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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

www.c4israel.org.nz | info@c4israel.org.nz



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Israel—A Blessing for the Nations

In many parts of Christendom there is a deeply rooted idea that Israel's role has finished. "Israel lost its right to the land and its priestly calling because of disobedience; and lost thereby its capacity to be a blessing to the world", wrote one Christian Palestinian theologian. As evidence he mentioned the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

These Christians ignore much of the Bible. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts, God's blessing went out into the world. But that did not bring an end to the significance of the Jewish people. God was not starting a totally new project but was fulfilling what He had already promised. Isaiah said about the last days: "The law will go out from Zion, and the word of

the Lord from Jerusalem." And "many people will come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob."

Zechariah 8: "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God... and many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to and entreat him. This is what the Lord Almighty says: in those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say 'let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

God's promises remain. The Biblical and historical deep connection between the Jewish people and the mountains of Israel remains. The return of the Jewish people to the land in our generation is proof that God is faithful to His promises.

The prophet Zachariah also said: "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles."

The apostle Paul later confirmed: a time will come "for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." (Acts 3:21)

Israel's role is far from finished.

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Rewarded Patience



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Colophon

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

Mission

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

Editorial Team**Andrew Tucker**

International Editor-in-Chief
atucker@c4israel.org

Cathy Trotter (nee Coldicutt)

Managing Editor
newspaper@c4israel.org

*Marloes van Westing, Bryce Turner,
Ian Worby, Rita Quartel,
Marie-Louise Weissenböck*

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C4I Offices**Christians for Israel—International**

Willem Griffioen, *Chairman*
Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer, *President*
Leon Meijer, *Executive Director*
PO Box 1100 | 3860 BC Nijkerk,
The Netherlands | Tel: +31 33 422 0405
info@c4israel.org | www.c4israel.org

The English Edition of *Israel & Christians Today* is published by the following English speaking branches:

Christians for Israel—Australia

Ian Worby, *National Leader*
PO Box 1508, Springwood
Queensland, Australia 4127
Tel: +61 7 3088 6900,
info@c4israel.com.au
www.c4israel.com.au

Christians for Israel—New Zealand

Bryce Turner, *National Executive Director*
PO Box 12 006, Penrose,
Auckland, New Zealand 1642
Tel: +64 9 525 7564
info@c4israel.org.nz
www.c4israel.org.nz

Christians for Israel—Korea

Rev Paul Wonil Jung, *Director*
Suite 3, 37 Railway Parade, Eastwood
NSW, Australia 2122
Tel: +61 410 430 677
email: c4israelkorea@gmail.com
www.c4israelkorea.org

Christians for Israel—USA

Willem Griffioen, *Chairman*
PO Box 400, Front Royal, VA 22630, USA
usa-info@c4israel.org
www.c4israel.us

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Modern Blood Libels

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The Jewish people have always been the subject of false accusations and slander. When Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's walls, Sanballat didn't contest the project honestly—he wrote an open letter to the Persian authorities accusing Nehemiah of secret rebellion, hoping an official body would act on an unverifiable claim before the truth could catch up (*Nehemiah 6:6–8*). Centuries earlier, Haman took a similar approach at the level of an entire people, telling the king that the Jews' "laws are diverse from all people" and that they should not be permitted to live—an accusation broad enough to justify anything, and specific enough to be checked by no one (*Esther 3:8–9*). In both cases, the accusation didn't need to be true. It only needed to be believed by someone with power to act on it.

"Blood libel" is a special kind of false accusation. It refers to the medieval myth, first recorded in Norwich in 1144 and recurring for centuries after, that Jews murdered non-Jewish children for ritual purposes. What made it durable wasn't just that it was false—it was how it was built: an accusation of hidden intent, supported only by testimony that could never be independently checked, where denial by the accused was treated as further proof of guilt rather than evidence of innocence. There was no action the accused could take that would count as disproof.

At this year's Venice Film Festival, the documentary NAZA—directed by two Israeli's, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor—received a 25-minute standing ovation and the festival's Special Jury Prize. The film draws on interviews with 24 anonymous Israeli soldiers and officers

who allege that the killing of Gazan civilians was not the incidental cost of urban warfare but systematic and deliberate policy, driven, in the words of one unnamed interviewee, by "total dehumanisation of Palestinians".

It's a serious charge, delivered to a standing ovation. But it's worth looking closely at how the case is built.

Start with the sourcing: every accusation rests on anonymous testimony. No accuser is named, no service record is verifiable, and the IDF itself says it cannot confirm whether these individuals served, in what unit, or in what capacity. An allegation of mass atrocity that can't be checked, contested, or falsified is testimony that asks to be taken on faith rather than evidence that can be tested.

The claims are also unverified by any independent standard—no forensic investigation, no corroborating documentation, no cross-examination, only edited interviews assembled into a narrative.

Most significantly, the film leaves out context that would let viewers weigh the claims fairly. It doesn't address that Hamas fighters routinely operated in civilian clothing, from tunnels beneath homes, hospitals, and schools, making combatants and civilians difficult to distinguish in real time. It doesn't engage the argument made by West Point's John Spencer and other urban-warfare scholars, that weighing expected civilian harm against military necessity isn't evidence of malicious intent—it's a calculation international humanitarian law actually requires commanders to make before every strike. And it omits evidence cited by former Ambassador of Israel to the US Michael Oren that the IDF "did their utmost to minimise civilian casualties."

None of this means IDF conduct is beyond scrutiny; legitimate questions about specific strikes deserve serious investigation.

But a film built entirely on unnamed sources, without independent verification, and without operational context, isn't well equipped to settle that question—it's equipped to produce a verdict before the facts are fully in. It's a blood libel.

It's a familiar sequence: build the case on material that resists scrutiny (a deliberately vague legal standard in one instance, anonymous and unverifiable testimony in the other), and leave out the operational realities—human shields, tunnel networks, the actual requirements of international humanitarian law—that would change how a fair-minded observer reads the same facts.

Critics have already drawn the comparison to Jenin, the 2002 film that shaped international opinion on the Battle of Jenin long before the more measured facts caught up with it.

The point isn't that scrutiny of Israel's conduct is illegitimate. It's that the specific instruments being used right now are manipulated in ways that presume that Israelis are intentional child killers.

The right response to such allegations is not panic, and it isn't silence either. It is action. Like Nehemiah ("There are no such things done as thou sayest"), we must speak out against those who propagate lies and misinformation against God's people.

We can speak boldly against the lies in the confidence that scripture promises: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper... this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (*Isaiah 54:17*).

Prayer Points

Israel

- On 4 October, the Jewish people celebrate *Simchat Torah* (Joy of the *Torah*). In 2023, *Simchat Torah* fell on 7 October, the day of the devastating attacks in Israel. As memories of that day remain painful for many, pray for comfort, healing, and strength for all those affected. Ask that bereaved families and others carrying loss will know God's grace and support, and that the coming year will bring greater peace, security, and reasons for rejoicing.
- At the end of October, Israel will once again go to the polls. Pray that both the country's leaders and its citizens will be attentive to God's guidance and direction for the nation.
- The situation in the Middle East remains uncertain due to ongoing threats from Iran. Pray for Israel's protection from both direct and indirect threats originating from Iran.

- "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace." (*Numbers 6:24–26*). Using the words of these verses, pray God's blessing over Israel.

Antisemitism

- 2025 was the deadliest year for antisemitic violence against the Jewish diaspora since 1994. Pray for the protection of Jewish communities worldwide, that planned attacks will be thwarted and that God's angels will watch over and guard them.

Christians for Israel

- Pray that Christians will have open eyes to God's covenant faithfulness and recognise His promises being fulfilled as He gathers His people home. Pray that younger generations will also see these signs of God's faithfulness and be encouraged in their faith.

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

Settlement Trade Bans

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

More and more Western states are rallying to impose sanctions on trade in products from “illegal Israeli settlements”. What appears to be a political and legal conflict is in fact an intensifying spiritual battle for Jerusalem, that will lead to a major conflict between Israel and the nations. Like a volcano, pressure has been building up deep underground for decades—and now it is starting to erupt.

Trade Bans

On 8 September, twelve countries—the UK, France, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden—issued a statement jointly pledging to “introduce national and/or support European restrictions on trade in goods with settlements which are illegal under international law.”

Britain, France and Canada are the ones actually pulling the trigger: UK Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband announced a full import ban on settlement goods within nine months, paired with “action against specific companies and individuals” financing or building in the settlements, though he carved out exemptions for religious items and Israeli medicines. The other nine committed only to “support further action”—a hedge that leaves plenty of room for the coalition to fray before Britain’s own ban actually bites. The twelve-nation statement frames the restrictions as compliance with international law rather than punishment. It cites: settlements being “illegal under international law” (naming the E1 project specifically); actions “tantamount to the annexation of Palestinian land”; the “forcible displacement of the Palestinian population”; “unprecedented levels of settler violence and settlement expansion”; a need to “ensure accountability for settler violence, and investigate allegations against Israeli forces”; and alignment with “relevant UN Security Council resolutions” supporting a two-state solution with Palestinian statehood alongside Israeli security. This builds on ground already shifting under Israel’s feet for a year. Spain banned settlement imports first, in September 2025, followed by Slovenia, Belgium, and now the Netherlands, which adopted a national ban that takes effect 22 September 2026, covering goods from the West Bank and Golan Heights, including intermediate trade by Dutch companies abroad.

Ireland’s Occupied Territories Bill—applicable to goods only, after the government stripped out services over its own legal analysts’ objections—cleared its final vote in July and awaits signature.



Aerial view of Ma'ale Adumim, an Israeli settlement outside of Jerusalem. | Photo: Flash90

Israel’s Response

It did not take Jerusalem long to answer. Israel closed the British consulate in East Jerusalem, pulled the UK out of the Gaza ceasefire support arrangements it had helped stand up, halted Palestinian Authority security training, and barred a dozen British parliamentarians from entry. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar accused London and its partners of “stoking antisemitism”; on the British side, Reform MP Richard Tice called the sanctions a “grave mistake” that would embolden the very antisemitism Sa’ar warned of—a rare instance of an Israeli minister and a British opposition figure making the identical argument from opposite sides of the debate.

The Real Issue: Sovereignty

The main argument used to justify these trade bans is the International Court of Justice’s July 2024 advisory opinion, which found the occupation itself unlawful and said other states have a legal duty not to render aid or assistance to it. According to the ICJ, the reason the occupation is illegal is because the land, including “East Jerusalem”, belongs to the Palestinian people.

The ICJ advisory opinion is the legal hook most of these governments’ own lawyers, and outside groups like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch, point to as the basis for a trade bans.

Since June 1967, Israel has exercised control but not asserted legal sovereignty over the territory that was previously part of the Mandate for Palestine and in 1948 occupied by Egypt (Gaza) and Jordan (the old city of Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria).

Since 1948 there have been basically two main categories of views about “who owns the land”—both within Israel and around the globe.

On the one hand, many (not all) in Israel and in the Jewish community and their allies around the world hold the view

that the Jewish people have a right to live in the land of their ancestors (after all, they argue, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, were all located in the land that the world now calls “East Jerusalem” and “the West Bank”). Some of these people believe it is a Biblical right, others regard it as a historical, political and/or legal right.

Opposing them are those (numerically, the majority of people in the world) who reject (or are ignorant of) the Jewish connection with the land and believe that “the Palestinians” are the rightful owners of this land. The latter group includes some who claim that the only way to solve the conflict is either to create a Palestinian state in the “occupied” territories, or to dismantle Israel and replace it with a single, democratic “State of Palestine”.

To this day, lawyers around the globe continue to debate the question. There is no consensus. Even in the International Court of Justice, there is a range of views. According to the Court’s Vice-President, Judge Sebutinde, the legal principle normally applicable in such situations (“*uti possidetis juris*”) means that in 1948 Israel “inherited” as borders the administrative boundaries of Mandate Palestine. This is the correct legal approach.

Remember that the Palestinians and their Islamic allies do not just claim the “occupied” territories. The Palestinian National Charter claims Palestinian sovereignty over the whole of Palestine, “from the river to the sea”—the territory that in WWI was allocated for the Jewish national home under the Mandate for Palestine.

At the center of this land—literally—is the city of Jerusalem.

The time has come for Israel to finally assert full sovereignty over Jerusalem and the whole land to which it is entitled: “from the river to the sea”.

Short News

Hostages Square



For over two years massive rallies were held on the central square in Tel Aviv for the release of all hostages who were held in captivity in Gaza since 7 October 2023. In popular parlance the square was called “Hostages Square”. In memory of this period the square has recently been officially named “Hostages Square”. Mayor Ron Huldai unveiled new signage at the plaza outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and stated: “History cannot be erased, and we must not allow it to be forgotten. The decision to rename the square is intended to ensure that this chapter in the history of the State of Israel, from 7 October 2023 until the return of the final hostage, Ran Gvili, on 26 January 2026, will be remembered for generations.” | Photo: Flash90

In Persian

Survivors of Hamas’ attack on the military basis Nahal Oz on 7 October 2023 heard terrorists shout in Persian (also known as Farsi) to each other. Farsi is the Persian language spoken in Iran. This information complements military information that forces or advisors affiliated to Iran were closely involved in the attack.

Safe for Jews App

A new Israeli app, Safe for Jews, helps Jewish and Israeli travellers to identify security risks and antisemitism at holiday destinations. The bilingual app combines government advice, reports from Jewish communities, media messages and user information. The app’s developers emphasise that the app doesn’t replace official travel advice.

Venezuela Consular Relations Restored

After seventeen years Israel and Venezuela restore their consular relations. The countries arranged to provide assistance to citizens via a new channel of coordination. They also continue their cooperation after the June 2026 earthquakes. Israels sent well over 50 specialists for emergency aid, damage assessment and recovery. The Jewish community is mentioned as a bridge between the two countries and as a sign of “historical friendship”.

Israel's Strategic Position After 7 Oct.

■ Keren Setton

The Media Line

Nearly three years after Hamas' devastating attack on Israel on 7 October, which plunged the country into a multifront war, Israel finds itself at a strategic crossroads as a new US-Iran memorandum of understanding reshapes the regional battlefield. Israel remains largely isolated internationally, maintains a military presence in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, and is still far from normalisation with Saudi Arabia. None of its conflicts has been conclusively resolved, and its relationship with Washington has grown more complicated.

The preliminary US-Iran framework reached earlier in June was a significant turning point. Israel has projected its military might throughout the region, causing massive destruction in Gaza and southern Lebanon while conducting airstrikes in Syria, Iran, Yemen, and Qatar, including a September 2025 strike on Hamas leaders in Doha that drew international condemnation.

"There is a great gap between the military picture and the strategic picture, which is one of overall defeat and collapse of Israel's strategy," Chuck Freilich, a former Israeli national security adviser and currently a professor at Tel Aviv University and Columbia University, told *The Media Line*.

Despite that military prowess, Israel is far from reaching its goals. "It did not succeed in destroying Hamas or unseating it from power, Hezbollah is coming back despite downgrading its capabilities greatly, and Iran believes with good reason that it won the war by surviving an attack by the world's superpower and out-negotiated the US, coming ahead diplomatically as well," Freilich added.

Netanyahu vowed to overthrow Hamas in Gaza, destroy Hezbollah's military capabilities, and remove Iran's nuclear threat. Still, budding alliances with several Arab states under the Abraham Accords survived the war, despite initially seeming fragile. Relations with Saudi Arabia, long coveted by Netanyahu, remain out of reach.

"All of Israel's enemies are significantly weaker; there is wider interest in the Abraham Accords because of the threat from Iran, but Israel's diplomatic and political situation internationally is much worse, particularly in the United States," Prof Jonathan Rynhold, a senior researcher at the BESA Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University, told *The Media Line*. "Israel has been far more isolated than this during its history."

The joint American-Israeli strikes inflicted significant damage on Iranian military infrastructure and reportedly



Israel's multi-front challenge: key threats and flashpoints. A more volatile Middle East. | Photo: AI

set back elements of Tehran's nuclear programme. Yet the conflict ended without the collapse of the Islamic Republic, perhaps amplifying its nuclear ambitions, and without a broader regional realignment in Israel's favour. Iranian officials and state media quickly declared victory, arguing Tehran had survived direct attacks by both Israel and the US while keeping its regime and much of its strategic posture.

"Iran believes that it won the war, doing so by withstanding a major American and Israeli operation," said Freilich. "They come out feeling stronger and invigorated. Israel and the US helped them achieve progress towards their goal of being a regional hegemon."

The memorandum with Iran demonstrated Israel's dependence on American diplomatic backing while also revealing differences between Netanyahu and President Donald Trump over the desired endgame. While Israel views Iran as an unresolved threat requiring continued pressure, Washington has sought to prevent a wider regional war, reopen maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, and stabilise the situation. For now, neither side has achieved a decisive outcome: Iran emerged weakened militarily but intact politically, while Israel demonstrated unprecedented military reach without fully removing the threat it sought to eliminate.

"Israel faces a real problem," said Rynhold. "If Iran is not limited in its conventional missile stockpile, Israel will want to attack, and it will be constrained by the US." The future of sanctions against Iran is also unclear, with the sides agreeing to a 60-day period to negotiate final terms. "Sanctions relief would be a strategic failure if it becomes part of any future agreement between the US and Iran," Rynhold added.

When Hamas launched its surprise attack on 7 October 2023, thousands of terrorists stormed across Israel's southern border, and Netanyahu vowed to retaliate, promising to release all 251 hostages taken and remove the terrorist group from power. Israel's ensuing offensive drew significant international backlash, with critics, including some close allies, accusing it of excessive force and war crimes—claims Israel categorically denies.

More than two and a half years later, a fragile ceasefire is in place, and all of the hostages, including the bodies of those killed in captivity, have been returned. Israel controls more than half of Gaza, with Hamas still controlling the rest. The next phase of the ceasefire, meant to see an Israeli withdrawal, is conditioned on Hamas' disarmament, which the group refuses to do. Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain a presence in Gaza and has implied the military will push deeper into Palestinian territory.

"Hamas' military capabilities are a fraction of what they were," said Freilich. "They no longer constitute a military threat, but they constitute a threat to the forces in Gaza, and they are still in power politically. Israel will be forced to withdraw from Gaza sooner or later, whether it likes it or not." Israel's leadership has nonetheless vowed to push further into Gaza to complete its mission of removing Hamas from power—partly, Freilich said, because there are no longer hostages there, and possibly because "Trump will try to compensate Netanyahu a little by giving him some free rein in Gaza for a while, especially before an election."

Netanyahu, who leads a far-right government, has coalition support to intensify military pressure on Hamas, even as the international community grows more critical—from South Africa's genocide allegations to growing cultural,

academic, and weapons embargoes.

"Any Israeli government will not move in a hurry," said Rynhold. "There are a number of reasons for this—psychologically for the Israeli public, it keeps Hamas further away from the border and also because withdrawal is a hard thing to do."

Senior members of the current government favour resettling Gaza with a Jewish population. Netanyahu has pushed back, but the voices within his coalition are loud, drawing international outcry. "As long as Israel won't allow settlers in, Israel has the ability to shape what goes on there—possibly keeping military control but giving other Palestinian factions civilian control," said Rynhold.

Israel is scheduled to hold national elections by late October, and the outcome will have a major impact on the future of Gaza. "Israel cannot allow itself to live with that equation," said Freilich. "This is another failure of its strategy."

