fast to his faithfulness to God? Or was it to make him stronger in it, thereby elevating him?

Jesus was tempted in the desert; by the devil, but it was the Spirit who led Him away into the desert to be tempted. This is curious. The same verb is used here. Clearly, the devil is out to overthrow Jesus, but Jesus is victorious.

God does not tempt anyone, writes James. Every person is tempted when he allows himself to be carried away by his own lusts. And when you give in to that, it leads to sin and the end result is death (*James 1:13*). Jewish tradition calls this the 'evil inclination' that exists alongside the good

inclination in every human being. The evil drive has both creative and destructive power and is also sometimes linked to Satan. The evil drive has to be turned around and harnessed for good. This is the personal struggle of every human being.

A few verses earlier (*verse 2-3*), James also talks about temptation. But you can be happy about that! This kind of temptation is indeed a trial (*verse 3*) to test you and strengthen your faithfulness. There, the evil inclination is curbed by the good inclination.

Perhaps the prayer in the Lord's Prayer also sees that inner struggle: do not surrender us to our evil inclination, but help us curb it. Jesus not only set the example in the desert, but also won the victory for us.



## Recommended Viewing

**Thistledown Seed**

by Louise Helfgott. Review written by Melbourne Holocaust Museum volunteer, Caren Silver.

*It is only by knowing where we have come from that we can ever really know who we are.*

Louise Helfgott's compelling biography/memoir threads together three narratives, moving back and forth seamlessly between them: between her journey to Poland, her childhood memories, and the fate of her Polish aunts. Her writing is often poetic, sharing her intense responses to what she discovers about her family's Holocaust experiences and how she "feels irrevocably changed— stamped with the stain of a historic blood-bath that can never be washed away."

While in Poland, Helfgott experiences a sense of "being at home" and wonders, "Can the memories of distant relatives be trapped in the cells of one's body, creating shared remembrance of places that one has not been before?"

This may be a response that resonates with her readers, many of whom will be the family of Holocaust survivors within our community. Her visits to the places of her parents' pasts and her acquisition of historic documents regarding them and their extended families enable her to understand more about her parents' early lives and the fate of their families during the Holocaust.

Helfgott also writes intimately about her past, her lonely childhood, about her constant sense of alienation at home, at school, and in social situations, her only refuge being her writing. She endures a tense relationship with her father, whose life she describes as a "battlefield...always at odds with the forces that tried to shape and mould him." Adding to their conflicts are those between her father and her brother, David, the celebrated concert pianist.

The third narrative, italicised to acknowledge that it is fictionalised, imagines the deportation to Treblinka of Helfgott's two aunts, children at the time, deported and facing their impending deaths in the gas chamber.

The survivor guilt carried by her parents, both of whom escaped from Europe before the outbreak of the war, is a palpable shadow that haunts them and their home. Through the melding of the three narratives, Helfgott powerfully portrays the intergenerational impact of the Holocaust with sensitivity.

To enquire further about the Thistledown Seed, please reach out to [library@mhm.org.au](mailto:library@mhm.org.au).

## ■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

To this day, Jesus' calling to redeem Israel, gather all the Jews back to their land and root them in the *Torah* has not been completely fulfilled. Because of that, however, he has become the 'light to the Gentiles'. Paul summarises this salvation-historical correlation in *Romans 11* in several statements:

- Through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles (*verse 11*)
- Their fall is riches for the world (*verse 12a*)
- Their diminishing is the riches of the Gentiles (*verse 12b*)
- Their casting away is the reconciling of the world (*verse 15*)
- The natural branches were broken off, so the wild branches could be grafted in (*verses 17-24*)
- As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes (*verse 28*)
- You have obtained mercy through their unbelief (*verse 30*).

We non-Jews have recognised God's *Messiah*, whom His own people failed to see for our sake. This gives the Gentile Church a responsibility: to provoke Israel to jealousy. Paul concludes in *Romans 10* that Israel will come to faith not through hearing or understanding the Word, but by being provoked to jealousy: "*I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a people; by a foolish nation I will anger you*" (*verse 19*).

In the following chapter he gets right to the point of this calling on the Gentile Church: Salvation has come to the Gentiles for the very purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy (*Romans 11:11*). Two verses later the Apostle emphasises: "*For I tell you Gentiles: I praise my calling as Apostle to the Gentiles, because I might provoke some of my blood-relatives to jealousy through my mission to the Gentiles, and thus save them*" (*11:13-14*).

We accept that salvation came to us from the Jews through Jesus Christ and feel, spiritually, a step ahead of them. "*Gentiles have achieved righteousness, while Israel, pursuing the law, did not succeed*" (*Romans 9:30-31*). We assume Israel should now depend on us spiritually, feeling a sense of pride that they receive mercy through the mercy shown to us (*Romans 11:31*).