Hezbollah, too, is reeling from more than two years of war with Israel. "Hezbollah is infinitely militarily, financially, and politically weaker than it was before 7 October," said Rynhold. It began firing at Israel two days after the joint American-Israeli attack on Iran started in March, prompting an Israeli campaign in Lebanon that lasted into June. Fighting has eased since the US-Iran memorandum, but Israeli forces remain in southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah says its position on the ceasefire depends on Israeli compliance. "Hezbollah now has a partial shield, by virtue of the agreement between the US and Iran; whether it becomes more or less, is another matter," Rynhold said. Iran's threats have made Beirut's Dahieh neighbourhood, Hezbollah's stronghold, harder for Israel to target, and Trump made clear to Netanyahu that action there would jeopardise a broader arrangement with Iran. Analysts say Hezbollah and Iran may emerge with greater leverage, even as both have absorbed heavy blows.

In the almost three years since 7 October, Israel stands in a paradoxical position. It has showcased extraordinary military capabilities and weakened its enemies, yet many of the political and strategic objectives that justified the war remain unresolved. Hamas remains a force in Gaza, Hezbollah continues to challenge Israel from Lebanon, and Iran has survived and, per Freilich, may feel emboldened, while Israel faces growing international isolation. As Israelis prepare to head to the polls again, the country confronts a question that military victories alone cannot answer: how to translate battlefield achievements into a lasting, favourable regional order.

A Waiting Room Full of Israel

■ Joanne Nihom

Journalist & Author

In the waiting room of the hospital, the world seems to come together for a moment. People sit close to one another on plastic chairs, some staring silently into the distance, others speaking softly while children fidget impatiently. The room hums with sound. Hebrew blends with Arabic, interrupted by the beeping of medical equipment and the monotone voice over the loudspeaker calling out yet another name. Outside, the heat of an Israeli afternoon rages on, but inside everything revolves around something else: waiting, hope, and health.

Recently I accompanied a friend who had a follow-up appointment at the Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya. It was not an emergency, but as always, a hospital visit carries a certain tension. While he fills out paperwork, I look around. An Orthodox Jewish man flips through a newspaper. Next to him sits an Arab woman wearing a headscarf, gently pulling her sleeping grandchild closer. Two nurses hurry past. One speaks Hebrew, the other responds in Arabic. No one seems to think anything of it. Here, it is the most natural thing in the world.

A hospital in Israel is perhaps the ultimate place of togetherness. A place where Jewish and Arab doctors, nurses, and caregivers work side by side. A place where babies from different backgrounds are born and where one hopes that the world outside the hospital might one day learn something.

Coexistence in Practice

When my friend is finally called in, we walk inside together. The doctor turns out to be Muslim, while his assistant is a Jewish woman. How do I know? Because during the consultation, we strike up a conversation.

At first, we discuss ordinary things, but soon the conversation turns to growing boycotts of Israeli universities and hospitals, which many say are straining international partnerships.

The doctor shares: “People only see the conflict, but they don’t see what happens here every day. Everyone should visit an Israeli hospital somewhere in the country. This is coexistence at its best.”

As my friend continues discussing his health with the doctor, my thoughts drift back to an interview I conducted some time ago with Dr Massad Barhoum, an Arab Israeli and the director of the hospital we are visiting. “In a hospital, it’s about people,” he told me then. “About human interactions and saving lives. Politics is not an issue here. In the hospital, peace prevails every day.”



An Arab nurse in a hospital in northern Israel. | Photo: Flash90

Barhoum has become a prominent bridge-builders in Israel’s healthcare system. Under his leadership, Jewish, Arab, Christian, and Druze physicians work together every day. Patients share rooms regardless of their background, religion, or political beliefs. In a region where division often dominates, a different reality emerges here.

As I sit in the waiting room, I once again understand what Barhoum meant. Here, in a place where life and health are central, walls seem to temporarily disappear. Not completely, perhaps, but enough to make room for something deeply human.

A young Arab nurse helps an elderly Jewish patient to his feet. A Jewish doctor studies the scan of a Palestinian child with intense concentration. Families who might never meet outside share coffee from the same vending machine while waiting for news after surgery.

No one asks about political beliefs before starting an IV.

That does not mean tensions disappear. Outside the hospital, reality remains complex and often harsh. Rocket attacks, fear, distrust, and political divisions have shaped daily life in Israel since 7 October 2023. Doctors and nurses carry that reality with them as well. Some have lost family members. Others live in communities where tensions are constantly palpable. Yet every day, they choose to work together.

More Than Politics

Of course, a hospital is not a utopia. Discussions, tensions, and emotions arise there too. No one lives in a vacuum. But within the medical world there exists a common purpose stronger than identity: saving lives.

Perhaps that is why so many doctors experience international boycotts as

painful. Not only because scientific collaboration becomes more difficult, but because these institutions demonstrate that cooperation between people is possible. A hospital is not a political slogan. It is a daily reality in which coexistence is made tangible and visible.

My friend’s doctor put it simply:

“When a patient comes in with a heart attack, nobody first asks who he is. You simply try to save his life. And that means it could even be a terrorist.”

It is a complicated reality.

The world increasingly seems to favour black-and-white thinking. The image of Israel that dominates internationally is usually one of conflict and confrontation. Rarely is it that of a Jewish and an Arab doctor performing surgery together. Rarely is it that of a Jewish and Arab nurse sharing coffee during a night shift while sirens sound outside.

Perhaps that is why it is so important to keep telling this story. Not to deny the problems or gloss over political pain points, but because humanity is also part of this region. Because cooperation, however fragile it may sometimes be, is visible every day in hospitals throughout Israel.

Hope in the Waiting Room

When my friend’s appointment is over, the waiting room is still full. I take one last look around. And for a moment, I feel something that has become rare in these difficult times of war: hope.

Hope that people can continue to see one another as human beings. That behind every identity, every language, and every religion lies the same vulnerability.

Peace does not necessarily begin with grand political agreements or international conferences. Perhaps peace looks more like an Israeli waiting room.

Short News

Brain Drain



An increasing number of high-income Israelis, working in the technology or healthcare sector, emigrate from Israel. Their number almost doubled within five years. This is according to a new study by the Israel Tax Authority, that has examined this phenomenon during the past ten years. The Tax Authority warns that the sharp increase in the brain drain could result in a loss of billions of dollars in tax revenue. The desire to find better economic opportunities abroad was always seen as the major reason for emigration. But in recent years the long-running conflict and the political tensions in the Land are the main drivers of rising emigration. | Photo: Flash90

Return

More than twenty years after Israel evacuated four communities in the north of Samaria, dozens of Israeli families recently resettled in one of the four settlements. Dozens of caravans were placed on the site as part of an initiative supported by the government to rebuild these communities. This means that three of the four communities are inhabited again. Israel evacuated these villages in 2005 as part of the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and Northern Samaria.

New Safety Triangle



Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan concluded a defence agreement in Mecca, in which an attack on one country is considered an attack on all. The pact does not yet provide for a joint command or automatic military response. The three partners also have different priorities. Saudi Arabia remains strongly dependent on America. Turkey contributes NATO-experience. The nuclear-armed Pakistan aims its strategic planning mainly at India. Furthermore Iran might see this agreement as an “encirclement”. | Photo: Saudi Press Agency/Wikimedia Commons

Growing Recognition of Jewish Indigeneity

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Director | Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem

Over the past decade there has been a growing recognition of Jewish Indigeneity. Some of the biggest advocates have been Indigenous Individuals. In 2017 Ryan Bellerose, a Métis from the Paddle Prairie Metis settlement in Alberta, Canada wrote, “It is my belief that strengthening Jewish identity is the optimum way to fight against the perpetuation of false narratives and lies. This can be achieved only through an indigenous decolonisation of Jewish identity, which would urge Jews to see themselves through a Jewish lens and manifest the indigenous aspects of Jewish identity in a meaningful way.”

Using the criteria set forth by José Martínez Cobo for the UN, Bellerose, like many others, recognised that the Jewish people fulfilled most of these requirements.

He stated, “At its simplest, indigenous status stems from the genesis of a culture, language, and traditions in conjunction with its connections to an ancestral land, most commonly derived from ties to pre-colonial peoples. Once a people have such a cultural, linguistic, and spiritual genesis as well as a coalescence as a people, they are generally acknowledged as an indigenous people”.²

Indigenous people have had a role to play in helping Jewish people to understand their own Indigeneity. Jewish anthropologist Adam Louis-Klein lived for a few months among the Desana tribe in the Amazon. He has said that studying another Indigenous people’s understanding of themselves made him reconsider Jewish civilisation from within rather than through external political categories.³

Jewish author Ben Freeman wrote the first monograph on this topic in 2025: “*Jews: An Indigenous People*”.⁴

Indigeneity speaks of emergence of a distinct people in a particular land from which a unique language and culture develops. For the Jewish people, that land is historically known as Israel and Judea. Jerusalem became the political and spiritual centre of Jewish life. It is the land where their ancestors lie buried. The connection to ancestors is an integral aspect of Indigeneity. The Hebrew Bible, later Jewish literature and an enormous body of religious practice are embedded in the geography, seasons, flora and agricultural cycles of that particular land.

Jewish identity therefore differs in an important respect from membership in a universal religion such as Christianity or Islam. Jews have historically understood themselves not simply as adherents of a faith but as *Am Yisrael*—the people or nation of Israel.



Dr Sheree Trotter with Ryan Bellerose



Former Grandchief Harvey Yesno at the Western Wall. | Photos: Perry Trotter

That identity survived the loss of sovereignty and the dispersal of much of the Jewish population. After the destruction of the Second Temple by Rome in 70 CE, and especially following subsequent Roman suppression of Jewish revolts, Jewish communities became increasingly dispersed across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Yet Jewish presence in the land itself never entirely disappeared. Communities survived at different times in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, Tiberias and elsewhere. More importantly, dispersion did not sever the cultural relationship between Jews and their ancestral homeland.

For nearly two millennia, Jewish communities thousands of kilometres apart continued to orient their religious and communal lives towards the same territory. Jews traditionally pray facing Jerusalem. Jerusalem is invoked at weddings. The destruction of the Temple is commemorated annually on *Tisha B'Av*. *Passover* and *Yom Kippur* conclude with the hope: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

This is an extraordinary example of cultural memory surviving displacement. The connection is also embedded in the Jewish calendar. Festivals developed around the agricultural seasons of the Land of Israel. *Sukkot* is associated with the harvest; *Pesach* with the beginning of the grain harvest; *Shavuot* with its culmination. The traditional prayers for rain correspond to the climatic cycle of Israel rather than the countries in which diaspora Jews might actually be living.

Even the symbolic vocabulary of Jewish culture is filled with the ecology of the ancestral land: olives, figs, dates, grapes and pomegranates; palms, myrtle and willow.

A Jewish family living for centuries in Poland, Morocco or Yemen could therefore inhabit one physical landscape while practising a culture whose sacred geography remained somewhere else.

Language provides another striking example. Hebrew ceased to be the everyday language of most Jews during antiquity, but it never disappeared. It remained the language of commerce, prayer, scripture, scholarship, law and communication between Jewish communities. Jews developed diaspora languages such as Yiddish, Ladino and Judeo-Arabic, but Hebrew remained a common cultural inheritance.

Its revival as a modern spoken language during the Zionist period is therefore better understood not as the invention of a new language but as the vernacular revival

of an ancient Indigenous one. Few displaced peoples have recovered an ancestral language so successfully.

None of this means that Jewish identity can be reduced to genetics. Indigenous identities are not simply biological categories, and neither is Jewish identity. Jewish communities incorporated converts and developed distinctive cultures wherever they lived.

Nevertheless, historical, archaeological and genetic evidence broadly supports what Jewish collective memory has maintained for centuries: the major Jewish diaspora populations share substantial ancestry originating in the Levant. Diaspora changed Jewish culture, but it did not erase its geographical origins.

This matters because Jews are sometimes described simply as Europeans who arrived in Palestine during the modern Zionist movement. That description captures part of the history of some Jewish migrants, but it obscures the longer history of the Jewish people.

Ashkenazi Jews lived for centuries in Europe, just as *Sephardi* Jews lived across the Mediterranean and *Mizrahi* Jews lived throughout the Middle East. But diaspora location is not necessarily the same thing as Indigenous origin. A people does not automatically cease to be Indigenous because it has been displaced from its ancestral territory.

Zionism consequently can be understood, from a Jewish-indigeneity perspective, as a movement of national return: a dispersed people seeking to restore collective life, political agency and cultural flourishing in its ancestral homeland.

The revival of Hebrew, the rebuilding of Jewish communities, the return to Jerusalem and the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty can all be situated within that story.

The remarkable feature of Jewish history is that, after centuries of dispersion, the Jewish people never stopped remembering their ancestral home.

¹ <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/bellerose-aboriginal-people>

² *Ibid.*

³ <https://www.indigenousembassy.org/articles/turning-point-in-history?rq=Adam Louis Klein>

⁴ <https://benmfreeman.com/>

<https://www.indigenousembassy.org/articles/jews-and-cherokees-indigenous-case-studies?rq=Cherokee>

Indigenous Supporters of Israel Speak

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Director | Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem

From Sweden to the Pacific, North America to Australia, India to Aotearoa New Zealand, a growing body of Indigenous peoples support Israel and understand her position as the Indigenous people of the land of Israel.

Indigenous peoples have supported the Jewish people from a variety of perspectives: symbolic, spiritual or biblical resonance; genealogical connection; Indigenous recognition; Jewish allyship in Indigenous causes and historical analogies.

When missionaries first arrived in New Zealand in the early nineteenth century, they noted certain similarities between Jewish and Māori cultural practices and some even surmised that Māori might be one of the “lost tribes of Israel”. While this theory was later debunked by historians, some contemporary Māori groups still hold to that view, and it is not uncommon in the thinking of Indigenous groups from other nations.



Brad Haami

Some Māori embraced Christianity, which resulted in a warm attitude towards the Jewish people, in recognition of their role as the prophets and apostles of the holy book. Māori lecturer, Brad Haami has pointed to the way in which Māori in the nineteenth century identified with the Jewish biblical stories and how Hebrew names were inscribed in the naming of persons and *whenua* (land).

As colonisation increased and Christianity fell out of favour, prophetic Indigenous movements arose, whose leaders identified with the Israelites of the Hebrew scriptures. Some of those movements still exist today.

Intermarriage occurred between Jewish settlers and Indigenous tribes in New Zealand, across the Pacific and in North America adding another element of



Hon Alfred Ngaro

Indigenous-Jewish connection. One example is Hon Alfred Ngaro, a New Zealand politician of Cook Island descent and a proud Zionist who speaks of his Jewish grandmother Rita Goldstein.



Nova Peris OAM

Indigenous Australian Nova Peris, Australia's first Aboriginal Olympic gold medallist and first Indigenous woman elected to federal parliament, points to Jewish lawyers and activists who supported Aboriginal rights, including involvement in native title and the 1965 Freedom Ride.

From the Pacific to North America, Australia, India and Aotearoa New Zealand, Indigenous voices are standing in solidarity with the Jewish people and affirming their connection to their ancestral homeland.

Former Judge, Harry LaForme, *Anishinaabe*, Canada has spoken of his experience in the 1970s, as one of only a handful of Indigenous students nationwide in higher education. LaForme felt like an outsider, but it was among Jewish peers, who knew what it felt like to be “othered,” that he found a sense of belonging.

“I had an audience with Jewish colleagues,” he said. “They identified with my otherness. Social justice was a real concern for these judges, as it was for me. Our thinking tended to be aligned. They became my haven—my go-to people.”

Many Canadian First Nations and Native Americans speak of having endured similar experiences. David Sickey, a leader with the Sovereign Nation of the *Coushatta* Tribe of Louisiana, has noted that his Native American tribe has experienced many of the same tribulations—“Banishment from our homelands, adversity and persecution”—that Jews underwent after Roman forces destroyed the kingdom of Judea.

Since 7 October, Indigenous voices have been amongst the most powerful in challenging the false narrative that Jews are foreign colonisers in their land.

Harry LaForme challenged the “antizionist libel-driven hate movement that incites violence and the targeting, exclusion, and marginalisation of Jews in the diaspora”.

First Nations lawyer Karen Restoule and Harry LaForme wrote a powerful submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights’ Study of Antisemitism objecting to the university encampments on Treaty lands. They stated, “As *Anishinaabe*, we are troubled by the expressions of hatred against Jews and Zionists, and the disappointing ignorance, fuelled by misinformation coming from

universities. Ignorance about the indigeneity of the Jewish people in the region that is Israel. Ignorance about the values that Israel, as a democracy, stands for—as imperfect as it is.”²

Nova Peris wrote a powerful submission to the Bondi Commission, as did Indigenous Australian academic Marcia Langton.

Contemporary Indigenous Evangelical Christians have a strong contingent of Israel supporters in Canada, the US and also across the Pacific. In September 2025, a wide coalition of *Indigenous Peoples from Across the Pacific Rim* issued a statement expressing solidarity with the Indigenous Jews who live in the Land of Israel.

Groups including the Ainu of Japan, Indigenous groups in Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, Latin America, Australia, United States, Canada, the Māori, Native Hawaiian *Knaka* peoples and others “represent a chorus of voices from every corner of the Pacific, declaring (their) unwavering love, admiration, and commitment to the Jewish state. Their declaration sums up the feeling of many Indigenous supporters of Israel.

“We recognise the Jewish people as the Indigenous stewards of the land of Israel, their ancestral

homeland, where their history, culture, and spiritual legacy have been rooted for millennia. This indigeneity resonates deeply with our own connections to land, tradition, and resilience, forging a sacred bond between our communities and the Jewish people.”³



Dr Sheree Trotter and Harry LaForme OC

Dr Sheree Trotter is the director of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, a platform for the indigenous of the nations to express their solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people. IEJ exists to oppose antisemitism, affirm Jewish indigeneity and to advance scholarship countering false narratives.

¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/an-anishinaabe-zionist-on-how-indigenous-history-is-weaponized-to-promote-antisemitism/>

² [https://www.indigenousembassy.org/articles/opinion-we-are-anishinaabe-zionists-hateful-anti-israel-camps-disrespect-our-lands?rq=Karen Restoule](https://www.indigenousembassy.org/articles/opinion-we-are-anishinaabe-zionists-hateful-anti-israel-camps-disrespect-our-lands?rq=Karen+Restoule)

³ <https://indigenousfriendsofisrael.org/press-release-declaration-by-pacific-rim-indigenous-people-in-support-of-israel/>

The Director's Log

By Leon Meijer

The World Through Qatari Eyes

Just imagine two small island nations of a few hundred thousand people each: Iceland in the North Atlantic, Vanuatu in the South Pacific. Both fear climate change will make them uninhabitable, through shifting ocean currents or the rising sea. Each launches an international news channel, *Icy News* and *Pacific Storm*, to help the world see reality through its eyes. Every tree felled, every coal-fired power station still running, every barrel of oil pumped becomes an attack on their existence.

Far-fetched? Yet that is precisely what is happening.

Only the country is not Iceland or Vanuatu. It is Qatar: some 350,000 citizens, almost three million migrant workers and, thanks to gas, extraordinary wealth. Its leadership has decided the world should see the news through Qatari eyes.

Here my comparison breaks down. Iceland and Vanuatu have reasonable fears and legitimate interests; their slant would be self-preservation. Qatar exports an ideological project: that of the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement antisemitic to its core. Its ideologues described the Jewish people as an enemy to be fought, and Hamas, part of the Muslim Brotherhood, wrote that enmity into its charter. When such a worldview frames how hundreds of millions watch the Middle East, the result is not slanted emphasis but a poisoned well.

Al Jazeera is Qatar's channel, funded with millions. Billions swallow its pre-cooked information whole, though its colouring is clear: in 2017 neighbouring Arab states demanded its closure. So the world sees Israel through Qatari eyes, paid for largely with Western gas revenues.

When I told officials at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs they are losing the battle on social media, they agreed: against Qatar's billions they are outmatched. Our conclusion was simple: come and see Israel with your own eyes. That is how our partnership began. This year and next, Christians for Israel International hopes to bring over a hundred young people to Israel for ten days to see its security challenges, how the Jewish people are rooted in the land God promised them, and how they hold on to hope.

The antidote to disinformation is winning people over, one by one. Anyone who has walked the land as an eyewitness will stand firm, online and offline, because they can say: I saw it myself. I heard it, I felt it. No one can take that away.

Do you know a young person who should make this journey? Get in touch with us.

An Evening for Israel in Vienna

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

At the invitation of Christians for Israel Austria, approximately 400 Jews and Christians who stand in solidarity with Israel, gathered on 7 September, 2026, at the MuTh, the Music Theater in Vienna, to enjoy an evening of music featuring Israeli songs and "golden oldies" performed by the Shalva Band, who had been flown in from Israel for the occasion.

The particularly moving solidarity event took place just days before *Rosh Hashanah* in support of the Shalva Sharabi Family Center, a rehabilitation and therapy center being built in southern Israel for families who survived the terror-attack of 7 October 2023. A substantial amount was raised for the project that evening.

The *Evening for Israel* was hosted by the chairwoman of Christians for Israel in Austria, Marie-Louise Weissenböck. Among the prominent guests in the hall were the Deputy Ambassador of Israel to Austria Ilay Levi Judkovsky, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna Rabbi Jaron Engelmayer, the President of the Jewish Community in Linz Dr Charlotte Herman, as well as the founder of the Shalva organisation, Kalman Samuels, who celebrated his birthday that same evening.

Kalman Samuels gave a short insight in how the institution Shalva had come into being.

Believing that the care of children with disabilities should not be left to the family alone, Kalman Samuels and his wife Malki created a therapeutic environment in which children with disabilities could grow and thrive. This approach was based on the Samuels' own experience with raising their son Yossi who was left blind, deaf and acutely hyperactive as the result of a faulty vaccination.

Yossi's disabilities took their toll on his family. Providing him with constant loving care, they became exhausted and isolated. Many professionals and well-intentioned friends suggested placing Yossi in an institution. But his mother Malki refused and vowed to God that if He helped Yossi, she would dedicate herself to helping other children with disabilities and their families.

When Yossi was eight, Shoshana Weinstock, a deaf special education teacher penetrated Yossi's wall of silence via Hebrew fingerspelling. She taught Yossi his first word, thus creating a relationship analogous to that of Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller. Malki recalled her promise and with Kalman's help, Shalva was founded in 1990.

What began as an afternoon programme for eight children in a local apartment



| Photo: Shalva

has grown into a national centre serving thousands of people with disabilities from infancy to adulthood from the entire spectrum of Israeli society.

Over the course of over thirty years, Shalva has developed transformative programmes to fill needs that were previously neglected. The success of these programmes has received government and cultural recognition, inspiring grassroots changes in public policy and social inclusion.

In his address to the audience Deputy Ambassador of Israel to Austria, Ilay Levi Judkovsky thanked the organisation, Christians for Israel in Austria, for their steadfast stand by the country: "In these days, when we are facing enormous challenges from our enemies alongside rising waves of antisemitism in Europe and the world, your support and courage are more important than ever. The members of the Shalva band are our true ambassadors—representing a caring, inclusive Israel that believes that every person deserves respect, community and equality."

The Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Rabbi Jaron Engelmayer, addressed the upcoming *Rosh Hashanah* prayers: "On *Rosh Hashanah* we pray not only for ourselves, but for the entire world to be blessed with peace and blessings. This partnership, and the spirit of peace that places the weak and the disabled at the center of society, is the embodiment of the mutual guarantee and social responsibility that we hope for."

The Shalva Band

The Shalva Band is comprised of eight talented musicians, of which four are disabled. It performs to the highest musical standards. Inspiring crowds with its musical repertoire and charm, the band is one of Shalva's most celebrated inclusion programmes. It

formed in 2005 as part of Shalva's music therapy programme. Many members are graduates of Shalva's rehabilitation programmes, where their musical talents were nurtured. Beyond their musical careers, band members engage in studies, work, and volunteering within the wider community. Today, the Shalva Band enjoys growing popularity in Israel, performing regularly with well-known artists and leading cultural integration efforts. Their performances shatter stereotypes, captivate audiences, and inspire belief in the potential inherent in every individual.

The artistic part of the evening in Vienna swept the entire audience to tears as well as dancing. The members of the Shalva band, including the two blind vocalists Dina Samta and Eden Tehrani, performed their greatest hits—from *A Million Dreams* to *Stand by Me* and *Hallelujah*.

The band's director, Shai Ben-Shushan, shared how the band members accompanied his rehabilitation process, after he was seriously injured in battles in Gaza and Lebanon and returned to fight time and time again.

Another highlight occurred when Vienna's chief cantor, Shmuel Barzilai, took the stage, and performed *Al Kol Ele* and *Adon Olam* with the band in a moving arrangement. After standing ovations the beautiful Jewish prayer *Avinu Malkeinu* (*Our Father our King*) was sung as an encore.

Later the song *Jerusalem of Gold* was dedicated by the Shalva Band to a group of Holocaust survivors who were also present in the hall. They were overjoyed when receiving roses from the band members.

The moving evening concluded with a joint singing of *Hatikva* (Hope) by all those present in the hall.

Why Should Christians Support Israel?

■ Interview with Johannes Gerloff

Christians, like all people, are bombarded daily with media framing Israel as a colonising, apartheid genocidal state—unceasing images of Israelis stealing Palestinian land, killing innocent children in Gaza, etc. This can cause us to question our support for the Jewish people. How should we deal with this? We discussed this with Johannes Gerloff, theologian and former journalist who has lived in Israel for over 35 years.

How would you answer the question: “How and why should Christians support Israel?”

In my view the why is far more critical than the how. All too often, the how has suffocated simply because the why was forgotten—or because the question was never asked in the first place. Yet it is the why that determines not only the how, but above all, how sustainably and against what resistance Christians are able to stand with Israel.

Why should Christians support Israel?

Any Christian who examines history with open eyes will quickly realise that no other name has brought as much disaster, suffering, pain, and death upon the Jewish people as the name Jesus of Nazareth.

It should have been different; it was intended to be different. But those who called themselves Christians took ancient pagan hatred of Jews and developed it to perfection—theologically, philosophically, ideologically, and practically. Islam merely adopted what it found in its originally Christian environment and adapted it to a nomadic desert mentality. To this day, the overwhelming majority of Christendom remains the driving force in the campaign against Israel.

Some Christians find this deeply

embarrassing. They want to repent and make amends—for something that actually cannot be made amends for. One does not have to be German to feel the weight of this. In many cases, it is shame, a sense of guilt, and remorse that drive Christians to support Israel.

But our support for the Jewish people should not be based on shame, guilt, and regret. Rather, it should be built on the word of God, and on our acknowledgement that we owe our identity as Christians to the Jewish people. “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:11). We are wild branches, who have been grafted into the Jews’ olive tree. Our identity, calling and future is inextricably connected with the Jewish people.

How do you explain the hatred of the Jewish people?

We must face the reality of the world around us. There is a virus, which I choose to term Judeophobia. It manifests differently depending on the environment: as Jew-hatred, anti-Judaism, antisemitism, or even anti-Zionism—to name just a few of its symptoms. Throughout history, this virus has inflicted infinite suffering upon the people of Israel.

However, it has never been able to destroy them—no matter how much the genocidal strain of Judeophobia dreams of doing so.

One effect of this virus, however, cannot be denied: it always kills the host harbouring it. One does not need to be a Christian to see this. Today, the devastation in the Gaza Strip and the condition of Shia villages and neighbourhoods in Lebanon cry this reality out to the world.

The living God put it unmistakably into words at the very beginning, when He



Pro-Israel rally in Amsterdam. Photo: Cees van der Wal

laid the foundations for Israel: “Whoever does not grant you the significance that I bestow upon you, I will curse” (Genesis 12:3).

The prophet Isaiah declared: “Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all” (Isaiah 41:11–12).

Does supporting Israel mean we ignore reality?

No, absolutely not. It is precisely because they have a realistic view of the world around them that Christians should stand with the Jewish people. Because they do not close their eyes, but rather suffer alongside those they see in the images from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Kurdistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Yemen—and join in the cry of creation. Out of sheer self-interest, we should join in the groaning of creation, in the universe’s cry for redemption—even if

we as Christians have somehow lost sight of who the sons of the one, true, living God are, for whose revealing the world longs (Romans 8:19).

What about the current allegations that settlers in the West Bank are oppressing and even killing Palestinians?

There are about 1 million Israelis living in what has become known as the West Bank. We mustn’t forget that they are living in the land of their ancestors, where Jews have been living uninterrupted for millennia—except for the 19 years that Jordan ethnically cleansed it of Jews between 1948 and 1967. The Jewish people are indigenous to that land—not illegal colonisers. The real colonisers are the Arabs.

Of these one million, a few hundred are behaving in an aggressive and totally unacceptable way. We shouldn’t condone that. The State of Israel should crack down hard on them. But you can’t attribute their behaviour to all Jews. That is a kind of blood libel.

Earth or Land?

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

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land.”
Matthew 5:5

The third Beatitude actually belongs together with the preceding two. In some ancient Greek manuscripts of Matthew’s Gospel, it appears as the second Beatitude, which makes its close connection with the first (“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”) more apparent. These two Beatitudes also occur as a pair in a Qumran text (one of the so-called Thanksgiving Hymns).

In Hebrew, the word for meek looks almost identical to the word for poor. The difference is

only a single letter. Their meanings likewise overlap, as it were.

This Beatitude is a direct quotation from Psalm 37: “But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace” (v. 11). The context of the psalm makes it clear that we should think here of the land, that is, the land of Israel. For that reason, it is preferable in Matthew as well to translate the word as land rather than earth (the Complete Jewish Bible and the Easy-to-Read Version).

Jesus says that the meek will receive as their inheritance the land that God has promised. It is the land of promise. The Jewish teachers of that time also understood this promise as pointing to God’s future. The same expression, to inherit the land, occurs in Isaiah 60:21. Concerning this

passage, the early rabbis taught:

“All Israel has a share in the world to come, for it is said: ‘Your people, all of them, shall be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are a shoot planted by Me, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.’”

According to this interpretation, the land symbolises the future, the world to come, the kingdom of heaven.

Seen in this light, this Beatitude runs parallel to the first, and the two illuminate one another. The kingdom of heaven is breaking into the world. This is the heart of Jesus’ ministry: “The kingdom of heaven has drawn near” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus’ coming is aimed at enabling Israel to fulfil the purpose God has given it: to be the place where He dwells among His people. Jerusalem is the centre where He makes Himself known and may be encountered.

Recommended Reading

**Fighting the Hate:
A Handbook for
Jews Under Siege**
by Melanie Philips*Book review by C4I Netherlands*

Since 7 October, many Jews have felt isolated and abandoned, observes the British journalist Melanie Phillips. Her new book, *Fighting the Hate*, aims to provide a practical: a guide to fighting back.

While travelling abroad, Melanie Phillips repeatedly met Jews who asked her the same questions. How should we respond to the wave of hatred directed at Israel and ourselves? Why do people seem impervious to our arguments? And how can we stand up for ourselves without jeopardising our safety?

Their questions form the basis for *Fighting the Hate*. In her book, Phillips describes a Jewish community that, since 7 October, has been shocked not only by Hamas's massacre, but also by what followed in the West. People from whom they expected support turned against Israel, while accusations they regarded as false became widely accepted. Phillips wrote a handbook for how to deal with this wave of hatred.

Her most important piece of advice sounds strange at first: stop defending Israel. By this, Phillips does not mean that Jews should leave the accusations against Israel unchallenged. On the contrary. But those who respond by saying, "Israel is not committing genocide, is not deliberately starving people and is not stealing land", allow the other side to dictate the narrative without realising it. Turn it around and ask questions yourself, like: "Why is Israel judged by different standards to other countries?", "Why does someone accept certain claims about Israel without question?" You need to be prepared for this, so learn about Israel, Judaism and antisemitism, and prepare concise responses in advance.

Philips also points out that you do not always have to engage in a discussion, safety comes first. Do not pick a fight you cannot win. And look after yourself by finding people with whom you feel safe and connected. Even if the divide runs right through families. The answer is not to seek confrontation. Preserving the bond may ultimately be more important than winning the argument.

Phillips wrote the book primarily for a Jewish audience. At the same time, many Christians also face a lack of understanding and hatred because of their support for Israel. This handbook is therefore also suitable and valuable for Christians who need guidance in their fight against hatred.

When Israel's Fullness Comes

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from dead?

In Romans 11, Paul explains that the "failure" of the Jewish people, their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah, became a wealth for the world. Through the "diminishment" of the Jewish people, the non-Jewish peoples gained free access to God. "Through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Romans 11:11). The community of believers in the Messiah, from the non-Jewish peoples, could only come into existence because Jesus was not successful as the Saviour of Israel.

From this the apostle concludes, as he did at the beginning of the chapter "from the lesser to the greater"... how much more [will] their fullness [be riches]! Romans 11:12b

If Israel's "loss," its "failure," its "misstep," or "diminishment" is already riches for the world, how much more riches for the Gentiles will their "fullness" bring.

Paul here demonstrates a law of salvation history that has not lost its validity to this day. Jesus did not tell the woman at Jacob's well that "salvation from the Jews" had come at some point in the past and was now freely available to the non-Jews. He let her know: "Salvation is coming (present tense!) from the Jews" (John 4:22).

Likewise, in Romans 11, Paul refers not only to the historical roots of our Christian worldview, but to the spiritual foundation of our being in Christ when, with reference to the olive tree, he points to Israel: "It is not you who supports the root, but the root who supports you!" (Romans 11:18).

To this day, the spiritual condition of the non-Jewish peoples is directly dependent on the spiritual condition of Israel. Not only have the Gentiles benefited in the past from the rupture in the relationship between God and his people, but they will be even more blessed when the relationship between Israel and its God is healed. Three verses later, Paul says the same thing again in different words:

"For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from dead?" Romans 11:15

The Greek usage connects the root of the expression "rejection" (ἀποβολή/apobole) with the idea of dry, falling leaves, of waste that is good for nothing, of something unclean and



| Photo: Shutterstock

therefore "rejectable" (1 Timothy 4:4). Thus, according to the Greek translation of the Septuagint, Abraham "rejected" his old homeland in order to be free for God's plans (Deuteronomy 26:5). Likewise, the blind man at Jericho "rejected" his cloak and threw it away to be free for Jesus (Mark 10:50).

"Their rejection"—this could mean that Israel was rejected by God; but also that the Jewish people rejected Jesus as their Messiah. "Their acceptance" could therefore either mean Israel's re-acceptance as God's people or Israel's recognition and welcoming of Yeshua as its Messiah: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 23:39).

Their rejection was the reconciliation of the world—their acceptance will be "life from dead." The expression "life from dead" (ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν/zoe ek nekron) occurs in this combination only in this one place in the New Testament. A host of commentators, from the fathers of the ancient Church, such as Origen and Chrysostom, to the most recent times, have interpreted the expression "life from dead" as "resurrection from the dead". In fact, the second part of this expression, "from dead" (ἐκ νεκρῶν/ek nekron), is usually used in the New Testament in connection with the resurrection of the dead.

However, this interpretation leaves open the question why Paul uses the word "life" here and not the term "resurrection" (ἀνάστασις/anastasis). Furthermore, he did not use the article before "life," which would have referred to eternal life, which begins with the resurrection from the dead. If the apostle meant that the redemption of all Israel was the starting point for the resurrection of the dead, why didn't he say this unequivocally?

We must infer the meaning of this unique expression "life from dead" from the context. In doing so, we do not forget that in the New Testament the term "dead" may also refer to "spiritually dead".

But first, let us note Paul's comparison: The misstep, the fall, the failure, the rejection of Israel brought "wealth" to the Gentiles. From this he concludes: How much more "riches" will their fullness, their reconciliation, bring (verse 12). By "riches," Paul meant "revival" and "church building" among the non-Jewish peoples. Why should he speak in parallel in verse 15 in a completely different way about "resurrection from the dead"? Wouldn't it be much more logical if, corresponding to "reconciliation of the world," he meant "more reconciliation of the world" and "much more revival"?

This is also indicated by the one passage which clearly does not use the expression "from dead" (ἐκ νεκρῶν/ek nekron) in connection with the resurrection of the dead: Romans 6:13. There Paul writes: "Neither offer your members as instruments of unrighteousness for sin, but present yourselves to the one God as those alive from dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to the one God." The "living from dead" (ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας/ek nekron zontas) are people who—even before their physical death and resurrection!—were revived and saved through an encounter with the Risen One and, on the basis of this experience, presented their bodies to the God of Israel as instruments of righteousness.

"Life from dead" is a "radical transformation from evil to good, whatever its nature, which will benefit all peoples." It is a revival of the world of nations on a scale never seen before.

Going Up to Jerusalem

Will the UN Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles?



Participants in Jerusalem's annual Sukkot parade, attended by delegations from Israel and abroad. 9 October 2025. | Photo: Flash90.

Kees de Vreugd

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

"Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

"For seven days you are to live in booths. All native-born Israelites are to live in booths" (Leviticus 23:42).

The shofar sounds today to gather Israel. But it also sounds to awaken the Church and the nations. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar speaks of the future.

Living in booths for seven days, this is what Israel has been commanded. Dwelling in booths recalls the journey through the wilderness, where God made the Israelites live in booths (v. 43). Yet the Feast of Tabernacles is also a harvest festival, celebrating the good land into which God brought His people. The "four species" (v. 40), the fruit of the beautiful tree (*etrog*) and the branches of palm, leafy tree (myrtle) and willow of the brook, represent the Land of Israel.

But compared with Israel's other pilgrimage festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles is also a festival of the future, of the Messianic age.

It is in this sense that the prophet Zechariah speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 14. Zechariah 14 is read on the intermediate Sabbath of Sukkot. The prophecy tells that history has entered a new phase. The hostility of the nations towards Israel and Jerusalem has come to an end. God has

defeated the enemies. He has revealed Himself as the Holy One before the eyes of Israel and the nations. God has become King in Jerusalem.

And then the nations come. No longer do they come to wage war against Jerusalem, as at the beginning of Zechariah 14. They now come with a new commission. Why at this particular festival?

According to Jewish tradition, the nations of the world have always been in view at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Numbers 29 describes the special festival offerings. On the first day, thirteen young bulls were to be offered; on the second day, twelve; on the third day, eleven; and so on, until finally, on the seventh day, seven young bulls were offered. Altogether, this amounts to seventy bulls. According to Jewish interpretation, these seventy bulls were offered on behalf of the seventy nations of the world, to make atonement for them.

Seventy is the number associated with the nations of the world, as the number of the nations listed in Genesis 10 amounts to seventy. Deuteronomy 32:8 says moreover: "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel." Jacob-Israel came to Egypt with seventy people.

Passover is the festival of the Exodus. The exodus marked the birth of Israel as

a people. The formation of the nation of Israel was ratified in the covenant at Sinai, where the Torah is given. That is celebrated on the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*). These festivals therefore emphasise the existence and calling of Israel among the nations.