The Apostle purposely targets this basic Gentile Christian misconception with regard to Israel. He uses the ancient biblical image of the olive tree (*Romans 11:17-24*).

In the ancient Orient, olives were a

## The Olive Tree



Olive trees in Gethsemane garden, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

crucial part of the daily diet. The olive tree was especially known for its 'fatness'. In the Holy Scripture, the olive tree, especially in view of the oil that is made from its fruit, stands for wealth, luxury, and blessing.

Olive oil did not just serve as food, but also as fuel for lamps, as ointment oil, cosmetics and medicine. For these reasons, the olive tree was counted among the most noble of trees (compare *Judges 9:8*). Because of its high value and its symbolic meaning, olive oil is often mentioned in the context of sacrifices.

The very hard and often gnarled wood of the oil tree is nearly useless as a building material. It was probably its symbolic value that led King Solomon to have the cherubim and some of the doors in the temple made of olive wood (*1 Kings 6:23,31-33*).

Expositors of the Scriptures often interpret the oil as a 'symbol of the Spirit of God and His gifts'. This is based on the use of anointing oil for the inauguration of priests and kings in Israel, as well as the interpretation of the olive trees in *Zechariah 4* and *Revelation 11*. In both of those Scripture portions, angelic messengers with extraordinary divine power are referred to as olive trees (*Zechariah 4:1-5,11-14; Revelation 11:3-4*).

In our context, however, the olive tree is used as an image for Israel—either its people or its *Messiah* (Anointed One). They are certainly not mutually exclusive. The noble 'Olive Tree Israel' represents the unity of God's chosen people and its king—just as, in a similar fashion, the image of the 'Servant of the Lord' or the 'Son of God' in Biblical revelation may represent the people of Israel as well as its *Messiah*. Concerning the people of Israel, God says through His servant David: "*Do not touch my Messiahs!*" (*Anointed ones: 1 Chronicles*

*16:22; Psalms 105:15*). The author of the Letter to Hebrews even goes as far as to identify the suffering of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt as "*the insult of Messiah*" (*Hebrews 11:26*).

*Hosea (14:5-6)* describes the relationship with his chosen people that God strives for: "*I will be like the dew to Israel..., his beauty shall be like the olive*". The prophet Jeremiah says: "*The Lord called you a green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit*" (*Jeremiah 11:16*).

Paul picks up on Jeremiah's analogy. Israel is the olive tree. The Apostle thereby indirectly refers to Israel's riches: the 'status as son,' the glory, the covenants, the 'giving of Torah,' the service of worship, the promises, the fathers and the *Messiah*.

And yet Jeremiah had to ask: "*What is my beloved doing in my temple as she, with many others, works out her evil schemes?*" and then went on to explain that the Lord: "*will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken.*" (*Jeremiah 11:15-16*). Paul also states that "*some of the branches were broken off*" (*Romans 11:17*), that they were expelled from communion with their God, from their land and from their original destiny.

Paul focuses not on Israel's behavior, but on the relationship between Gentile believers and the Jewish people, addressing the arrogance non-Jews have shown toward Israel over the centuries.

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*)



# Sukkot—Feast of Tabernacles



Jewish men dance with Torah scrolls during Simhat Torah celebrations at Rabin Square, Tel Aviv, 24 October 2024. | Photo: Flash90

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

From 7 to 13 October, Israel celebrates *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles. Like every Jewish festival, the Feast of Tabernacles begins on the evening (of the 6th). This is the Biblical order of creation: “And there was evening and there was morning, one day”. The day begins with the evening.

**The children decorate the hut with the symbols of the feast: the fruits of the season and the ‘four kinds’ and with all kinds of beautiful drawings.**

For eight days, the Jewish people lived in huts (*sukkot*), as a reminder of the exodus from Egypt and the journey through the desert. The roof of the hut (*sukkah*) is made of branches and it must not be completely closed. You must be able to see the sky through the branches. Immediately after the Day of Atonement (2 October) is over, the father will start work on the *sukkah*. And the children help, of course. The walls of the hut can be of any natural material, usually planks, but you can also use blankets, for example. The children decorate the hut with the symbols of the feast: the fruits of the season and the ‘four species’ and with all kinds of beautiful drawings.

Living eight days in the *sukkah* means to learn that we do not have a permanent city here. Living means eating, at least one meal a day, and preferably sleeping in the *sukkah* too. And then you return to your home. Yet through this experience, your home starts to feel like a *sukkah* as well. Israel confesses: we

depend on God’s blessing in everything. A beautiful lesson for Christians, too!