With the Feast of Tabernacles, that calling reaches its fulfilment. The nations are invited to walk in that light. They are called to go up to Jerusalem and bow before the God of Israel and His Anointed King.

This is not a matter of choice. The Feast of Tabernacles marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel. In the liturgy, the prayer for rain, and therefore for a fruitful harvest, is resumed (in fact, God is praised for giving rain; during the summer, when there is no rain in Israel, God is praised for giving the dew).

The nations are invited, or better summoned, to join Israel in this praise and thanksgiving. A nation that does not go up to Jerusalem deprives itself of that blessing. The same applies even to a country such as Egypt, which in ancient perspective was not dependent upon a rainy season, but derived its fertility from the annual flooding of the Nile.

The united nations face a choice: to march together against Jerusalem in battle (Zechariah 14:1), or to join Israel in worshipping God (v. 16). The verb translated with worship implies bending down and stretching oneself flat on the ground.

This is the challenge to the nations today: bowing down and honouring God as the God of Israel, and His Messiah, or calling God's wrath upon them. We are living in exciting, crucial times!

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

The Meaning of the Scar

We are currently in the sacred season between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. It is a window of time dedicated to self and national reckoning. Yet often the heaviest burden an honest soul brings before God is not the hurt others inflicted on them, but the grief over the wounds they caused someone else.

There is an unsettling finality to the past: words spoken cannot be unsaid, and betrayals cannot be undone.

The Hebrew Bible understands this tension deeply. The *Book of Genesis* refuses to conclude with tidy amnesia, or Joseph triumphant on an Egyptian throne. It ends with a family terrified by its history. After their father Jacob dies, the brothers who threw Joseph into a pit fall to their knees, convinced that divine retribution has finally arrived. Joseph answers with one of the most explosive revelations of grace in Scripture: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

Notice what Joseph refuses to do. He does not minimise their sin or pretend the chains never existed. He names the evil plainly: "You intended harm". But he reveals an Almighty God whose providence is larger than human wreckage: "God intended good". The brothers could not erase the crime, but the Creator transformed what that crime ultimately produced.

In Hebrew, our word for repentance is *teshuvah*—which literally means "to return home". Biblical repentance means an absolute pivot: stopping dead in your tracks, turning 180 degrees, and marching in the opposite direction. It is not an emotional performance or a sentence of lifelong self-loathing.

God doesn't require a pristine past to build a meaningful future; He requires an honest, surrendered heart. Joseph's brothers could never claim, "We never did it." They did. But by the end of Genesis, they could truthfully declare, "We aren't those men anymore."

The scar remains on your skin, but it changes from a badge of shame into living evidence that the wound did not destroy you. The failure stays in your story, but it transforms from a prison cell into a lighthouse for someone else walking through the dark.

Your past is an event; it is not your identity. You cannot edit yesterday, but when you return to God with an undivided heart, yesterday loses the power to write tomorrow. If the Almighty is still giving you breath, your worst chapter does not get the final word.



Iran Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Of the nations of the world, it is among the most consequential. A large, resource-rich land, with a long, illustrious history, educated population, and high culture, it wields significant influence regionally and internationally. The nation is called Iran but is also referred to by its ancient name, Persia. We will take a brief panoramic look at what the Bible says about this nation, especially in prophecy.

Daniel and the Prince of the Kingdoms of Persia (Daniel 10)

The Persian Empire (539-335 BC) was one of the largest, liberal, and most enlightened empires in history. In the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in *Daniel 2*, the Persian Empire is the "arms and chest of silver".

The Prince of Persia is the invisible spiritual principality (see *Ephesians 6:12*) that covers Iran. He is a relentless opponent of God's kingdom. When Daniel prayed and fasted for the kingdom, God dispatched a heavenly messenger that very day. But the messenger was kept from reaching Daniel for 21 days because of the furious pushback from the prince of Persia. He is still opposing God's kingdom today, especially the growing indigenous Iranian church. Yet the spiritual prince knows he is fighting a losing battle.

Good Persia/Bad Persia

When it comes to a Biblical assessment of Persia and its conduct towards the Lord and His ancient covenant people, the reviews are mixed. For example, it was Cyrus, King of Persia, whose appearance was prophesied by Isaiah (*44:28; 45:1*) 150 years before his birth. Though he may not have known God personally, he is called the Lord's "shepherd and anointed".

His commission? To (re)build God's house—the temple in Jerusalem. He provided the money, building permits and materials, furnishings, and all that was necessary. In his grand proclamation (*2 Chronicles 36 and Ezra 1*) he invited—indeed, commanded—the exiled Jews to go home to Jerusalem and build the temple of the Lord their God. This heralded the end of the prophesied 70-year Babylonian captivity of the Jews. So with no promise of earthly acclaim or reward or political advantage, Cyrus set the captives free and rebuilt the Lord's house simply because God told him to. This is an example of Good Persia and is happy and wonderful; the Bad Persia was horrible and wicked, even genocidal and annihilationist. Its evil outstripped the Babylonians, Assyrians and Romans.

It has been said that crucifixion as an instrument of execution came from Persia.

The Book of Esther details the grand example of Bad Persia. The prime minister Haman wanted to execute all Jews in the empire, all because one Jew named Mordechai refused to bow down when the PM came by. Despite the massive overreaction, there are reasons for such irrationality.

First, Haman is an Agagite, of the royal household of Amalek, the ancient enemy of Israel. When Israel wins, Amalek loses. Second, God's plan for redemption through an everlasting king and kingdom came via the covenants He made with Abraham and David. Between the ratification of the covenants and their fulfilment is a chain link in which the *Messiah* and the Jewish people play the key roles. The third reason is spiritual: The Prince of Persia knows all of this, and if he can motivate Haman to destroy the Jews, the chain will be broken and the plan of salvation ruined (*John 4:22*).

Though Haman's decree to destroy the Jewish people was unchangeable, God raised up a Jewish orphan named Esther to win the beauty pageant, marry the king, and persuade him to issue a second unalterable decree giving the Jews the right to defend themselves. The chain of redemption remained intact unto the coming of Jesus.

Elam and Prophecy: Jeremiah 49:34-39

Elam was the region of Persia in the SW of the country, where Susa, the royal city, was located. Jeremiah's prophecy is neither long nor detailed, but it has echoes of the present. For example, the Lord speaks about breaking the bow, just like the world today wants to send the sword after them to strip Iran of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

God's judgment is more than disarmament: it includes widespread exile, confusion, and danger. The Lord will send His sword after them until He consumes them. Then, God sets His throne in Elam and restores their fortunes. Isn't this "Amazing Grace" in action?

Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38-39

This detailed and fascinating account has Persia join a coalition of nations in attacking Israel. The leader is Gog from the North, and he leads the others in a well-armed, unprovoked, spontaneous invasion when Israel is living in peace. Caught off guard, it looks like Israel will finally be destroyed by its enemies, but divine intervention steps in and incinerates the invaders.



Gate of all Nations, Persepolis, Iran. | Photo: Adobe Stock

A trend to watch: on 7 August 2026, Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia formed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, with other Muslim nations to join this "Islamic NATO". This means a military attack on one is treated as an attack on all. Will it mean more weapons in a highly weaponised region?

Will Iran join? Will the Red/Green Alliance (Marxist/Islamist) take advantage of this? Watch and pray.

There is good news at the end of the Magog invasion: The final ingathering of the exiles takes place, and God puts His Spirit on them (*Ezekiel 39:28-29*). Thank God for some more amazing grace.

The Bible Speaks

"And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem." Isaiah 27:13

The *shofar*—the ram's horn—sounds today to gather Israel together. But its sound also calls the Church and the nations to awaken and take heed. The prophet Zechariah speaks of the day when God, as King, will reign from Jerusalem, and when the nations will come together with Israel to worship the God of Israel and bow down before Him during the Feast of Tabernacles.

May the Church and the nations hear the sound of the *shofar*, recognise the significance of its call, and take its message to heart.

Photo: David Cohen/Flashgo

Short News

Naoera Opens
Embassy in Israel

The Pacific nation of Naoero (formerly known as Nauru) opened an embassy in Jerusalem in September, becoming the ninth country to locate its diplomatic mission in Israel's capital.

"Israel's relations with the nations of the South Pacific are advancing tremendously," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said at the event. "Today two ancient peoples stand together in Jerusalem, proud of our identity, our heritage and our friendship."

He continued: "We see opening an embassy here in Jerusalem not only as strengthening our ties with Israel, but also as a message to the world of where we stand. Our motto is God first, and Israel always has a special place in our hearts." | Photo by Shlomi Amselam/GPO.

AI Eye Scan Study
Detects Anemia

Israeli researchers say a simple video scan of the eye could one day help detect anemia without a needle in ten seconds, pointing to a future where basic blood screening may become faster, cheaper and far more accessible. The breakthrough comes from Tel Aviv University and Sheba Medical Center, where scientists developed an artificial intelligence system that analyses tiny blood vessels in the conjunctiva, the clear membrane covering the white of the eye. Instead of drawing blood, the system uses a short, high-magnification video of blood flow in the eye and converts it into digital data that can be read by AI.

Torah Scrolls Stolen

Thieves stole 13–15 Torah scrolls worth US\$90,000–\$113,000 from the main synagogue in Levallois-Perret near Paris. Two men entered through a window, stole only the Torah scrolls, and were captured on surveillance cameras. Philippe Cohen, president of the local Jewish community association, described the theft as "a spiritual trauma for the entire Jewish community in France and around the world," noting that no other property was damaged or stolen. Rabbi Chalom Lellouche called the incident "an antisemitic act that targeted the Torah."

European Jews:
Herzl's Final Years—Part 5

■ Edda Fogarollo

Historian | President | Christians for Israel Italy

As we saw in the previous edition, Herzl spent his final years working to secure official recognition of the Zionist movement from the major European powers. He believed that international support would help raise the funds needed to purchase land in Palestine for Jewish emigrants who were increasingly forced to leave Eastern Europe as waves of pogroms spread throughout the region.

For Russian Jews, Zionism was more than a simple diplomatic matter; it had to be instilled into people's heart and soul in order to grow steadily into a tree with strong roots. The problem of the Land could not be solved in such a short time. They recognised Herzl's good organisational and leadership skills, but pointed out his lack of knowledge about the people, not fully comprehending the intrinsic strengths of the Russian masses. When Herzl began to get to know the Russian Jews, he was surprised and wrote: "They possess that inner unity which has disappeared from among Westerners. They are steeped in Jewish national sentiment without betraying any national narrowness and intolerance. They are not tortured by the idea of assimilation. They do not assimilate into other nations, but exert themselves to learn the best in other peoples. In this way they manage to remain erect and genuine. And these are still the Jews living in ghettos! The only ghetto Jews of our time! Looking on them, we understand where our forefathers got the strength to endure through the bitterest times." Despite the fact that Herzl drew close to the Russian Jews, many Jewish people in Eastern Europe did not see Western Zionism as representative of their thoughts and soul as it was based on abstract ideas that had no foundation in Jewish tradition and sentiments. Different currents of thought appeared among the Jews in Western Europe (represented by Herzl, Max Nordau, David Wolffsohn and others) and Eastern Europe (represented by the likes of Martin Buber and Chaim Weizmann).

The Uganda Proposal and the
Crisis within Zionism

The pogrom that broke out in Kishinev, capital of Bessarabia (now Moldova), on 19 April 1903, was another example of open massacre (45 Jews were killed, 102 people were seriously injured and about 1,500 houses were razed to the ground) that considerably worried the Zionists.



The grave of Theodor Herzl on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, where he was reburied in 1949. | Photo: Flash90

Herzl, shocked and worried for the fate of the Jews, hurried in order to avoid any further slaughter. After what happened in Kishinev, he was received in London by British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain to discuss the question of a motherland. The Minister proposed Uganda as the perfect place to give refuge to the Jewish people risking their life in the pogroms. Herzl saw Uganda as a temporary solution in view of the fate of his people in Russia, but stressed the importance of finally gaining political recognition of a territory. Clearly, Uganda was not Palestine, but this could be acquired directly from the Sultan at a later stage as soon as they collected enough funds for the purchase.

In the seventh Zionist Congress, held at Basel on 21st August 1903, Herzl proposed Uganda as a temporary solution to the Jewish question. However, this proposal led to the division of Zionism and the Congress was remembered as the most turbulent gathering of the movement. It was chiefly the Russian Jews, victims of the Kishinev persecution, who rejected the proposal as this was interpreted as a form of deviation from the original focus on Palestine. In fact, for the Eastern Jews, the heart of Judaism, with all its bonds of affection and tradition, was found in Palestine. It was this need and desire for the native land that gave them the strength to move forward and even surpass the fear of death and devastation of the pogroms. It was this irreplaceable bond that, on the one hand, strongly motivated the Russian Jews and, on the other hand, eluded the Western Jews.

Herzl's Legacy

The differences between these two cultures, characterised by distinct

historical and socio-political realities, were striking. This did not deny the geniality and uniqueness of Herzl who succeeded in awakening the world's interest towards his people in just a few years. Since ancient times, no-one had managed to interpret and manifest the need for a land for the Jewish people. Only Herzl succeeded in exposing the Jewish people's case on an international level. He gave voice to some of the very powerful people of that time who until a few years before were not even aware of the Jewish question and need. A few months before his death, Herzl, who had given himself completely to the Zionist cause, regretted the fact that he had started his mission so late. While he conversed with one of his friends, the writer Stefan Zweig, in a park of Vienna, he uttered these words of reproach: "It was a mistake that I began too late; no-one can make up for the years of the past." Herzl died in Vienna, aged just 44, on 3 July 1904.

Herzl succeeded in awakening the world's interest towards his people in just a few years.

Almost ten thousand people attended his funeral. The *Hatikvah*, a song of hope, which has since become Israel's national anthem, officially accompanied his burial. And so the father of Zionism remained in the cemetery of Döbling (Vienna), next to his father's grave, until the day when the Jewish people could take his remains to Israel.

Myth: Pro-Palestine Demonstrations are Peaceful

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

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

Myth: Pro-Palestine Demonstrations are Peaceful

During a lecture I gave in the city of Den Bosch, a lady wanted to speak after the break. She referenced *Romans II*, where believers from the nations are described as being grafted, like wild branches, into the noble olive tree. She said: “When that olive tree is violated, the branches will also be shaken.” That’s exactly what she felt on 7 October and in the days that followed. I found that very relatable. The unimaginable brutality of the massacre Hamas carried out in Israel deeply shocked me, and the surge in antisemitism worldwide is equally disturbing. Thousands of pro-Palestine demonstrations have taken place in Europe, America, and across the globe. The organisers claim to stand up for justice and peace, but these demonstrations are anything but peaceful.

Are You Pro-Hamas?

At the time, I was staying in Amsterdam, so I took a train from Central Station there to Den Bosch for my lecture that evening. Outside the station, a group—mostly people with a migration background—was preparing for a pro-Palestine demonstration. I approached a young man holding a large Palestinian flag and I asked him, with genuine curiosity: “Are you pro-Hamas?” “No”, he replied. “So, you are against Hamas?” I asked. “No”, he said again. “Then you are pro-Hamas?” “Yes”, he admitted. “Do you think Hamas is good for the Palestinians?” I asked. “Yes”, he said. “Anyone who fights against the Israeli occupation is good for the Palestinians.” “But Israel hasn’t occupied Gaza since 2005, has it?” I pointed out. In a moment, I found myself surrounded by ten men.

I asked others around them: “Are you for Hamas?” Several responded that they were indeed demonstrating for Hamas. I managed to get a leaflet that boldly read:



Palestinians attend a National Return Festival in southern Gaza, 11 May 2026. | Photo: Flash90

“The question is: what exactly are these people demonstrating for? Are they standing up for the people of Gaza, or are they supporting the survival of the Hamas dictatorship in Gaza?”

“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” I had to leave at that point, but had I been able to speak with them calmly, I would have asked: “How many Palestinians has Hamas killed since they took control in 2007? Are you aware of the brutal ways they treat their own political opponents? Do you know that Hamas is also holding Arab Israelis hostage in Gaza? Do you realise that Hamas leaders openly call for the complete annihilation of Israel and the murder of all Jews? Would you want to live under a regime like that of the Ayatollah of Iran? A regime where there is no freedom, no democracy, and no equal rights? How can you support that?”

Deceive the Infidels

The question is: what exactly are these people demonstrating for? Are they standing up for the people of Gaza, or are they supporting the survival of the Hamas dictatorship in Gaza? If they truly care about the people of Gaza, then it seems to me they should be supportive of what Israel is doing there, as Israel’s actions are aimed at ending the terrible neglect and oppression that Hamas has inflicted on the Palestinian people. Ayaan Hirsi-Ali, who grew up in an Islamic fundamentalist family, has commented on these pro-Palestine demonstrations. She says: “People think they are marching for the Palestinian

people, but they are not. They are marching for Hamas. There is something in Islamic ideology that teaches “deceive the infidels” (*Da’wah*). Many people are being deceived by Hamas. Hamas does not care about the people of Gaza, it only cares about the destruction of Israel. According to Hamas and its supporters, Israel and the Jews are the greatest enemy of Islam. Israel must be wiped off the map, and Jews must be killed. So, if you think you are marching for the Palestinian people, you are lying to yourself. You are not doing that at all.”

Testimony of an anonymous Jewish Amsterdammer

The following message appeared on Facebook in October 2023. It was written by a Jew from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, who chooses to remain anonymous for security reasons. “As a born-and-bred Amsterdammer, I feel compelled to share something. On 15 October, I saw a crowd of people with Palestinian flags marching through the city from Dam Square. The noise was overwhelming. What I saw was a mass of angry individuals, chanting things such as “Free Palestine” and “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”, a kind of indoctrination mantra. The hatred I saw in their eyes was unlike anything I have ever witnessed. Everything about this crowd felt

menacing and tense. There was an almost tangible atmosphere of hostility and aggression. It was incredibly intimidating.

Just three days earlier, on 12 October, I had walked past Dam Square again. I pass by there two or more times almost every day. But on that day, I saw a completely different scene: a crowd of people with Israeli flags. There were speeches, singing, and people laying flowers. It was a world of difference!

From my parents, I know the stories of the last century, when people took to the streets with hate-filled mantras and marched through cities. That had led to a totalitarian regime, where ultimately not only Jews, but also all other minority groups were persecuted and murdered: Sinti and Roma, LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with intellectual disabilities or Down syndrome, political opponents, and so on. Last Sunday, I saw people marching through the streets once again, chanting hate mantras. This time, they are followers of a totalitarian faith. I am deeply concerned about the consequences in the Netherlands and Europe, because history teaches us that such movements are serious: their opponents must die.”

We Can’t Reach Them

In an interview, Dutch-Jewish columnist and writer Leon de Winter said: “Thousands fill the streets, waving flags and chanting absurd slogans. This small group gets its information from one-sided, completely distorted sources—TikTok and Al Jazeera—and we can’t reach them. This explosion of hatred has been building up for decades, out of our sight, and it creates a fundamental divide in society. The vast majority of people want nothing to do with that inhumane and reprehensible noise.

Conclusion

Pro-Palestine demonstrations are not peaceful. They are organised and funded by fundamentalist Islamic organisations (such as Samidoun, and Students for Justice in Palestine) and by countries that are intent on the destruction of Israel, the Jews, the West, and the values upheld in the Western world. They are focused on the establishment of a global Muslim caliphate and the spread of the Islamic revolution.