**Lulav**  
An important object at the Feast of Tabernacles is the *lulav*. This is a bundle of branches from a palm, a myrtle and a brook willow. In addition, it includes the *etrog*, a lemon-like fruit. These are the so-called ‘four species’ of the feast mentioned in *Leviticus 23:40*. The bundle of branches and the *etrog* are taken in

the hand during prayers and moved back and forth in the four directions according to Biblical prescription. According to Jewish tradition, the four species symbolise four types of religion: the myrtle branch has smell but no taste. This is *Torah* knowledge not accompanied by corresponding good deeds—a faith without works. The palm branch has flavour, but no fragrance. These are good deeds, but without knowledge of God’s word. The brook willow has neither smell nor taste. It lacks both knowledge and right living. The *etrog* has smell and taste. This is how every Jew should be: with the smell of the knowledge of God’s commandment and the taste of living according to God’s will.

Waving palm branches should be familiar to us. John the evangelist tells us that at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, people picked palm branches and sang to Jesus: “*Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*”. And these are exactly the words (from *Psalms 118*)

sung in the synagogue when moving the *lulav*! John connects Easter and *Sukkot* to designate Jesus as the *Messiah*.

**Israel and the Nations**  
Especially at the Feast of Tabernacles, the significance of Israel to the nations of the world becomes clear. At the time of the Temple, a total of seventy bulls were sacrificed during *Sukkot*. According to Jewish tradition, this was done for the seventy nations of the earth, which there are according to *Genesis*.

In the synagogue service, the last chapter of the prophet *Zechariah* is read, *Zechariah 14*. There the prophet foretells (verse 16) that one day all nations will annually march to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Jerusalem will become the international centre of worship. For the nations will come there to “*pray to the King, the Lord of hosts*”. Earlier in the chapter, he mentioned that the Lord will be king over all the earth. “*Then the Lord will be one and His Name will be one*” (verse 9). All nations will recognise and call upon Him in unison.

Jesus also celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (*John 7*). From the Feast of Tabernacles to *Passover*, the Jews pray for rain. The beginning of this prayer cycle was marked by a particular ceremony in the temple during the feast: water was drawn from the pond Siloam, brought to the temple in a lavish festive procession and poured there. At that moment, Jesus tells of the living water, the Holy Spirit.

*Sukkot* is a picture of the future: all nations together with Israel will bow down before the Lord. The Church that receives the Spirit of God serves as a vanguard of this. In Christ, we join Israel in praise to the one God (*Romans 15:7-13*).

**Biblical Roots**  
By David Nekrutman

**A Taste of History: Apples, Honey, and the Truth in *The Chosen***

The TV series *The Chosen* has captivated millions with its innovative and human portrayal of the Gospels. In Season 3, Episode 3, we see a beautiful, albeit historically inaccurate, moment: Jesus is given an apple to dip in honey for *Rosh Hashana*. While the scene is a touching nod to a widely recognised Jewish custom, it offers a wonderful opportunity to explore the real story behind this beloved tradition.

The scene is anachronistic because the practice of dipping an apple in honey on *Rosh Hashana* didn’t exist during Jesus’ lifetime. While the holiday itself is an ancient biblical observance (*Leviticus 23:23-25*), the specific custom of eating sweet foods to symbolise a sweet new year evolved centuries later.

The earliest *Rosh Hashana* food traditions, or *simanim*, began with Babylonian Jews in the 4th–5th century CE. Interestingly, these symbolic foods weren’t sweet—they were chosen because their Hebrew names sounded like prayers to ‘destroy our enemies’ and ‘thwart evil decrees.’ Squash, fenugreek, leeks, and dates became edible prayers for protection and peace.

The custom of eating apples and honey began in Germany over a thousand years ago. Though its origins are debated, its global adoption by Jewish communities is seen as a move of the Holy Spirit. Today, apples and honey—together with the *shofar*—are the most recognisable symbols of *Rosh Hashana*.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word for apple, *ta’pu’ach*, has a deeper meaning. Rabbinic interpretations connect the apple’s fragrance to the biblical accounts of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (*Daniel 3:27*) and the blessings of Isaac to Jacob (*Genesis 27:27*). According to these interpretations, when the three men emerged unharmed from the furnace, they smelled not of smoke, but of apples. The ‘fragrance of the field’ that Isaac smelled when blessing Jacob is also interpreted as the scent of an apple orchard. The story of Daniel’s friends demonstrates a commitment to faith under the threat of death, while the story of Isaac and Jacob represents the desire to receive the blessings of the covenant, including sovereignty over the land of Israel.

I believe the widespread custom of eating a honey-dipped apple on *Rosh Hashana* allowed Jews—despite persecution in the Middle Ages—to affirm their faith and hope of returning to their homeland. This tradition reminds us that Judaism is living and evolving, bridging past and present with a message of renewed commitment to God’s kingdom—made even sweeter when observed in Israel.



# Dealmaker? Peacemaker?: Trump and the Middle East

## ■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

**His name is a household word, and it is rare for people, both Americans and non-Americans, to be neutral. They either dislike him intensely or love him wholeheartedly. Yet, regardless of your opinion, Donald Trump is the most colourful man to occupy the Oval Office in modern times.**

First elected as US President in 2016 on the coattails of Brexit, his first term in office (2017–2021) was eventful and turbulent. He worked hard and fought hard, and, unlike many career establishment elite politicians, the New York 'blue collar' billionaire, Donald Trump, related to everyday Americans, the working class, minorities, and Generation Z young people. That's how he won two presidential elections, despite being a political outsider.

Having left the White House after the disputed 2020 presidential election (one that he never conceded), Trump was considered politically dead. The obstacles to a political comeback were enormous: a second impeachment over the 6 January riot at the Capitol Building, the numerous indictments, the criminal conviction in a New York trial, an FBI raid at his home at Mar-a-Lago, and two known assassination attempts, plus an Iranian fatwa calling for his murder.

Trump, age 79, could be forgiven for walking away from it all and spending his last years in peace and luxury. But he would say that it is for the love of his country and the unfinished business in his first term that caused him to run for office again, fight a good fight, and win. The four-year interregnum in the political wilderness from 2021–2025 was spent planning for a second-term win in 2024, as well as fighting the battles of lawfare, a hostile media, and an uncertain electorate. As the leader of the Republican Party, Trump built alliances with key Democrats, such as Robert Kennedy, Tulsi Gabbard, the unions, and minorities including Hispanics and blacks. He harnessed the power of alternative media such as podcasts and ran an effective campaign. On Election Day, 5 November 2024, Trump won all seven battleground states, the popular vote nationwide, and the all-important electoral college. Without exaggeration, it was nothing short of a political resurrection.

After his historic return to the White House, he has been engaged in a beehive of activity. His first hundred days in office were stronger than Elijah's whirlwind to heaven.

## Trump and the Middle East: the Dealmaker

Donald Trump has extensive involvement in the Middle East. His three-country visit to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in May 2025 was the culmination of much diplomacy and bridge-building. Arabs welcomed him like a rock star. As the best-selling author of *The Art of the Deal*, Trump was in full negotiation mode with friend and foe alike. By the end of this short trip, the President received for the United States three trillion dollars' worth of trade pledges from these three host Arab countries.

Trump also returned home bearing gifts, especially a luxury 747 jumbo jet from Qatar, which will serve as Air Force One, the official US presidential plane. There is the prospect of a luxury (Trump) golf course near Doha, and Trump Towers in Dubai and Damascus.

Classic Arabs, particularly rich ones, are known for their lavish hospitality and ultra-expensive gifts. This raises some questions: was Trump being played and compromised? Was he being seduced by all the fanfare and the munificence of his hosts? Has his once rock-solid support of Israel waned? The jury is out, and time will tell, especially during times of trouble. But there is no question that his deal-making was highly successful.

## Peacemaker? Here's the Scorecard

**The Houthi Rebels:** The Houthis of Yemen are a Shiite proxy organisation supported by Iran and a designated terrorist group. They have been attacking ships in the Red Sea and sending missiles into Israel, as a formal military response in their solidarity with Hamas and its war with Israel.

Trump, after the US mercilessly bombed Yemen, allegedly got a separate agreement with the Houthis. Trump claimed that the Houthis capitulated and promised to stop the attack on US shipping. The President added "We will take their word." Why didn't he link his agreement with a Houthi commitment to stop attacking Israel? They even sent a missile into the Jewish state over Trump's head while he was in Saudi Arabia. And the Houthis' anti-Israel, anti-American propaganda continues unabated.

**Syria:** After fourteen years, the Syrian civil and regional war appears to be finished, at least for now. Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) took over Aleppo and Damascus (though not the entire country). President Bashar al-Assad fled to Russia in December 2024; the fifty-year secular Ba'athist al-Assad regime collapsed.



Burj al Arab 7-Star Hotel in Dubai. | Photo: Adobe Stock

HTS had ties with known terrorist groups, including al-Nusra and ISIS. The current interim president is Ahmed al-Sharaa. Less than a year ago, the American government had a \$10 million reward for his capture. Al-Sharaa has trimmed his beard, wears western suits, and claims to have forsaken all terrorist ties.

MBS (Mohammed bin Salman), the crown prince and de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, brought al-Sharaa to meet Trump. MBS's motive was to take Syria out of regional rival Iran's sphere of

influence. How did President Trump respond? He lifted the long-term sanctions on Syria so they would have a chance to get ahead economically. Goodwill and confidence-building are great when wisely used, but did al-Sharaa see the light and reject terrorism? Is he now a non-violent moderate? Or is he still, in his heart of hearts, a caliphate-building, infidel killing, ideologically and theologically driven jihadist? And will we finally get peace in the Middle East?