Find Oscar Lohuis’ book on Amazon:
<https://www.amazon.it/-/en/Oscar-Lohuis/dp/9082000369>

Life Saving Mobile Bomb Shelters

For decades, residents in both Israel's north and south, and most recently the entire country, have faced relentless attacks, with little time to reach safety.

country, especially in the north and south, continues to be extremely tense. There is no indication when the incessant attacks on the Israeli civilian

In some northern cities and towns, people have mere seconds to take cover in public bomb shelters. These seconds can make the difference between life and death.

In southern cities such as Sderot, Ashkelon, and Be'er Sheva, citizens have endured relentless rocket fire for over 20 years, with thousands suffering physical and psychological trauma. In the north, residents of Kiryat Shmona, Nahariya, and Metulla are under constant threat from Hezbollah. An entire generation has grown up in the shadow of emergency sirens, whether as babies in their cribs at night; as children in nursery, kindergarten and elementary school; as college students; and as working adults living their daily lives. The level of danger in Israel is high and the security situation throughout the

population will end and residents must take precautions to safeguard themselves and their families. While permanent shelters exist in some areas, mobile bomb shelters are critical for ensuring accessibility to safe spaces, particularly in agricultural and rural communities.

Christians for Israel supports a mobile shelter initiative to protect civilians under fire. These shelters offer essential refuge, ensuring residents can take cover within seconds—making the difference between life and death. The deployment of mobile shelters will significantly enhance security, allowing residents to



continue their daily routines with a greater sense of security.

Your generous donation will help safeguard Israel's civilians by providing life-saving protection to northern and southern communities on the frontlines. Together, we can help ensure the safety

and well-being of Israel's citizens, who are under attack. | Photos: Jewish Agency for Israel

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Not Everything You Hear Is True

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

The Bible give us many lessons, wisdom, warnings, encouragement, even from time to time, entertainment. It's sometimes unclear as to which category some things belong. A favourite is a term used in New Testament Greek, "mōrologia"—a combination of two more common terms: *moros* (stupid) and *lego* (speaking). (You might recognise the common noun form, "moron"). Used only once in scripture, it features in *Ephesians 5:4* where Paul admonishes strongly against obscenity, crudeness, and this "stupid talk".

But—and it is shameful to even have to pose the question—how do we know what is "stupid talk"? Surely if some famous person says it, it must be true, right? Or if it has thousands of "likes" on social media? No? So how do we wade through the enormous tides of the false and the fantasy? We test. We research. We examine the 'talk' against God's word, against facts and evidence, and we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The "facts and evidence"? Proof, explanation by people who actually know what they are talking about, verified images. We have all seen the litany of images since 7 October, supposedly showing tragic or incriminating scenes from Gaza, that have subsequently been proved fake, manipulated, or just stolen from some entirely different conflict. Unfortunately, by the time these images have been debunked the damage has already been done.

Romans 12:2 ESV says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." This seems to be very reasonable advice... and yet apparently it is very difficult to follow. Despite having access to more information than ever before in history, we seem to have become extremely ignorant. All too often we see and hear from "experts" who have no qualifications other than a loud voice or a media platform, and yet their assertions are accepted without question. The Bible has much to say about jumping to conclusions (the most



| Photo: AI

■ We have a job to do: to test what we hear, seek truth, and stand firm in what we know to be right.

exercise some people seem to get!) or passing judgement, without hearing the full, tested, truth. *Proverbs 18:13* states, "To answer before listening—that is folly and shame."

Whilst in Proverbs, we see further warnings to the gullible: wisdom requires testing what we hear. *Proverbs 14:15*: "The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps."

So, does that mean we should call out those who echo foolish talk? Who repeat untested lies? Absolutely we should—whilst ensuring that we apply the same standard to ourselves! We are instructed to have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather to expose them (*Ephesians 5:11*), but always to do so in humility wisdom, and grace.

In our woke western society, even daring to call something right or wrong can invoke a barrage of judgement from those who insist that you can't... judge. But that doesn't mean we should be silenced, nor that we should simply accept everything that the gullible masses are crowing.

As Israel heads towards elections—a unique occurrence in the Middle East—the rumours and propaganda are increasing exponentially. Again!

In recent days, all the old tropes and conspiracy theories have been reinvented and recycled. The current Israeli government is being accused of all kinds of ridiculous things, from deliberately orchestrating the 7 October invasion and massacre, to manipulating the entire world economy. Whilst we all recognise that there are questions to be answered from the tragic events of 7 October and the IDF's apparent failure to "read the signs", who actually thought the ensuing events even possible? I am reminded of similar discussions after 9/11, as to how signs were missed, and opportunities to prevent the tragedy, lost. Hindsight is always 20/20, and it's far easier to throw bricks after the fact. But the conspiracy theories of Israeli manipulation are simply ridiculous. And yet are being repeated and exaggerated—snowballing. Do pray for our Israeli cousins as they choose their government. It is their country, their choice, but we recognise the enormous—and unfair—external pressures being placed on that tiny nation.

New Zealand heads to the polls soon, also. As always, it appears that those of us who are mindful of Godly principles may again struggle to find an ideal party or

candidate to entrust with our vote. Once again, the privilege of democracy leaves us selecting the "lesser of evils", but how do we choose? Between parties already promising sanctions against Israel, the rewarding of terrorism with statehood? Candidates who have spent much of the last political term waving terrorist tea-towels and calling for the destruction of Israel—actual genocide? That side looks pretty bleak. But we now have a political party with no policies of benefit to New Zealand whatsoever, its sole campaign promise being the destruction of Israel. That the "Free Palestine from the river to the sea" party managed to obtain registration, and some \$73,000 of taxpayer funding, seems to clearly signal the rapid decline of our country.

Please, please, prayerfully consider which party you entrust with your vote. Contact your local candidates, interrogate their position on issues dear to Christians, to family values, to our relationship with Israel, among other things. If nothing else, it lets candidates know that there are constituents who don't support the death-spiral that many in our country seem to be hell-bent (literally?) on following. It is otherwise too easy for many candidates to simply go with the loudest voices—and we know who they are.

In the meantime, we have a job to do. Please pray as we finalise a group of young people to travel shortly, to see Israel for themselves, with their own eyes. Please pray for the finances that are needed, but especially to prepare the hearts and minds of those going, and for their protection when they return. As this edition arrives in your mailbox, we will be preparing to stand with our Jewish friends in remembrance of the tragedy of 7 October—while Minto's mobs plan opposing events. Please pray for strength and clarity, that the tragic date will not be hijacked by terrorists yet again.

The Bible warns us that things will be tough for a time, and that many will fall away. But it also tells us how the story ends. Enjoy this edition of *Israel and Christians Today*, and thank you for standing with us, in support of Israel.

"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed." *Malachi 3:6*



Europe Targets Jewish Presence

■ Robbert van de Bovenkamp

Researcher | The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.)

In the world today the word “settler” evokes the image of foreign colonisers, but in reality, Jews living in Judea and Samaria are returning to the cradle of their civilisation: Hebron, Shiloh, Beit El, and Shechem are biblical towns where Jewish life thrived for millennia. In the words of legal scholar Eugene Kontorovich: “Israel’s presence in the West Bank is not an occupation under international law, because there was no prior lawful sovereign, and the land was allocated to the Jewish people under binding international law”.

Background

Unfortunately, the European Union (and its predecessor the EEC) has chosen to ignore the history of the land prior to the June 1967 war. The EU has since 1970’s demanded that Israel end its occupation of what it regards as Palestinian territory. In 1980, the EEC issued the Venice Declaration, which essentially committed the Europeans to support the PLO in its efforts to enable the Palestinian people “to fully exercise their right to self-determination”. In article 7 the Europeans demanded that the PLO be associated with negotiations.

Since 1980, the European position has hardened into a demand that a Palestinian state be established in the entirety of the “occupied” territories. The EU’s most recent actions targeting Israeli “settlers” has been stimulated by the 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, in which a majority of the Court’s members opined that Israel’s occupation of the territories captured by Israel in June 1967 has become illegal, and that Israel must remove Israelis from these territories. Several of the Court’s own judges were highly critical of this conclusion.

This majority Opinion is often regarded as justifying the view that somehow all Israelis in these territories are illegal. However, such an approach is highly problematic from a historical perspective, as it completely disregards the facts (as inferred in the introduction to the article above) that Jews have been living in what is now known as the “West Bank” for millennia, that Jordan ethnically cleansed Jerusalem and the West Bank of Jews between 1948 and 1967, and that many Jews who now live there are neither responsible for the Israeli military administration nor have they ever been “deported” or “transferred” by the State of Israel within the meaning of article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (this provision being the sole ground for the claim that settlements are illegal), nor



Israelis pray at Sa-Nur, northern Samaria, July 2015. | Photo: Flash90

does their presence as such prevent Palestinians from fulfilling their self-determination rights.

As for the presence of Jewish people in the West Bank, it’s noteworthy here to refer to the dissenting opinion by Judge Sebutinde in the ICJ case “Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.” She writes that, “whilst the exact nature of the rights conferred under the Mandate has been the subject of much discussion, the language of the Mandate shows that with respect to the territory then known as “Palestine”, the Jewish people were the main beneficiaries of those rights.” According to Sebutinde, the Mandate clearly confirmed the right of the Jewish people to settle, self-determine and live peacefully in the Mandate territory.

It is against the background of the European bias towards the Palestinians that we must view the most recent efforts of the European Union to make the presence of Jewish life in the West Bank a sanctionable offense.

On May 28th the European Council adopted additional restrictive measures against four entities and three individuals under the European Union’s Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime. Those targeted by the measures are labelled by the Council as “extremist Israeli settlers and organisations”, which are “responsible for serious and systematic human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank, including abuse of the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental integrity, the right to property, the right to private and family life, to freedom of religion or belief and the right to education.”

The designations include the Nachala Settlement Movement and its Director

Daniella Weiss. According to the European Council, the movement encourages and facilitates coercive acts that lead to the forced displacement of Palestinians. The Council also lists the Israeli NGO Regavim and its director Meir Deutsch. The council remarks that Regavim and its leadership lobby for the demolition of Palestinian property “with the aim to expand the control of Israel to the whole West Bank and institute legal proceedings to that end.”

Restrictive measures are also imposed against the Hashomer Yesh NGO—an organisation that offers material support and coordinates volunteers on the herding farms, supporting outposts and settlements in the West Bank—and its president Avichai Suissa. Additionally, the Council lists the Amana cooperative association of the settler movement Gush Emunim. Since its creation, Amana has played a key role in initiating, financing, and facilitating at least 30—in view of the Council: “violent”—outposts and settlements.

The European Union’s policy deliberately mixes together criminal acts (real or manufactured) by a small number of Israelis against Palestinians—acts that are both inseparable from and greatly outnumbered by acts of terrorism by Palestinians. Israel’s leaders and rabbis condemn criminal acts by settlers categorically, in contrast with the Palestinian Authority, which pays pensions to its terrorists. The clearance rate on such incidents is low, but that is also true of property crime in US and European cities.

It should be noted how the “settler violence” story is made up. The production cycle goes like this: A deceptive NGO report becomes a settled account, trumpeted by human-rights organisations that are themselves funded

by the European Union. Reporters and international bodies cite the NGOs without independent verification. Policymakers cite the resulting consensus. The European states that funded the NGOs making the claims then impose sanctions accordingly. What passes for evidence is often nothing more than a chain of ideological citations. And when a handful of these stories were finally forced to address facts, the narrative fell apart.

A good example is the case of Amana. Following the Biden administration’s lead, the European Union sanctioned Amana for “initiating, financing, and facilitating at least 30 violent outposts and settlements.” The word violent in that sentence is doing the work here. What makes an outpost “violent”? Amana pours concrete and lays roads. But under the definitions used by the United Nations, anything from exercising self-defense to an individual committing petty theft is classified as violence. This then allows the European Union to state with a straight face that Amana “facilitated violent outposts” without identifying a single act of violence that Amana directed, funded, or encouraged. Nowhere in its report does the Council identify one single violent incident committed by Amana. As one can see: this is not a legal standard but a word game.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that there have been isolated acts of violence by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank. These are illegal under Israeli law, and Israel should ensure they are prevented and punished.

However, framing settler violence as a crisis threatening global security reinforces a narrative of predatory fundamentalist Jews dispossessing Palestinians.

Criminal activity level of by Jews in Judea and Samaria is a domestic Israeli law enforcement matter and should be treated as such. As this article has shown, the ‘settler violence’ story is fabricated and often thrown into the world without any supporting evidence. The European Union should stop its policy that undermines Israel’s legitimate sovereign rights to security and territorial integrity, and even more keep itself from turning Jewish presence in the West Bank into a sanctionable offense.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international law academics, practitioners and experts in related disciplines. Founded in 2017 in The Hague—the global capital of international law—our mission is to promote peace and security in the Middle East and beyond through the fair and consistent application of international law. We challenge the political instrumentalisation of international law and legal frameworks, advocating for principled legal standards that respect the sovereign equality of states and foster regional stability and cooperation.



Free Speech: Are There Limits?

■ **Tony Kan**

President | NZ Friends of Israel

Freedom, Propaganda & Democracy

Free speech is often described as the foundation of a free society. Without the freedom to challenge authority, question beliefs and express unpopular opinions, democracy risks becoming managed consensus. Yet modern societies face a difficult question: can speech undermine the very freedoms that protect it?

The debate now extends beyond causing offence to propaganda, social media manipulation, foreign influence, social fragmentation and ideologies that reject liberal democratic values.

The challenge is not simply protecting free speech, but protecting the conditions that allow it to survive.

The Classical Liberal View

The traditional liberal argument, most famously articulated by John Stuart Mill, holds that speech should rarely be restricted. Even mistaken views can serve a purpose by challenging assumptions and strengthening the case for truth. The answer to bad speech, therefore, is better speech—not censorship.

History supports this view: scientific discoveries, democratic reforms, civil rights and religious freedom often emerged because people were free to challenge accepted ideas. Progress often begins as heresy.

Yet the world in which Mill wrote was fundamentally different from our own. He imagined citizens engaging in debate and persuasion. Today's information environment allows organised actors to shape public opinion on a scale and at a speed previously unimaginable.

That raises a question: when does free speech cease to be participation in public debate and become propaganda?

When Does Free Speech Become Propaganda?

Not all speech has the same purpose. Free speech generally seeks to persuade through argument, evidence, and open discussion.

Propaganda seeks to manipulate. It often relies upon emotional appeals, selective information, repetition, misinformation, intimidation, or the suppression of competing perspectives. The distinction matters because propaganda is often designed not to participate in the marketplace of ideas but to distort it.

The Israel-Gaza conflict illustrates how difficult this distinction can be. Hamas has long recognised that modern conflicts are fought not only through military means but through information campaigns.



| Photo: Shutterstock

Social media platforms have enabled unprecedented global reach for narratives emerging from the conflict, while the realities of war have often limited opportunities for independent verification from within Gaza.

At the same time, both Israel and its opponents accuse one another of conducting sophisticated information operations aimed at influencing international opinion. Social media has become a primary battleground in its own right.

The result is a public sphere filled with competing claims, selective evidence and emotional narratives, leaving citizens to make judgements without all the facts—an environment where propaganda flourishes.

The answer, however, is not necessarily censorship. Transparency, independent journalism, disclosure requirements, media literacy and robust public debate are often more consistent with democratic values than silencing competing narratives.

Should Social Cohesion Matter?

Many advocates of speech restrictions argue that social cohesion should be a major consideration.

A society cannot function if mutual trust collapses entirely. Citizens need a minimum level of shared commitment to common rules, democratic institutions, and peaceful coexistence. Yet social cohesion is often invoked as a justification for suppressing dissent.

Throughout history, governments and powerful institutions have frequently described criticism as divisive. Reformers, religious minorities, journalists, and political dissidents have all been accused of undermining social harmony.

A free society must therefore be cautious. Social cohesion should not be

confused with ideological conformity. The more important question is whether speech promotes peaceful disagreement or seeks to replace democratic debate with intimidation, coercion, or hatred.

Recent events provide a useful example. In many Western countries, legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies has increasingly overlapped with broader anti-Zionist activism. While criticism of government actions is a normal part of political discourse, Jewish organisations and scholars have raised concerns that some anti-Zionist rhetoric has crossed into hostility toward Jews as a people.

The distinction matters. When individuals are blamed for the actions of a state because they share a religion or ethnicity, the line between political criticism and prejudice begins to blur.

Reports from Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada and elsewhere indicate significant increases in antisemitic incidents since the 7 October attacks and subsequent Gaza war. Jewish communities have reported increased harassment, threats and vandalism, while surveys show growing concerns about safety among European Jews.

These developments raise uncomfortable questions. Is social cohesion damaged more by restricting inflammatory speech, or by permitting rhetoric that contributes to fear and intimidation among minority communities? There are no easy answers.

The Paradox of Tolerance

Philosopher Karl Popper warned of what he called the “paradox of tolerance”. Unlimited tolerance, he argued, may ultimately destroy tolerance itself if intolerant movements are permitted to eliminate competing viewpoints. This idea has particular relevance today.

What should a liberal democracy do when confronted by movements that

openly oppose freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of expression, equality before the law, or democratic government itself?

A purely absolutist position would grant such movements unlimited protection.

The difficulty is that some ideologies seek not coexistence but dominance. They are willing to use democratic freedoms to gain influence while denying those same freedoms to others.

History offers numerous examples from both the far left and the far right. Democratic institutions have often been weakened by movements that first exploited democratic liberties and later dismantled them.

The issue is not whether such ideas should be debated. They should. The issue is whether liberal democracies possess a legitimate right to defend themselves against forces committed to ending liberal democracy.

Defending Freedom Without Abandoning It

The answer cannot be broad censorship. A healthy democracy should remain deeply reluctant to suppress opinions. Restrictions should remain narrow and focused on direct threats, criminal conspiracies, incitement to violence, and coercive conduct.

At the same time, democracies are not required to be morally neutral regarding their own survival. It is entirely legitimate for democratic societies to defend freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, minority rights, and representative government. Those values deserve active defence. The challenge is doing so without creating new forms of censorship that ultimately become more dangerous than the threats they were designed to address.

Putting it all together

The question is not whether free speech should have limits—every society imposes some. The more difficult question is where those limits should be drawn and who should be trusted to draw them. Free societies should remain deeply sceptical of censorship, because once governments acquire broad powers to determine acceptable opinion, those powers may extend beyond genuine extremists.

Yet democracies must also recognise that freedom is not self-sustaining. Some movements, organisations and ideologies seek to exploit liberty to eliminate it. The challenge for liberal democracies is therefore not choosing between freedom and self-preservation, but preserving themselves through freedom while remaining vigilant against those who would use freedom as a weapon against freedom itself.



The Conflict in Iran

■ John Carstensen

The conflict in Iran is continuing with on-again, off-again ceasefires and renewed tit-for-tat attacks: the US striking military targets and strategic infrastructure in Iran, and Iran targeting US military bases and allies in the Middle East, and blockading the Strait of Hormuz.

Unsurprisingly, no actual regime change has been achieved with bombs and missiles. Nor has there been the hoped for popular uprising to overthrow the government. The title of this article, *The Conflict in Iran*, could also pertain to the conflict within Iran between the government and the majority of the population. The totalitarian government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Revolutionary Guard Corps, has a shocking record of human rights violations, with regard to the execution of tens of thousands of its own citizens protesting against political repression, the persecution of Christians, the oppression of women, economic hardship, corruption, and restrictions on personal freedoms. It beggars belief that the UN's 54-nation Economic and Social Council nominated Iran to serve as a member of a United Nations committee tasked with protecting women's rights, human rights, freedom of speech, and combating terrorism, and that the US is the only Western democracy who objected that Iran was unfit to serve on the committee.