*To be continued*

## The Bible Speaks

### The Coming Kingdom

*This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:  
In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths."*

*The law will go out from Zion the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshare and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

**Isaiah 2:1-5**

What a future awaits! Hatred against Israel will not prevail, for lies will be exposed and propaganda will be silenced. Through God's guidance, peace will come to the world. All nations will turn their eyes toward Zion, and Jerusalem will take its rightful place as the centre of the world. The *Messiah* will appear in the midst of Israel, and only the God of Israel—the Lord—will be honoured. This is the future we await, in unity with the Jewish people. | Photo: Canva



## Short News

## Staged



The German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, has concluded that some of the images from Gaza are staged by Hamas. Photos from photographer Anas Zayed Fteiha show begging women and children at a distribution point for aid supplies. But photos from others at the same location show mainly men quietly waiting for food. A photo expert says about this that: "Hamas controls one hundred per cent of the production of images in the South of Gaza." | Photo: Flash90

## Popular Boy's Name

The name Yahya enormously increased in popularity last year in the United Kingdom. This name, also borne by the killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, rose 33 places compared to last year and ended in 2024 in the 93rd place. It was therefore the name that rose the most in popularity, as many as 583 newly born boys were given this name. Sinwar was killed October last year by the Israeli army. He is considered to be the mastermind of the large-scale Hamas attack on 7 October.

## El Al Office Vandalised

The El Al office in Paris, the Israeli airline, was damaged. The doors and walls of the building were smeared with red paint. In addition, the text 'El Al genocide-airline' was written on the building. After this incident El Al decided to immediately evacuate all its staff from the French capital. The Israeli Minister of Transport reacted to this incident with the words: "If the French president Macron makes announcements and gives presents to Hamas, this is the result."

## Cutting Edge Innovation

Scientists in Israel have developed an artificial skin that accelerates the healing process of burn injuries. Because of the fast-rising number of soldiers and civilians with severe burn injuries due to the present war, the researchers wanted to develop a treatment that shows faster results than the present ones. According to the researchers the new method yields better scar formation, a reduced risk of infections, and a faster recovery.

## Gaza's History at a Glance

## ■ Renske Lankman

Christians for Israel Netherlands

Since 7 October 2024, Gaza, a small coastal area on the Mediterranean Sea, has been in the global news every day. Today it is most often associated with Hamas and the current war. However, the Gaza area has a long and turbulent history, shaped by numerous civilisations and rulers. Understanding Gaza's past is essential to understand its present.

Gaza is frequently mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament in particular, we regularly read about Gaza and the people who lived there: the Philistines. They likely settled in Gaza in the twelfth century BC, after the Egyptians lost control of the area. The Philistines established city-states, such as the well-known cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gath, and regularly attacked their neighbours, the Israelites.

Gaza is also known for the story of Samson, who carried the gates of the city of Gaza on his back, and for Goliath, the Philistine giant. In addition, the prophets in the Old Testament regularly issued warnings and (judgement) prophecies concerning Gaza. Interestingly, in *Joshua 15* this area is promised to the tribe of Judah.

## The Greek and Roman Periods

In the centuries before Christ, the area changed hands regularly. In the fourth century BC, for example, the Greeks conquered Gaza. Gaza then developed into an important centre of Greek philosophy and culture. But even the Greeks eventually had to make way for a new ruler.

After a brief period under Jewish Hasmonean rule, the Romans took control in the 1st century BC, incorporating Gaza into the province of Judea. Under Roman rule, Gaza remained an important hub, thanks to its location on the trade route between Egypt and the Levant. The area grew into an intellectual and commercial hub in the Roman Empire.

## Islamic Rule

The Roman Empire eventually gave way to the Christian Byzantine Empire. Under the Byzantine Empire, many inhabitants of Gaza converted to Christianity. A major turning point came in the 7th century CE when Muslim forces conquered the area from the Byzantines. This conquest would have a lasting impact on the rest of Gaza's history, right up to the present day. Many converted to Islam, Arabic became the official language and many churches were converted into mosques.

From then on, Gaza was ruled by Islamic rulers for centuries, with a brief interruption in the twelfth century during the Crusades. The most notable Islamic rulers were the Ottomans, who controlled the area from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.



Gaza City in 1857. | Photo: Public Domain



The surrender of Gaza to the British in 1918. | Photo Public Domain

## The time of the British and Egyptians

In 1917, a new player appeared on the scene: the British, who captured Gaza during the First World War. They found an area that had long since passed its peak as an important trading centre. Gaza became part of the British Mandate of Palestine. The population consisted mainly of Arab Muslims. Under the United Nations partition plan of 1947, Gaza was assigned to the future Arab state. During the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, many Arabs fled to Gaza. After the war, this area came under Egyptian control. The Arab refugees were registered as such and did not receive Egyptian citizenship.

## Israel and Gaza

In 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel captured Gaza from Egypt. In the years that follow, Israel established several Jewish settlements in the area. Following the Oslo Accords in 1994, Israel partially withdrew from Gaza in 1994. The Palestinian Authority then gained limited administrative control over Gaza. During the same period, Israel also began constructing a border fence around Gaza, which was later reinforced during the Second Intifada, a period of violent Palestinian uprisings against Israel. In 2005, Israel decided to fully withdraw from Gaza. All 21 Jewish settlements were evacuated and 8,000 Jews were relocated.