Russia and China and countries of the so-called Global South condemn the US

military strikes on Iran. Many in the liberal West condemn the brutal totalitarian Iranian regime and at the same time condemn, or at least do not support, the "illegal war" against Iran, while remaining safely uninvolved. They may also well be relieved the threat of a nuclear armed Iran is being contained.

US President Trump says that a non-negotiable condition for a peace deal is that Iran must not be allowed to possess nuclear weapons. He claims that if Iran had a nuclear weapon they would use it. Iran is the number one sponsor of terrorism in the world, and the destruction of Israel has been a top priority of Iran's foreign policy since the inception of the theocratic regime that governs the country. But would they really deploy nuclear weapons against Israel "the little Satan" and the USA "the great Satan"? Presently nine countries possess nuclear weapons, as deterrents, and realistically, none is likely to launch a nuclear warhead in a pre-emptive strike. The consequences would be unthinkable.

However, there is a real fear that the mullahs of Iran could countenance a nuclear Holocaust. According to Shia Muslim eschatology, a messianic-like hidden imam, known as the Mahdi will appear at the 'end of the age'. Various *hadith* describe signs that may precede the Madhi, including: increasing injustice and oppression; internal conflict among Muslims; major wars and social upheaval; natural disasters and widespread suffering; the appearance of



Tehran cityscape at sunset, with the Milad Tower in the background.. | Photo: Shutterstock

false claimants to prophethood or messianic status. There are those within Iranian *jihadi* Shia Islam who believe they could hasten the Mahdi's coming by creating the preconditions of: war, instability, chaos and widespread suffering. Hence a justification for deploying nuclear weapons.

The conflict in Iran is technically an illegal war, insofar as it is not sanctioned by the United Nations. But the United Nations is an increasingly biased, corrupt and ineffectual institution.

President Trump claims to have defeated Iran militarily and is now imposing economic sanctions to "financially strangle" Iran. He has also

called on all US allies to "isolate and defeat the Iran threat" and warned of "tremendous economic consequences" against any countries who provide "any type of lifeline to Iran".

To summarise Trump's statements on the situation: "The Iranian navy is gone, their air force is destroyed, their military factories are now rubble, their currency is worthless and their country is hanging by a thread... and yet the regime has defiantly failed to make a deal... Therefore, I am announcing the most crushing economic operation ever taken against any country... These historic measures will cripple them and their ability to project terror worldwide. Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Opinion on Palestinian Speakers visiting NZ

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

In November 2025 a group identifying themselves as "Palestinian Christians representing a variety of churches and church-related organisations in Palestine" released a document called, *Kairos Palestine—The Palestinian Christian Initiative, A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*. The document is also known as *Kairos II* because a former document released by the same group in 2009 was known as *Kairos I*. A careful examination of both documents led me to the conclusion that the documents serve no theological or conciliatory value, but their publication is motivated purely by politics, and their aim is to demonise the State of Israel while making excuses

for years of persistent terrorism by Palestinian extremists.

Both documents give no respect to the Jewish connection given in the Holy Bible to the Land of Israel, nor to the covenant God made to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through their great patriarch—leaving one to ask the question, "What Bible do these Palestinian Christians read?" It is obvious that the people behind this are not representing all Palestinian Christians.

The folly of the second document *Kairos II* "A moment of Truth: Faith in a time of Genocide" is seen in the opening statement in the first paragraph: We look toward the day when we shall live free in our land, together with all the inhabitants of the earth, in true peace and reconciliation—founded upon justice and equality for all God's

creation, where "mercy and truth meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." (Psalm 85:10)

If the authors had read the first verse of that Psalm, the fabric of their malicious anti-Israel diatribe would have come undone from the beginning. *Psalm 85:1* reads in the New Living Translation, "Lord, you poured out blessings on your land! You restored the fortunes of Israel". Unfortunately, *Kairos II*, along with *Kairos I*, are lacking in the truth department, and therefore righteousness and peace do not find a place to kiss in any of their biased articles.

Coinciding with the Church of England's general synod agreeing to "hear" the *Kairos II* document in early July, was a visit to New Zealand by two academics from Nazareth and Bethlehem to bring "Palestinian

Christian Perspectives" on "how should Christians respond to violence and injustice in the Holy Land?" They visited several churches. One participant I know of left troubled and confused.

There is no wonder they leave confusion in the minds of their hearers, as the teaching of the *Kairos* documents is based on what is called "Palestinian Liberation Theology". It is a doctrine which teaches Jesus was a Palestinian and the Old Testament is not to be taken too seriously. It is a different gospel geared to suit the anti-Israel and anti-Zionist agenda of those who have it in for Israel and the Jewish people. To cut it short, such doctrine is antisemitic!

The *Kairos* documents along with their false prophets are wrong, antisemitic, and do not align with the truth of the eternal Word of God. Be warned!

Jew-Gentile Relations

Since 7 October 2023, Australian Jews have experienced an unprecedented wave of antisemitism. Many felt bewildered and betrayed as this was “the lucky country”, in which the Jews were part of the social fabric, had contributed enormously and were a valued community group. Their calls for protection and public recognition and action on antisemitism went unheeded. Then unsurprisingly, the Bondi attack occurred. Suddenly the public could no longer ignore the reality that things had changed in Australia, and not for the better. The Royal Commission hearings, based on themes, allowed ordinary Australians and experts to outline the realities of their changed lives and to gauge the extent of the problems.

Jews in Society

Most Australian Jews tend to live in Jewish communities, primarily in Melbourne and Sydney or at least in small geographic areas; meaning that many Australians never encountered Jews and were unfamiliar with them as individuals and as a community. Ordinary Australians were shocked to hear what was really going on in Australia. Repeatedly, Jews outlined how support for Israel was a key element of their Jewish identity.

Opportunities

The Commission received widespread coverage in the mass media. Since the hearings were livestreamed and available online, both the Jewish community and the public were able to gauge the progress of the Royal Commission and find out more accurately what has been going on in Australia.

Controversies

Some felt the Commission was not probing deeply into the causes of antisemitism. Prominent Australians, including promoter Josh Frydenberg, surprisingly, never got to give evidence

before the Royal Commission. This caused some consternation among the Jewish community who felt that prominent Jewish voices were being excluded. They did, however, make written submissions. Similarly the PM, Anthony Albanese and other key politicians were not called to give evidence about how much they knew about the situation.

Christian Communities

Christians made public submissions in Block 9 on healing, community support and countering bigotry, many from an inter-faith perspective. Outside the Commission, it is unknown whether Israel-related groups spoke up in support of the Jewish community. Historically, the two faith communities were very isolated from one another.

Regrets

The former head of ASIO, Australia’s internal security force lamented the fact that the government did not take his warnings seriously enough, wondering if he could have done more. Subsequently, Lorraine Finlay, Humans Rights Commissioner, lamented that she didn’t speak out earlier and more clearly against rising antisemitism. Acknowledging her actions had undermined trust in the Human Rights Commission, she described her response to the Opera House protests as her “greatest regret” of her term.

Key Findings

Progressive Jews in creative spaces, and Jews in academia, have found themselves locked out of their jobs, specialty and social groups, and the targets of hate. They were being asked to separate their identity and denounce Israel and Zionism. Jewish schools and their pupils are being heavily targeted. The amount spent on community security has increased enormously. But is that the solution? Australian Jews are

TIMELINE

AUSTRALIAN ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ANTISEMITISM

- 14 DEC 2025** **Bondi Attack (Hanukkah)**
16 dead & 41 injured
- 17 DEC 2025** **Josh Frydenburg (Ex-Treasurer)**
calls for a Royal Commission & lays out 8-point plan
- Support from Prominent Australians**
Sports stars, politicians and academics (non-Jews)
- JAN 2026** **Government agrees reluctantly**
- Appointment of Hon Virginia Bell**
High Court Justice (retired) as Royal Commissioner
- 9 JAN 2026** **Terms of Reference made public**
- 24 FEB 2026** **Hearing commenced**
- 30 APR 2026** **Interim Report Released**

HEARING BLOCKS

1-3 SYDNEY
4 May–10 July

- Block 1:** Antisemitism — Nature & Prevalence
- Block 2:** Bondi testimonies
- Block 3:** Online, Media & Social Media

4-5 MELBOURNE
13–24 July

- Block 4:** Universities
- Block 5:** Community Security

6-9 SYDNEY
25 July–26 Aug

- Block 6:** Guidance & Training
- Block 7:** Protest & Policing
- Block 8:** Drivers & Deradicalisation
- Block 9:** Social Cohesion



FINAL REPORT
Due 18 December 2026



20,000
Submissions



347
Witnesses



151,800
Livestream views

THE BIG PICTURE

increasingly asking—is it time to leave?

Conclusion

As John Anderson, former Deputy Australian PM noted, the primary responsibility of the state is to protect its citizens and antisemitism is a societal problem, not a Jewish problem. The multi-prong institutions of state are there to protect the vulnerable.

But there is also a duty for the ordinary citizen to stand up too to defend them as fellow citizens of a democracy. The burden should not fall on the Jews alone. What are Christians doing for the Jews in terms of solidarity? We are living in light of the Holocaust, not in ignorance. Remember God is watching and our support matters.

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Israel Heads to the Polls: What to Expect

■ Rob Berg

Chair | Jewish National Fund NZ (JNF)

As the Israeli elections draw ever closer, we now know not just which parties will run in the elections, but we now know each party's list of candidates. What remains as unclear as ever is what the makeup of the next Israel government will be, including who will be Prime Minister.

With the elections set to be held on 27 October 2026, the pollsters are having a field day. Currently in the front running for PM are Gadi Eisenkot and current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Naftali Bennet, a former PM, is also in the running, but is continuing to look like a long shot.

Benjamin Netanyahu

Netanyahu is well known to us all. He has his lovers and his haters, which is not surprising for someone who has been in power for most of the last 30 years. Many young Israelis know nothing else. Netanyahu sees himself, with some justification, as the leader of the right-wing block. In Israel—right-wing and left-wing politics more often describes policy, albeit not exclusively, towards the Palestinians and potential statehood than it does economic policy in most other countries. He is also seen as more favourable to the ultra-orthodox (*Haredi*), especially with regards to the draft into the Israeli Defence Force, than many other political leaders.

Naftali Bennett

Naftali Bennett has been in politics since 2011 when he was head of the *Yesha* (Settlers') Council (Israelis living in Judea and Samaria) and in 2013 he was elected to the *Knesset*. Apart from the last four years, he has been a Member of *Knesset* (MK) serving in various ministerial roles including Prime Minister for a year from June 2021 to June 2022. Bennett is the first Israeli PM to welcome into the government members of an Arab party. To some on the right wing, where Bennett views himself, this was perceived as a betrayal. For others, especially on the left, this was hailed as a major positive breakthrough in Israeli society.

In the aftermath of the 7 October attack on Israel by Hamas, Bennett was seen as the main rival to Netanyahu for Prime Minister had elections have been called. However, since announcing in April this year a merger with Yair Lapid from the left-wing *Yesh Atid* party, Bennett's numbers have fast been falling and he is now sitting behind both Netanyahu and Eisenkot. Bennett has ruled out bringing the Arab parties into any government of his, stating that after 7 October it is not the right time. However, many on the right are sceptical he would maintain this position if he needed the numbers.



| Photo: Flash90

Bennett has also expressed his opposition to a Palestinian State but would seek ways to give the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria more autonomy than they arguably have now, but with some restrictions such as no army.

Gadi Eisenkot

Gadi Eisenkot is relatively new to politics but is nonetheless well known in Israeli society due to being Chief of Staff for the IDF between 2015-2019. In Israel, unlike in many other countries, the Chief of Staff of the armed forces is a well-known figure.

In 2022, he was elected to the *Knesset*, and following the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas, was invited into the Unity government by Netanyahu as Minister without Portfolio and as a member of the War Cabinet. Eisenkot resigned from the Unity government and the *Knesset* in July 2025 in what he saw as deprioritisation of the hostage's release over military action, a lack of a war strategy and frustration with Netanyahu. However, following his resignation, Israel eliminated Mohammed Deif, Fuad Shukur, Ibrahim Aqil, Hassan Nasrallah and Yahya Sinwar, as well as directly attacking Iran. It is impossible to know if Eisenkot would have been in support of these had he remained in the War Cabinet. It should be noted that Eisenkot lost both a son and two nephews in the IDF's response to the 7 October attacks.

After resigning from the *Knesset*, Eisenkot stayed very much in the public eye and in September 2025 established the *Yashar!* Party (*yeshar* means 'straight' as in the direction) as a centre left party to directly take on Netanyahu and lead the so-called 'anti-Bibi' block. Since establishing *Yashar!* and with Bennett merging his party with Lapid's, Bennett's decline in popularity has corresponded to Eisenkot's rise in the polls, where Eisenkot is currently leading the way to become the largest party in the *Knesset* at this year's election.

Eisenkot has stated that he will be willing to form a coalition government with any party that meets all of the following three criteria: 1) accept Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, 2) endorse the foundational values of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, and 3) support mandatory national service which would require all Israeli civilians, including the *Haredi* and Israeli Arab citizens to complete either national or military service. These three conditions would, therefore, make it possible for him to have the Arab *Ra'am* party in a coalition government, but would seem to rule out the *Haredi* parties. Like Bennett, he will set up a State Commission of Inquiry into the 7 October failings, something Netanyahu has refused to do. With regards to the Palestinians, Eisenkot has stated that anyone who believes in a Two-State Solution post 7 October is "delusional" and does not understand the conflict. However, he has been critical of expanding some settlements in Judea and Samaria arguing that the E1 Settlement construction, for example, carries an unnecessary "international cost".

The Small and New Parties

In addition to the main parties, contesting the election are several smaller parties including those from the *Haredi*, far right, far left, and Arab parties, as well as some new parties. On the far right, it seems that the Religious Zionist Party of Bezalel Smotrich who, at the time of writing, may miss the 3.25% threshold to get back into the *Knesset*. Both Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir (*Otzma Yehudit* party) also have competition from a newly formed far-right *Amcha Yisrael* (People of Israel) Party. How the votes will be split amongst all these will be closely watched as we near election day. Interestingly, the *Amcha Yisrael* Party includes the well-known Israeli Arab pro-Israel advocate Yoseph Haddad as

number two on the party list.

First Time Voters

One of the main unknowns of this election is how first-time voters will vote. This election sees far more first-time voters than in previous elections due to this being the first Israeli government who have lasted their full term since the 1969–1974 government of Golda Meir. Latest figures are putting the number at around 64,000 new voters, which accounts for approximately 10% of eligible voters.

This is a group whose views will inevitably be shaped by social media, the Covid pandemic, the 7 October attacks and the two years of war which followed. Many would have served in Gaza. They are also a group who politically have known little else in their lives other than Netanyahu as Prime Minister. Latest polls are suggesting their turnout to vote will be very high. Their vote will be crucial for any political party to succeed. How they will vote is the big unknown.

Democratic Party

It would be amiss to discuss the Israeli elections without mentioning the Democratic Party who are a merger between the *Meretz* Party and the old Labour Party of stalwarts such as David Ben Gurion, Gold Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak. They are still recovering from what is widely regarded in Israel as the failure of the Oslo Agreements and the Camp David talks between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, who rejected close to 97% of Judea and Samaria, land swaps, all of the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem as the Palestinian Capital. Instead of accepting the opportunity for a Palestinian state, Arafat said no. He couldn't accept the idea of a Jewish state in any part of "Palestine" and launched the deadly second intifada which saw over 1,000 Israelis murdered by a wave of suicide bombers. It is fair to say the left in Israel have struggled since the turn of the century and there is little to suggest they will be a force in this year's elections either. However, their leader, Yair Golan, is well respected as a war hero following his actions on 7 October in donning his army uniform early in the morning to fight Hamas and rescue Israelis.

And finally, one big surprise has been the ex-Police Commander and Jewish Israeli Yoav Segalovitz who has joined the Arab *Ra'am* Party as number two on their list. This is a shrewd move by the head, Mansour Abbas, as this may make the party more palatable to the likes of Naftali Bennett. It also shows an intent by *Ra'am* to focus on the current law enforcement issues facing the Israeli Arab community.

Continued on page 9



Oslo Accords: Why Areas A, B and C Matter

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

Nearly every week, international news reports mention “Area C”, Israeli demolitions or settlement construction, or Palestinian structures built without permits. Yet the background is often missing: what Area C is, why Israel administers it, and why different rules apply just kilometres away.

These events cannot be fully understood without the framework that produced them—the Oslo Accords. More than three decades later, arrangements intended to be temporary still shape who administers towns, provides security, approves construction and seeks to establish “facts on the ground”.

A Temporary Agreement

The Oslo process began with the Declaration of Principles, signed on 13 September 1993 by Israel and the PLO. The famous handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, witnessed by US President Bill Clinton, symbolised an effort to establish Palestinian self-government while negotiations continued towards a permanent settlement.

The 1995 Interim Agreement, known as Oslo II, divided Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”) into Areas A, B and C. These were not intended as international borders, but allocated administrative and security responsibilities during an interim period while permanent-status issues—including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security—were negotiated. The division was never intended to be permanent. Oslo II envisaged further Israeli redeployments and the gradual transfer of additional powers to Palestinian jurisdiction, with Area C itself eventually to be transferred.

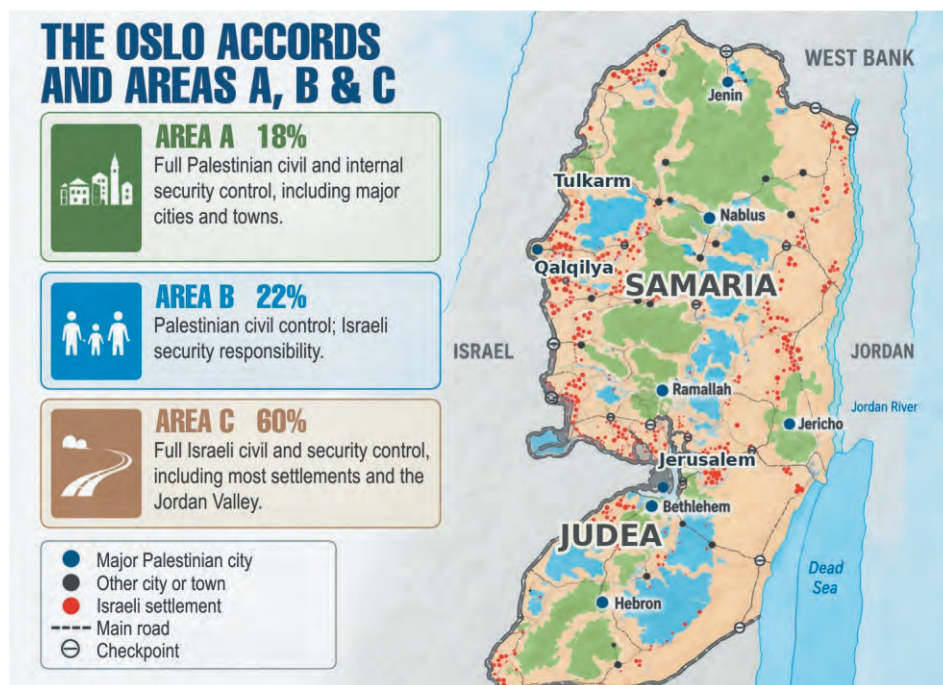
That process was never completed, leaving the supposedly temporary map in place.

What Are Areas A, B and C?

Area A, approximately 18% of Judea and Samaria, is under Palestinian civil administration and responsibility for internal security and public order. It includes major cities such as Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem and Jenin. However, Israeli forces have continued to operate there for counter-terrorism purposes.