A street in Gaza in 1967. | Photo: Boris Carmi, The National Library of Israel.

## The Time of Hamas

In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian elections in Gaza, triggering a violent conflict with the ruling Fatah party. Hamas emerged victorious, expelling Fatah and establishing control over Gaza. Since then, the terrorist organisation has ruled the small coastal enclave with an iron fist. For security reasons, Israel imposed a blockade by land, sea and air. In the years that followed, there were regular confrontations with Israel: in 2008-2009, 2014 and 2021. On 7 October 2023, Hamas and other terrorist groups launched a large-scale and deadly attack on Israel from Gaza. As a result, Hamas plunged Gaza into a devastating war.



# The Israeli Settlers

## ■ Krista Gerloff

Author and Theologian

In media coverage, whether worldwide or in Israel, Israeli settlers are often portrayed negatively, especially during times of conflict or violence, with a focus on extremist actions by a small minority. However, among the nearly 800,000 Israelis living in the Golan Heights, Judea and Samaria, and East Jerusalem we find all kinds of people whom we otherwise encounter in Israeli society. The number of Israelis who would not live in a 'settlement' for ideological reasons is decreasing for various reasons. The term 'settlement' can be confusing. It covers a whole spectrum of cities, villages and towns, including small farms in the Judean Desert or the hill country of Samaria.

In addition to the settlers from Jerusalem, there are also residents of the Golan Heights, which were occupied by Israel during the Six-Day War and declared Israeli territory by law in 1981. Shortly after the end of the war, experienced *kibbutzniks* founded the first *kibbutz*, 'Marom Golan.' Soon more were added. Today, when you visit Susita, one of the archaeological national parks, you cannot only walk along a Roman road but also watch a film that tells how, during the War of Independence, *kibbutzniks* from Ein Gev even captured a Syrian military base from which they were constantly shelled.

The settlement of the Golan Heights after the Six-Day War was primarily for security reasons. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the residents were forced to flee. But they returned after the war and rebuilt the destroyed places. Today, the Golan Heights are a place of fertile plantations, vineyards and pastureland. At an altitude of over 1000 meters above sea level, raspberries and blueberries, which do not otherwise grow in Israel, also thrive.

Archaeological excavations testify to an interesting history and nature reserves attract countless visitors.

From the shores of the Sea of Galilee, one can see a hilltop in front of the Golan Heights where, after the First World War and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, representatives of Great Britain and France stood to divide the area between themselves. At that time, the Golan Heights were then assigned to France. With the end of the French mandate, Syria became independent in 1946. The British had the mandate to enable the Jews to establish a national homeland on their territory both west and east of the Jordan. But by the early 1920s, about 75% of the British Mandate of Palestine had been separated and declared the Emirate of Abdullah Ibn



Aerial view over Israeli settlement Har Homa. | Photo: Shutterstock

Hussein. Abdullah actually came from the Arabian Peninsula. His father had been the Sherif of Mecca. The League of Nations approved this first partition of Palestine on 16 September 1922. As a result, the East Bank of the British Mandate of Palestine became the Emirate of Transjordan.

After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the government of Yitzhak Rabin considered returning the Golan Heights to Syria. At that time, banners, posters, and stickers reading 'The People with the Golan' appeared everywhere. Today, no one in Israel regrets that a 'peace agreement' with Syria under these conditions was not reached. From the perspective of the EU and a large part of the UN, the Israeli inhabitants of the Golan Heights are still occupiers of Syrian territory. Under President Donald Trump, the United States recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights in 2019.

There were settlers 'who were residents of the Jewish villages in the Gaza Strip.' Exactly 20 years ago, the Israeli government under Ariel Sharon implemented a decision to unilaterally separate from the Palestinians. All residents of the Jewish communities in the Gaza Strip were forcibly relocated, 'uprooted,' as they themselves called it. This was done with the approval of the whole world, even though according to the Fourth Geneva Convention it is no longer legal to 'deport or transfer' civilians for political reasons.

When in the year 2023, in connection with the controversies and massive demonstrations surrounding the judicial reform, there was talk of "the greatest crisis since the founding of the State of Israel," the thought of the unfortunate separation from the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip through the expulsion of its own population was unavoidable. In my view, the heartbreaking scenes of Israeli soldiers forcibly dragging their own civilians from their homes was the

greatest crisis in Israeli society, with terrible consequences.

The Palestinians could have built a Singapore on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. But they built Hamastan—and the world continued to talk about occupation, even though not a single Jew, not a single Israeli soldier, remained in the Gaza Strip. The flourishing agriculture with its huge greenhouses on sand, synagogues, schools and kindergartens, all residential buildings were destroyed by the Palestinians—"the world of yesterday," as Stefan Zweig would say, ceased to exist.

Twenty years after that tragic attempt to secede from the Palestinians in Gaza and grant them self-rule; after three decades of rocket fire and terrorist attacks on Israeli territory, culminating on 7 October 2023, in the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, retired Major General Gershon HaCohen, who led the expulsion of Jews from the Gaza Strip, admits that without the evacuation of the settlements, the massacre would not have happened. The smuggling of weapons from Iran and the establishment of a terrorist stronghold in the Gaza Strip would not have been possible in this way.

So far, we have been dealing with settlers who, from the Israeli perspective, are not settlers. Then there are settlers who are no longer settlers because the government evacuated them from the villages in the Gaza Strip against their will. Then there are the settlers, about whom there is a lot of talk at the moment, who live in places that are historically very important for the Jewish people.

I write "at the moment" because on 23 July 2025, the Knesset, by a majority of 71 votes, issued an official recommendation to the Israeli government to declare sovereignty over Judea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley. This resolution describes these

territories as an inseparable part of the historical, cultural and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people.

For example, there are settlers from Hebron. It was there that the patriarch Abraham bought a field to bury his wife, Sarah. The patriarchs Isaac and Jacob are also buried there together with their wives Rebekah and Leah. King David ruled in this city before making Jerusalem Israel's capital. For 3,000 years, there was a continuous Jewish community in Hebron until Arabs committed a horrific massacre in the summer of 1929. The British Mandate evacuated the surviving Jews, so that the old Hebron community was wiped out.

When assessing a situation from a historical perspective, the question always arises as to how far back in history one should go. To Biblical times? To the Byzantine period? To the Middle Ages? Into the early modern period? Regarding the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, there is archaeological and written evidence of a Jewish presence, often of a Jewish majority population. The beautiful mosaic from an ancient synagogue in the Gaza Strip can now be admired, for example, in the Museum of the Good Samaritan on the way to the Dead Sea. In Europe, Gentiles always wanted to determine where Jews could live and where they could not. That is why Jewish life in Europe is characterised by expulsions, restrictions, ghettos and worse. Even today, when the Jewish people have returned to their original homeland, we Europeans obviously want to continue to determine where Jews may and may not live, even in their own country.

The Palestinians and their supporters have made their voices heard around the world, not only in Arabic but also in a universally understandable chant: 'From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free!' They openly demand that the entire historical territory of Israel from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea should be 'judenrein.'

When the slogan 'From the river to the sea' became so popular, I was personally immediately struck by an irony of fate, or perhaps the irony of God. This sentence comes from the Bible. There God promises His people (Deuteronomy 11:24): "Every place that your foot sets on will be yours: from the desert to Lebanon, from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea, all of it will be your territory." However, there is also a condition attached to this in the relationship between the God of Israel and His people.

*Born in 1965, Krista Gerloff grew up in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) and studied theology in Prague, Halle an der Saale and Tübingen (Germany). Since 1994 she lives with her family in Jerusalem.*





■ Valeria Zakharova  
Jewish Agency for Israel

Late August to September is the best time to harvest fruits. Our greatest ‘fruits’ are happy families who find ways to fulfill themselves in Israel and become part of it. This story is exactly about that.

In the spring of 2023, a family from Russia made *Aliyah* through the First Home in the Homeland programme and quickly found themselves welcomed into a supportive *kibbutz* community. From their very first days, they were surrounded by kindness and encouragement, which helped them complete *Ulpan* (Hebrew language school) successfully and begin new initiatives. Their story proves that kindness inspires kindness, and a will to help always bears fruit.

“We have been living in Israel for two years now. We are a young family—father Anton, mother Irina, daughters Margarita and Varvara, and our dog Chak-Chak. Our *Aliyah* has exceeded all our expectations! Thanks to the ‘First Home in the Homeland’ programme, we found ourselves in a wonderful place—the Biblical Mount Gilboa<sup>1</sup>, in the religious *kibbutz* Ma’ale Gilboa,” Anton shares.

Anton holds a PhD degree; he used to work as a journalist and University professor. Irina worked as a journalist and an exhibition projects curator. Both of their daughters studied at the Gymnasium (editor: academic high school).

Two years ago, they came to Israel with the First Home in the Homeland programme to the *kibbutz* Ma’ale Gilboa. After completing the programme, their story with the *kibbutz* didn’t end. They

## Pictures on the Wall

asked if they could stay a little longer, to continue actively participating in the life of the community and supporting it creatively.