Area B, approximately 22%, has shared responsibilities. The Palestinian Authority administers civilian affairs and public order, while Israel retains “overriding responsibility for security”.

Area C, approximately 60%, remains under Israeli civil and security control in areas not transferred to the Palestinian Authority. It contains almost all Israeli settlements, much of the undeveloped land, key transport routes and the Jordan Valley.



The West Bank: Areas A, B and C under the Oslo II Agreement (indicative only). | Photo: AI

Importantly, Area C was not designated as sovereign Israeli territory or as part of a future Palestinian state. Its final status was left for negotiation.

Living with Oslo

For most Palestinians, everyday civil services are provided by the Palestinian Authority, particularly in Areas A and B, including schools, healthcare and municipal services. Israeli communities are overwhelmingly in Area C, where Israel retains security responsibility.

The three-colour map therefore masks a complex patchwork of jurisdictions. Movement between areas can involve Israeli checkpoints and security controls, while construction rules change at the boundaries. A project permitted in Area B may require approval under the Israeli-controlled planning system just across the border in Area C.

These distinctions have practical consequences every day, yet are largely invisible in international reporting.

Why Does Area C Dominate the News?

Area C is where Israeli authorities oversee planning, construction, demolitions and settlements.

This can create the impression that Israel imposes planning rules across all of Judea and Samaria. In reality, the division originated in an agreement between Israel and the PLO, although its continuation three decades later remains fiercely contested.

There is another consequence. Israeli settlement construction occurs overwhelmingly in Area C and is routinely analysed in terms of its potential effect on a future territorial settlement. Palestinian construction in the same area receives much less attention as a territorial phenomenon, despite potentially affecting the same future map.

The Battle Over Building

Israel retains planning and zoning authority in Area C. Palestinian communities and international organisations argue that permits are difficult to obtain, while Israel says unauthorised construction cannot be ignored and may sometimes establish territorial facts before final-status negotiations.

Israeli settlement construction is often described as creating “facts on the ground”, but Palestinian construction can also affect territorial continuity. While not every unauthorised building is politically motivated, both sides recognise that what is built today may influence tomorrow’s map.

Europe’s Role

European involvement adds another layer, with the EU and individual governments funding infrastructure in Area C, including projects without Israeli approval. Europe argues that Israeli planning restrictions hinder Palestinian development and that humanitarian aid should not depend on permits unlikely to be granted.

Israel questions whether third-party governments should fund construction in territory where Oslo assigned planning authority to Israel. The dispute is particularly acute around settlements and strategic locations, where construction can influence the outcome of future negotiations.

Khan al-Ahmar illustrates the complexity. The Bedouin community east of Jerusalem has faced demolition proceedings for years, involving prolonged litigation, diplomatic pressure and political intervention. Such complexity can be lost when headlines simply report that Israel has “ordered the demolition” of a Palestinian structure.

Oslo does not settle every legal question concerning Judea and Samaria. The international community overwhelmingly considers Israeli settlements contrary to international law, a position Israel disputes. In its July 2024 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice went further, finding that Israeli policies and practices, particularly in East Jerusalem and Area C, entrenched Israeli control and amounted to annexation of large parts of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Oslo remains important because it explains the administrative arrangements under which Israelis and Palestinians operate. International law, Oslo’s agreements, Israeli military law and Palestinian law overlap, creating a complex legal framework.

Disagreement over the legality of settlements does not erase the administrative distinctions created by Oslo. Sovereignty, international law and administrative jurisdiction are connected, but they are not the same thing.

That complexity rarely fits comfortably into a headline.

An Interim Arrangement Without an End

Oslo’s greatest paradox is that its supposedly temporary arrangements have outlived the peace process that created them.

Rabin’s assassination, terrorist attacks, the failed 2000 Camp David negotiations and the Second Intifada eroded confidence in the process. Settlement construction continued, Palestinian politics fractured between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and repeated attempts to restart negotiations failed.

Rather than becoming a bridge to a permanent agreement, Oslo became the framework through which the unresolved conflict is managed. The events of 7 October 2023 made the future even more uncertain, strengthening Israeli arguments for retaining security control, while many Palestinians see an interim system entering its fourth decade as evidence of permanent occupation.

The Oslo framework still shapes significant aspects of Israeli-Palestinian life, even though the peace process it was designed to support has effectively disappeared. Almost nobody intended Areas A, B and C to last indefinitely, yet there is no agreement on what should replace them.

Oslo was conceived as a bridge to peace, but its temporary map became one of modern diplomacy’s longest-lived interim arrangements. More than 30 years later, Areas A, B and C still shape who governs, polices and builds—and why today’s headlines look the way they do.



The Unchanging God: Amir Tsarfati's NZ Tour

■ Scott Woodcock

Amir Tsarfati recently toured New Zealand speaking on the theme *The Unchanging God*. He spoke of God's covenantal faithfulness to His people and that His ways do not change, highlighting the fact that "There has not failed one word of all His good promise" and that the "Gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" in relation to His promise to Israel.

Originally the tour was only planned for the North Island, but after the tour was announced, requests piled in from the South Island. Amir responded by adjusting his tight schedule to include Christchurch. In response to the overwhelming demand, he also adjusted his schedule so he could hold two meetings in Auckland and Tauranga. In all areas the events sold out quickly. In Christchurch 750 tickets sold within a week. From the number of enquiries from those who missed out, it appears we could have easily doubled that number.

There were a few concerns about security especially from the pro-Palestinian movement. In Christchurch



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivers a speech in Malaysia 11 October 2025. | Photo: Shutterstock

we had one threat, but nothing eventuated. It turns out that we had organised our event at the same time as the Pro-Palestine movement was holding their meeting at the Cardboard Cathedral, meaning we had no interference. However, it was a different story in Tauranga. Around 20 protestors turned

up and spread blood on the pavement outside the meeting place, throwing objects at the building and blasting the attendees with bad language and threats. The police were made aware but did not respond. Despite the loud opposition, the event still went ahead and was a wonderful night for everyone involved.

In Hamilton a handful of protestors turned up but they got rained out and caused little interference. The sad thing is, Amir has not experienced these hostilities for any of his speaking tours anywhere else in the world. Only in New Zealand.

The majority of the meetings were organised by like-minded Calvary Chapels around the country. Amir was willing to go wherever he was invited to go, including Bethel AOG in Auckland. Amir generally partners with Calvary Chapels as their doctrine and outlook align. On his Australian tour Amir had Bary Stagner (a Calvary Chapel pastor) join him for the speaking tour.

A big difference for Amir in this season was his intentional decision to return to focusing his ministry on teaching the word rather than providing news coverage, which he found would otherwise consume his time and thoughts. His desire is to equip the church with God's word, reminding us of this foundational truth:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."
Isaiah 40:8

Be Not Partakers in Sins!

■ Joanna Moss

The instruction found in *Revelation 18:4* to come out of Babylon is a powerful command. But it's not just for the End Times. Interestingly, it is a command that is repeated six other times in *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah* making seven in total. It has three aspects: To come out, not to be partakers of her sins, and not to receive any of her plagues (consequences). Babylon is both a place and a world system. But it is also symbolic of the mother of all harlots; where harlotry is the metaphor for participating in false religions. The command suggests that we examine whether there are any Babylonian elements in our church and in our personal faith and practice.

Time of Change

The New Zealand church is undergoing a fundamental change. It's been happening for awhile. Many are spiritually dead and no longer viable. For some believers the time of grace is closing. For others, it's a judgment on the New Zealand church. Maybe you have noticed the sale signs going up over church properties around the country? The cross is disappearing from many smaller centres and some larger suburban ones. Many congregations have been growing smaller. The main denominations are liquidating property to fund child abuse settlements arising out of the state inquiry into abuse in religious care and in areas where they are no longer viable. Jesus said it was a serious thing to harm a child. He meant it (*Matthew 18:6*).

On the other hand new fellowships are being

established. Some are representative of new immigrant Christian groups. Others are community churches headed up by a local group of believers. Some strong fellowships remain. There is always life. Regardless, for believers it's a time to be Bereans and search the scriptures, not just read them. We need to be asking hard questions about beliefs and practices. What does it mean to be an authentic believer? Why are so many Christians passive? Where are the miracles and healings promised in the Bible? Remember Jesus couldn't move in power where there was unbelief. Why are so few operating in the gifts? Why have many not grown for a long time? Why do so few take any responsibility over how the church functions. What about the next generation?

Coming Out

You may know people who have walked away from fellowships over the past few decades. God called many out of their fellowships for a time aside or due to a particular doctrinal error or sin. Some left because they took offense, others were just not serious, some were hurt and others remain in the wilderness and need to be called back. But called back to what? Jesus made it quite clear that we need to be meeting together and having fellowship (*Hebrews 10:25*). By fellowship he meant real fellowship and that requires relationship—love, commitment, accountability, teaching, sharing and dedicated time on a weekly basis. Reading through the *Book of Acts I* was struck by the love they showed one another and how many were single names, not couples. Many single people are isolated and lonely. They shall know

you are my disciples by their love. To love others we need to know God's incredible love for us, far beyond any human love. Do you really know it? Try reading through the Gospel of John, open your heart and let the words and His love flow into you.

Not Partaker in Sins

Dealing with problems, here the commandment is both don't do the sins and don't come into agreement with them i.e. when you don't do them yourselves. This means condoning wrong doctrines and actions, many of them worldly ones. Babylon was full of witchcraft, yet few believers understand what witchcraft from a spiritual perspective really is. This includes idols and control. God gave us free will. Discipline is biblical and that requires biblical submission. Some won't submit because they are lawless. Let them go. A study of Babylon is fruitful.

Share in Her Plagues

The Egyptian plagues reappear in the Book of Revelation like bookends, a constant reminder of a spiritual reality. They are serious and have deeper meanings. The call to come out of Babylon is a call to purity and separateness requiring repentance and deliverance. But it's also a WAY to authenticity and power. Take heart; remember the true church will always be a remnant (*Parable of the Sower*). The harlot church will remain. But the true church knows God, worships Him in a godly way, is powerful, multifaceted and full of love. The question for believers is—are you willing to come out of Babylon and lay down your life?



The Man Who Remade Turkey

■ Greg Bouwer

Israel Institute of New Zealand

Few contemporary leaders have altered their country's trajectory as decisively as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Across more than two decades in power—first as Prime Minister, then as President—he has restructured Turkey's political institutions, redirected its foreign policy, expanded its military-industrial base, and eroded the secular framework defining the Turkish Republic since Atatürk founded it in 1923. To understand Turkey's conduct on the world stage today is, in large part, to understand one man's ambitions.

From Reformer to Strongman

Erdoğan's rise began in Turkey's Islamist political movement. He served as mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s before co-founding the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001, which swept to power the following year amid economic collapse.

The party's first decade delivered strong growth and closer ties with Europe: market reforms raised living standards, the military's political influence was reduced, and EU accession talks gathered pace, leading many Western observers to see proof that political Islam and liberal democracy could coexist. That optimism proved misplaced. As Erdoğan consolidated his dominance, dissent narrowed, and independent media, opposition politicians, journalists and academics increasingly faced prosecution.

The failed coup of July 2016 was decisive. Blaming followers of the exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen, Erdoğan launched sweeping purges across the military, judiciary, universities and civil service; tens of thousands were arrested or dismissed. A 2017 referendum then abolished the office of Prime Minister and concentrated executive authority in the presidency, leaving him with powers



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivers a speech in Malaysia 11 October 2025. | Photo: Shutterstock

unmatched since Atatürk. Elections continue, but the checks that once constrained executive power have been significantly weakened.

His economic record has grown more mixed. Early growth gave way to soaring inflation, a collapsing currency and financial instability, driven partly by Erdoğan's insistence on low interest rates despite high inflation—a stance at odds with conventional theory that undermined investor confidence. Recent adjustments have sought to stabilise the economy, but economic management remains a principal challenge.

Alongside this has come a gradual re-Islamisation of public life: religious education has expanded, Islamic symbolism has grown more prominent, and institutions built to preserve secular character have lost influence. The 2020 reconversion of Hagia Sophia from museum to mosque symbolised the shift—to supporters, a restoration of authentic identity; to critics, another step from the secular republic Atatürk envisioned.

Turkey: An Independent Power

Erdoğan's ambitions extend well beyond the domestic order. Where earlier governments portrayed Turkey as a bridge between East and West, he presents it as an independent power with its own sphere of influence—an outlook analysts call “neo-Ottomanism”, though officials avoid the label. Rather than a territorial blueprint, the Ottoman past functions as a claim to civilisational prestige and regional leadership.

This has produced a far more activist foreign policy: operations against Kurdish militants in northern Syria and Iraq, intervention in Libya's civil war, support for Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, expanding engagement across Africa, and a fast-growing defence industry whose Bayraktar drones have become recognised exports. The Kurdish question is central here—Ankara treats the PKK and affiliated groups as existential security threats, a concern that has repeatedly put Turkey at odds with Western allies who relied on some Kurdish forces against Islamic State.

Turkey's relationship with its formal allies has grown transactional. It remains a NATO member but routinely diverges from its partners: it purchased Russian S-400 systems while arming Ukraine, maintains dialogue with Moscow while backing opposing sides in regional conflicts, and positions itself as an indispensable mediator rather than a dependable bloc member. New partnerships with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan extend the same strategy of strategic autonomy—building influence across the Middle East, Central Asia and the wider Islamic world without binding Turkey to any single power.

The Palestinian issue sits at the centre of this positioning. Erdoğan has made himself one of Israel's most outspoken critics, casting himself as defender of Palestinian rights and a leading voice for Muslim political causes—a stance that has won him popularity across the Muslim world even as Turkey weighs it against pragmatic interests, including periods of substantial trade with Israel.

A Different Republic

Whether one admires or opposes Erdoğan, his impact on Turkey is undeniable. He has rebuilt its institutions around the presidency, reshaped its national identity, expanded its military capabilities, and redefined its place in international affairs. The secular, Western-oriented republic Atatürk founded has evolved into something markedly different: more religiously conscious, more centralised, and far more willing to project power independently.

Erdoğan has sought not simply to govern Turkey but to redefine what it is—strategically autonomous, rooted in its Islamic heritage, militarily self-reliant, and capable of shaping events from the Middle East to the Caucasus. What is already clear is that the Turkey he leaves behind will be profoundly different from the one he inherited.

Continued from page 6

Israel Heads to the Polls: What to Expect

Who Will Win?

One thing is for certain, it is never easy to predict what will happen in the Israeli elections, and as we have seen in New Zealand, the party who gets the most votes does not always go on to form the government, just ask Bill English!

Another given will be the intense negotiations that will take place once the results are known. President Herzog is likely to ask the leader of the *Yeshar!*

Party (Gadi Eisenkot), the *Likud* Party (Benjamin Netanyahu), or less likely the *Together* Party (Naftali Bennett) to form the next government. How long after the votes have been cast will we know who will make up the next government of Israel is anyone's guess. Israelis won't want a repeat of 2019 and 2022 when no one could form a government and the country went to the polls five times.

Whatever the outcome of this year's elections, may it bring stability, peace, and prosperity for Israel and for the whole of the Middle East.

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Christians: Leaving or Growing?

Christianity was born in the Middle East. Yet, many of the communities that have lived there for centuries are disappearing.

In towns where church bells rang for centuries, congregations have dwindled. Families who once expected their children and grandchildren to remain have watched them leave instead. Some churches that survived numerous empires and invasions serve only a fraction of the worshippers they once welcomed.

Terrorism and regional conflicts, persecution, extremism and political instability have dramatically induced emigration and reduced historic Christian communities across much of the region.

Only one country, Israel, has consistently moved in the opposite direction. Why?

The Middle East: A Region Losing Its Christians

Long before Christianity spread across Europe and beyond, believers established churches, monasteries, and thriving communities in the Middle East, preserving religious traditions that have endured for nearly two millennia.

These same communities have been facing challenging circumstances in the past decades. Although the number of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa increased slightly over the last decade, their growth was still the slowest of any major religious group. While Christians made up about 14% of the total population across the wider Middle East region (from Egypt to Iran) 120 years ago, today Christians account for just 3% of the Middle East's population and the erosion continues even more intensely.

Behind the regional figures lies a far more troubling reality.

Lebanon, established under the French Mandate as a state in which Christians, particularly Maronites, would play a leading political role, has undergone a serious demographic change. Christians now comprise approximately 28% of the population, while Muslims account for roughly 68%.

Before Syria's 2011 civil war began, around 1.5 million Christians, roughly 10% of the population, lived throughout the country. Recent estimates suggest that only one third or 450,000 remain.

In Iraq, one of Christianity's oldest continuous communities has suffered an even steeper decline, falling from approximately 1.5 million before 2003 to fewer than 150,000 today.

War, religious extremism, political



Christian Pilgrims during the baptism ceremony at the Jordan River. | Photo: GPO/Mark Neyman

instability, economic hardship, and significant emigration have combined to erode communities that have formed an integral part of the Middle East's religious and cultural landscape.

Why Are Christians Leaving the Middle East?

The decline of Christianity across the Middle East did not begin in the modern era. The region's religious landscape has been transformed repeatedly over centuries by conquest, changing political rule, forced conversion, and persecution.

This trend accelerated in the past decades. The rise of radical Islam, the Syrian Civil War, and ISIS devastated some of Christianity's oldest centres. Terrorism and religious persecution forced thousands to flee their homes. Churches were bombed and desecrated, clergy and worshippers were murdered or kidnapped, entire villages were emptied, and communities that had endured for centuries were scattered across the globe.

Beyond armed conflict, Christians have continued to face daily discrimination and religious persecution, fueling further emigration. Combined with political instability, economic hardship, and limited opportunities, these pressures have driven many families to seek new lives abroad.

Today, this transformation is reflected not only in demographic figures but also in the region's religious composition. According to Pew Research Center's Religious Diversity Index, eight of the world's ten least religiously diverse countries are Muslim-majority states.

Protecting the Birthplace of Christianity

With the reduction of Christianity

across the Middle East, the region risks losing an irreplaceable part of its historical and cultural heritage.

For two thousand years, Christian communities have shaped the region's religious, cultural, and economical life. They preserved sacred traditions, built churches and monasteries, established schools and hospitals, harbours and trade centres and helped define the rich diversity that characterises the Middle East.

When these communities disappear, the loss extends far beyond numbers.

Languages, liturgical traditions, historic institutions, and centuries of life are depleted and eventually forgotten. Once a community leaves, it is impossible to fully rebuild what was left behind.

This is why protecting Christianity is not just preserving ancient churches or archaeological sites. Christianity's future depends on whether the communities that have worshipped in these places for generations are able to remain, raise their families, and pass on their traditions.

Israel: A Different Story

On Easter, thousands gather inside Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the Holy Fire ceremony. Every December, Christmas fills the streets of Nazareth with worshippers and pilgrims from around the world. Throughout the year, believers from every continent are baptised in the waters of the Jordan River, renewing a tradition that stretches back to the baptism of Jesus.

These are not museums, they are living communities.

Across much of the Middle East, churches have watched their congregations shrink.

In Israel, churches remain filled with worshippers.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, approximately 184,200 Christians now live in Israel, with the community continuing to grow through natural increase. Nearly 80% of Israel's Christians are Arab Christians, underscoring that this is not a story of new communities, but of one of the region's oldest Christian populations continuing to flourish.

Israel's story is more than preserving sacred places. It is about preserving the communities that give those places life.