“Being a creative family, we were excited to come up with the idea for a children’s art exhibition. Our small but vibrant and unique gallery took shape right on the wall of our house. The first exhibition featured drawings by children of new *olim*—drawings as memories of the past and reminders of the future. After the first, came the second and third exhibitions. The new artists were children from the *kibbutz* kindergarten. This year, our project was dedicated to the theme of the return of Israeli hostages from Gaza. Through their drawings, the boys and girls expressed emotions of compassion, sorrow, and hope. Our hearts are united, and we are all waiting for their safe return home.”

Despite all the difficulties, life in Israel and on the *kibbutz* continues—Anton’s family is full of ideas, hopes and faith in a bright future in Israel.

Anton graduated from the *Ulpan* (Hebrew class) for teachers and successfully passed the exam. Now he is looking for a school for an internship: “I think being a geography teacher would suit me best, and my many years of experience as a university teacher, as well as my experience in traveling and scientific expeditions to the will help me with this”.

Irina also began additional training. Before that, she completed a medical course at MADA (Magen David Adom, the national ambulance service providing emergency medical care in Israel), and today she began classes in pedagogy. The family travels around Israel and



never ceases to be amazed at how many interesting things there are in this small country. They have already visited many amazing places—from Rosh HaNikra to Eilat and many more places that they plan to visit. Each journey gives them even more inspiration and strength to move forward.

Anton and Irina have heard a lot about Christians for Israel (C4I) and conveyed the warmest words of gratitude for everything C4I does for the programme and all Jewish people around the world,

your support and prayers strengthen our families in their desire to live in the Promised Land, to build their future here and the future of their children.

We believe that the people of Israel cannot be broken, that after the rain there will always be a rainbow and together, we will overcome any challenges. | Photos: First Home in the Homeland

<sup>1</sup>Mount Gilboa is most famously mentioned in the Bible as the site of the tragic battle, where King Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, were killed. This battle marked a major turning point in Israelite history, leading to David’s rise to power.

## Summer of Blessings in Bethlehem!

This summer the church of Rev Naim and Elvira Khoury hosted a joyful family retreat with over 130 participants—parents and children alike. In a time of challenges, God opened the door for Arab Christian families to gather, worship, and grow together.

With the theme from *Matthew 9 and 19*, “We must leave everything and follow Him,”

families enjoyed uplifting programmes, children’s activities, and fellowship at a lovely location surrounded by trees.

The joy was tangible—families expressed deep gratitude for the chance to refresh, connect, and strengthen their faith. We thank the Lord for this season and all who partnered with us to make it possible. | Photos: First Baptist Church Bethlehem





# Ukrainian Teens Embark on Journey of Hope

Mid-September, 29 young people from across Ukraine embarked on a life-changing journey to Israel through the Na'aleh study programme. For many, this is more than just an opportunity for education—it is a chance to reconnect with their heritage, rebuild their future, and strengthen their faith.

One of these students is Elisaveta, known as Liza, a 14-year-old girl from Kherson. Liza grew up in a Jewish family and discovered her roots at the age of eight. Her parents enrolled her in the Jewish school of Rabbi Yosef Wolf, where she learned about *Shabbat*, Jewish history, about the Land of Israel, and the God of Israel.

Unfortunately her studies were abruptly disrupted in February 2022, when the war broke out in Ukraine. Kherson was quickly occupied, and Liza's family endured nine long months of fear, destruction, and uncertainty. Their home was bombed, forcing them to flee with her grandparents to Nikolayev. Despite the hardships, Liza's spirit remained strong. What she missed most was her Jewish education, which had closed due to the war. Determined to continue learning, she joined an online Jewish school in Zaporozhe.

"I learned a lot about Israel in school but never visited the Land," Liza says. "I used to feel a bit jealous that older students could go to Israel through Na'aleh. Now that I am 14, I can join too! I am not afraid to go, the last few years of war in Ukraine were very hard but made me strong! And I am ready to go!"

Another student, Nikita, also looks forward to this journey. He first learned about Na'aleh at the 'Israel Open' fair in Kyiv in 2024. The entrance exam was the longest of his life, lasting nearly a full day, but he persevered and was accepted. "Today times are difficult in Ukraine, and in Israel too," Nikita reflects. "But I believe the war in Israel will end soon. In Ukraine, no one knows when the war will end. For me, it is safer and wiser to study in Israel."

Nikita dreams of higher education, a meaningful profession, and building his life in Israel together with his family. "Today we, Jewish people, have the opportunity to return to Israel, no matter where we live. This reminds me of what is written in the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible): one day all the Jewish people will gather in their homeland, in Eretz Israel. And of course, my wish is that our family stays together. That's why my parents, along with my younger brother, plan to move to Israel as soon as possible. | Photo: Christians for Israel Ukraine

As these brave Ukrainian teens prepare to step into a new chapter, let us keep them in our prayers. May their life in Israel be blessed with safety and growth.

**Please consider giving today to support our work in Ukraine, so we can help teenagers and Jewish families on their way to their new future in the Promised Land.**



Liza (right) with her grandmother and sister.



The group ready for their departure to Israel.

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