Christian citizens are an integral part of Israeli society. They worship freely, celebrate their faith publicly, establish churches and schools, and participate in every aspect of national life. Arab Christians consistently rank among Israel's highest-achieving communities educationally, 87.7% of Christian high-school seniors qualified for a matriculation certificate, and they are prominent in medicine, law, academia, technology, business, and public service.

Christian citizens serve in hospitals, universities, courts, businesses, and government institutions.

Churches operate openly. Christian schools educate new generations. Pilgrimages take place freely. Religious festivals are celebrated publicly.

This reality reflects the strength of Israel's democracy and free society, the rule of law, and a longstanding commitment to protecting freedom of religion. The true measure of religious freedom is not simply the preservation of churches or holy sites. It is whether the communities who worship there are free to build families, educate their children, pursue opportunity, be part of the broad society and shape the future of their country.

Christianity's Future in the Middle East

Across much of the Middle East, Christianity is disappearing from the very region where it was created.

Israel has chosen a different path.

It has protected not only Christianity's holiest places, but the living communities that give those places meaning.

History tells us where Christianity began. Its future depends on whether Christian communities are able to endure. If we believe that religious freedom is a universal value, then protecting the Middle East's remaining Christian communities must become a shared international priority.

Hope and Trust Before the Messiah

■ Benjamin Philip

Director | Hineni Soup Kitchen, Jerusalem

The Jewish people and Israel are going through a difficult period, full of conflicts, division, and human suffering, foretold and described as the birth pangs for the coming of the *Messiah*. Therefore, as a practicing Jew in Jerusalem, I am filled with hope and trust.

This is due to the many biblical promises and prophecies concerning the return of the Jewish people during the Messianic period to the Promised Land, which will then flourish again, with ruined cities being restored, the rebuilding of the Temple, and a universal recognition of God with the realisation of Israel as God's chosen people, bringing an end to the age-old struggle against Israel.

The Age-old Struggle Against Israel

A struggle that arose because Israel, in stark contrast to all nations, began by recognising one God and by exclusively living according to His covenantal teachings, the *Torah*. The Israelites refused to worship the idols of the successive dominant world empires, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire.

Through the covenant, the Israelites were given the universal role to “*be a light to the nations, so that My (God’s) salvation may reach to the ends of the earth*” (*Isaiah 49:6*). But because of this calling as God’s chosen people, Israel was rejected even more by the nations and incessantly faced exiles, persecution, murder, slavery, and subjugation. With the danger of being forced or tempted into pagan rituals and failing to uphold the covenant. God had already warned of the consequences in *Leviticus 26:33*: “*I will scatter you among the nations and draw a sword after you*”. This sword will manifest itself in many forms.”

And *Deuteronomy 28:65*: “*And among these nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a despairing soul.*”

But God will never definitively reject Israel, as He promises in *Leviticus 26:44*: “*Even when the people are in the land of their enemies, God will not completely cast them away nor break His everlasting covenant with them.*”

The Israelites were repeatedly exiled, where eventually the core of the struggle with the pagan nations changed due to the new doctrine of the replacement theology, which the Jewish people refused to accept, because according to that doctrine, the Christian church has taken Israel’s place as God’s chosen people. Likewise, the Jewish people refused to



Israeli soldier in a prayer shawl at an IDF post on the Syrian border, 24 September 2026. | Photo: Flash90

Therefore, as a practicing Jew in Jerusalem, I am filled with hope and trust, due to the many promises and prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.

accept Muhammad as a messenger of God and to submit to Islam.

The “Sword” of Blood Libels

These refusals caused the Jewish people to be systematically falsely accused of ritual murder, poisoning of wells, and baking *matzah* with the blood of non-Jewish children.

These false accusations are historically known as “blood libels” and are one of the oldest and most destructive forms of antisemitism, which for centuries served as the direct cause for brutal pogroms, lynchings, torture, burning at the stake, exiles, confiscations, and especially forced conversions.

Promises of Grace and Redemption

The low point of centuries of Jewish persecution was the Holocaust, during which, among others, my father suffered terribly for three years in eight different Nazi camps. With the resurrection of Israel after the war, he was able to partially come to terms with his suffering and loss, by the thought that the tears and prayers during the Holocaust had brought about God’s promise, as described in *Deuteronomy 30:2-6*, where God promises to be merciful if they turn to Him again in exile. Then God will have compassion on them, and gather them from all the nations where He had dispersed them, to bring them back to the “sworn land” with the promise to bless them and make them more numerous than their ancestors. The hearts of their offspring will be changed so that they will love God with all their heart and soul.

The Physical Return

The physical return seems to precede the spiritual restoration associated with the Messianic era. As in *Ezekiel 36-37*, the prophecy of the scattered dry bones are first gathered; then flesh and skin are stretched over them. Only then does God breathe His Spirit into them.

The Jewish people can now return to the Promised Land, but many of them are hesitant, often due to prosperity and assimilation.

Ezekiel 20:32-35 describes how God will therefore bring them with a strong hand to the “wilderness of the nations” and there conduct a trial with them face to face. This means that amidst the nations, God will personally intervene with a period of isolation and purification to bring them back into the covenant (*Ezekiel 20:37*); those who rebel will not enter the territory of Israel. As happened in *Numbers 14:21-23*, the rebellious Israelites were not allowed to enter the promised land and remained in the wilderness.

Assimilation Through the Ages

In biblical times, assimilation also occurred, such as after the Babylonian exile, where a small portion of the Israelites returned and the vast majority chose to stay. The book of Esther also describes a large community of Israelites within the Persian empire who did not return due to a comfortable existence.

This pattern has repeated itself for centuries: the Israelites arrived as exiles or refugees and were able to form a

thriving community, often making a disproportionately large contribution to the development and prosperity of their host country.

This often led to assimilation, but when it took on a threatening form in their Jewish identity and way of life, then suddenly a period of antisemitism would arise, during which the host country turned fiercely against the Jews, and further assimilation was curbed.

We actually saw this around 1922 after the establishment of the British Mandate of Palestine as a Jewish national homeland, which gave the Jewish people the opportunity to finally return in large numbers. For centuries, Jews had lived in the biblical region, but at the outbreak of World War II, only about 2% of the total Jewish world population resided in the British Mandate of Palestine. Only after the indescribable horrors of the Holocaust did a broad, collective desire for the return and restoration of their own Jewish state in the Promised Land emerge.

The “Sword” of Antisemitism

God’s prophecies, history, and current developments point to a future period of extreme global antisemitism. Full of violence, intimidation, discrimination, and terror, in which Jews will be confronted with anti-Zionist hate propaganda because people are against the existence of Israel as the Jewish national homeland.

This will not only create tensions between Jews and society at large, but also cause deep divisions among family members—between practicing and assimilated Jews; as a result, many will strengthen or rediscover their Jewish identity, while others will choose to assimilate further.

As foretold by the prophet Micah 7.6: “*For the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.*”

In the *RD Magazine* of 30 May 2026, I described the influence that antisemitism has had on me personally as a child of Holocaust survivors. Reflectively. Which in retrospect, “thank God” saved me from further assimilation, causing me to live more according to the *Torah* and to strive to restore my covenant with God. I observe that my personal life experience is now, as it were, playing out globally. As a result, I want to share my experience with every Jew and non-Jew and inspire them to make the right choices.



Continued from page 11

Erev Rav, the Enemy from Within

Within Jewish traditions, since the Exodus from Egypt, they have been called the “Erev Rav”, the strangers among us describing both the strangers among us (non-Israelites alongside the Tribes of Israel) or those who are estranged from us. It concerns a group that outwardly continues to present themselves as part of the Jewish people, but who have consciously abandoned traditional *Torah* values, while seeking to claim political and moral leadership over Jewish communities. They are under the impression that the Jewish people would be better off by merging into universal, secular ideologies rather than living according to divine instruction of the *Torah*. They operate worldwide, even in Israel, with the aim of forming a secular state.

Gog, Magog & the UN

Ultimately, the Jewish people will largely be gathered in the Promised Land, against the will of the nations, as described in *Ezekiel 38 and 39*, who will prepare a wicked plan to later decide to march against Israel.

See also *Psalms 83:3-5*: “For behold, Your enemies make an uproar, and those who hate You have lifted up their heads. They make shrewd plans against Your people, and conspire together against Your treasured ones. They say, ‘Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, so that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’”

Those nations are represented within the United Nations with 193 member states, of which about 120 countries have a Christian majority and approximately 53 Islamic countries. They are already devising wicked plans against Israel using modernised variants of the classic blood libel.

Therefore, there is an obsession with Israel at the UN, and they continuously pass anti-Israel resolutions with false accusations of immorality, apartheid, genocide, illegal occupation, colonisation, etc.

It is not possible to discuss all modern blood libels in detail within this article, but I would like to take three as an example to demonstrate how the prophetically foretold conspiracy against Israel publicly manifests itself in our time.

The Myth of Occupation & Colonisation

It is crucial to know that when the Ottoman Empire was divided, the part assigned to Britain was called the Mandate Territory of Palestine, purely as an administrative term, because a Palestinian people or Palestinian sovereign territory has never existed. The British derived this name from the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who named the Jewish province Judea, Syria Palaestina out of revenge after a bloody Jewish revolt.



Two Jewish men look at the Jerusalem skyline from the Mount of Olives. | Photo: Flash90

Deep conversations arise here at Hineni, which shows that our cooperation is an inexhaustible source of support and connection that means much more than charitable work alone.

Although the modern name Palestine is linguistically derived from the biblical people *Peleshet* (Philistines), there is no direct ethnic or historical connection between the ancient Philistines and those that consider themselves Palestinians in our times. While the Hebrew word for Philistines is פְּלִשְׁתִּים (*Pelishtim*), translates itself as “invaders”.

With the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its formal ratification by the League of Nations in July 1922, the British Mandate Territory of Palestine became the national homeland for the Jewish people under international law. The Arab leaders reacted furiously, resulting in them creating an artificial dispute over a Palestinian people and territory, with the aim of preventing the return of the Jewish people through intimidation, terror, and war. In August 1929, this led to large-scale Arab violence and massacres in Hebron and Safed, in which a total of more than 130 Jews were murdered.

The Fable of Israel as an Apartheid State

In stark contrast to many Arab countries, all minority groups living in Israel enjoy equal rights, including Arab-Palestinian citizens. They are represented in all professional fields of Israeli society, from Supreme Court judges, medical professionals, police officers, academics, to elected members of parliament.

The Lie of Genocide in Gaza

After eighteen years of exclusive Palestinian self-rule in Gaza, Israel was confronted on 7 October 2023, with an unprecedented Palestinian surprise attack. The horrific murders, brutal

sexual acts, and abduction of women, babies, children, and the elderly are reminiscent of the bloody pogroms and the catastrophe of the Holocaust.

The inhumane and life-threatening situation in which the Israeli hostages found themselves and the refusal of the Palestinians to release them, forced Israel to wage an intensive battle against the Palestinian Hamas fighters. They were hiding among their own civilian population in a tunnel network of approximately 700 kilometres with entrances in residences, mosques, schools, hospitals, etc.

During a two-year complex war, the number of fallen fighters and civilian casualties in Gaza is estimated at around 70,000 deaths. Compared to regimes in the region such as Iran, which brutally murdered over 35,000 of its own citizens in just two days, an accusation of genocide against Israel is therefore refuted and must be categorised as a modern blood libel.

The Danger for Bible-Believing Christians

During this period of conspiracy against Israel, there will still be a small group of Bible-believers who will not be against Israel, but will stand up for Israel and the Jewish people. They will be severely tested in this, experiencing rejection within many churches, at their work, and from friends. Their economic interests may be harmed. They will be able to discuss countless topics with family and friends, except for Israel. Even within their own families, bitter confrontations and divisions will arise over the question of whether one should be for or against Israel. They will be treated in society as

one with the Jewish people, with the consequence that they will ultimately have to adopt the same survival principles as the Jewish people had to for centuries. For example, consciously seeking or forming communities where one can still speak freely about Israel, attend social gatherings where one can meet and support each other. Being selective and alert with the media, education, the environment for children, elderly care, even where one wants to spend the last days of life.

Organisations such as Christians for Israel can play a crucial role in this. But they too will be tested with demonstrations and legal proceedings, such as, for example, the import of wine from Judea and Samaria.

Solidarity Between Christians and Jews

In cooperation with Christians for Israel, volunteers have been coming to our aid organisation, Hineni Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem for many years to help in our soup kitchen. However, today this is not only a time of service for many, but also it has become a period in which to recharge their spiritual batteries. They regularly share with us their moving and poignant experiences of rejection because they want to stand with Israel. Sometimes their own children or grandchildren, to their great sorrow, have refused to say goodbye before their departure to Israel. This is because they deeply disapprove of their commitment to Israel, with the poignant question: How can you help Israel now as an occupier and perpetrator of genocide? As a result, deep conversations arise here at Hineni, which shows that our cooperation is an inexhaustible source of support and connection that means much more than charitable work alone. At Hineni, we try to support and inspire each other with the divine principles of morality, justice, and charity.

Annual Gathering for the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”

Zechariah 14:16

But do not wait for that; we invite you to come now, for whoever blesses Israel will be blessed; our home and heart are open to you.

Benjamin Philip was born in Rotterdam to Holocaust survivors.

During his career as an entrepreneur, he developed a growing desire for a deeper purpose in life. In 1993, he answered that calling, sold his business, and moved to Israel. There, he dedicated himself to Bible study and to the Hineni organisation—an initiative focused on charitable projects, Jewish unity, and inspiring people to strive for greater morality, justice, and peace based on biblical principles. As a result, Hineni has become a place where Jews and Christians collaborate during these challenging times, strengthening and comforting one another through shared biblical values and prophecies.

Palestinian Christian Antizionism—Part I

Sheree Trotter

Director | Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem

Two Palestinian academics, Dr Lamma Mansour and Dr Yousef Kamal AlKhoury toured New Zealand recently for a series of talks, held mostly in Anglican churches, but also in at least one university. They presented one-sided, heavily truncated accounts of the complex Israel-Palestinian conflict. This is the first in a series of articles that will address these concerns.

The Palestinian Narrative: Centering the Nakba

Dr Mansour argues that the *Nakba* is the central point of all Palestinian history and is an ongoing process that continues until this day. *Nakba* means catastrophe and it is the word, she claims, that is used to describe the “mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in 1948”, when “Zionist militias violently expelled over 750,000 Palestinians from their homes”.

The *Nakba* is a powerful formation story for the Palestinians. The notion of Palestinian dispossession as a defining historical event was inscribed by the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said in his 1994 work, *The Politics of Dispossession*. This became one of the foundational texts for later scholarship in post-colonial studies and Palestine studies. Said, known as the father of post-colonialism, played a major role in shaping and internationalising the discourse of “victimhood” as a Palestinian political identity built around dispossession.

It has become a popular and compelling narrative, repeated frequently in universities, churches and international institutions. However, the political framing of this event has led to a one-sided, incomplete and decontextualised curation of history. A number of salient facts are missing from the Palestinian narrative.

- 1920 San Remo Resolution and the 1922 League of Nations Mandate for Palestine
- 1947 UN Partition Plan
- 1948 the fledgling state was immediately attacked by five regular Arab armies—Egypt, Transjordan (Jordan), Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon
- The Jewish people had experienced a genocide in Europe, in which six million were murdered and faced the refusal of the rest of the world to receive refugees. This was (another) existential struggle.
- The Arab exodus occurred during an Arab-initiated war and resulted from a combination of factors: flight from active fighting, expulsions in some locations, fear generated by the conflict, collapse of local leadership and, in many instances, encouragement by Arab military or political leaders to leave temporarily until the new Jewish state was destroyed. Many of those Arabs who chose to stay are today Arab Israeli citizens with full rights.
- Between 1948 and the early 1970s, roughly 850,000 Jews left or were expelled from Arab countries, a demographic upheaval comparable in scale to the Palestinian refugee crisis but rarely incorporated into discussions of 1948. These refugees were resettled in the new Jewish state.

Mansour, in her online presentations, makes much of the plight of Palestinian refugees, relating that some of them carry the keys to the homes they lived in prior to 1948. But she fails to mention that Palestinians are the only people in the world who have an UN organisation



Map of Palestine, 1947, showing the region before the establishment of the State of Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

dedicated solely to them, UNRWA, while the rest of the world is represented by UNHCR (Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees). UNRWA is the only UN agency that passes “refugee” status down through descendants indefinitely, which is why the Palestinian refugee count grew from 700,000 in 1948 to over five million today. Further, UNRWA has a deeply problematic record, promoting antisemitic school curricula. Indeed, amongst UNRWA staff were Hamas members who participated in the attack on 7 October.

What is framing and driving this selective narrative: Settler Colonial Theory?

The Palestinian narrative is deeply influenced by post-colonial ideologies, in particular **settler colonial theory** (SCT). It is evident in these kinds of statements — “*Nakba* is a process that continues until today”. This builds on Patrick Wolfe’s formulation that, “Settler colonisers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event... Settler colonialism destroys to replace.” (*Patrick Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native, 2006*)

By this he means that settler colonialism is an enduring social, political, and legal system rather than a single historical conquest and that settler projects seek to replace Indigenous political and social orders with a new settler society.

A central interpretative device of SCT, related to critical race theory, is that of power relationships. The world is divided into a binary—fixed categories of oppressor and oppressed. In this worldview, victims are inherently righteous, because they supposedly lack power and therefore lack agency, the ability to make choices. It follows that the oppressor has determinative power and is inherently evil. Under this framework, history becomes morally predetermined. Agency flows almost entirely to the coloniser. The colonised are acted upon rather than acting. Their choices become reactions rather than decisions.

Palestinians are portrayed as the Indigenous people of the land who have been dispossessed by foreign European colonisers. This, despite the reality that Jews have had a continuous presence in the land for over 3,000 years. It is the land within which their unique peoplehood and culture developed. This is affirmed by archaeological evidence, genetic studies, and unbroken textual and liturgical reference to the land.

The Gaps in the Settler Colonial Narrative

In order to pursue its blanket oppressor/oppressed narrative, SCT has to ignore much historical and political context.

Claiming Indigeneity of course assists the Palestinian claim for victimhood status. However, Palestinian leaders could have made beneficial choices for their people, such as accepting one of the many offers of “land for peace”. Palestinian leaders could have chosen to cease teaching their children that all of the land is for Arabs and not Jews. They could have built a state in the territory they control, rather than manipulating international fora to condemn Israel. SC theorists will not tell their audience that many Palestinians view the Palestinian Authority (PA) as corrupt, ineffective, authoritarian and unable to achieve statehood, that there hasn’t been a presidential election since 2005, and parliamentary election since 2006 or that they have a “slay to pay” policy which incentivises acts of terror.

Rather, the narrative insists that the *Nakba* is a process that continues until today with “illegal settlements” in the “West Bank”, Palestinians forced from homes and many other such claims. This ignores the history of attempts to work towards a peaceful solution.

The Palestinian narrative ignores the decisions made by Palestinian leaders. They spurned the opportunity to develop Palestinian self-governance, and to negotiate for the so-called “final status” issues—borders, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, and security. This required being willing to live peacefully alongside Israel. They chose instead Intifada—a five-year campaign of suicide bombings, shootings, and rocket fire that killed over 1,000 Israelis and many more Palestinians.

The claim of “Israeli occupation” sits uneasily with the fact that Israel completely withdrew from Gaza in 2005, offering the Palestinians the opportunity for self-governance. It led to a violent take-over by Hamas in 2007 who, in order to fulfil its genocidal goal to eliminate Israel, invested in terror tunnels and rockets instead of building a state.

Sadly, once history is reduced to coloniser and colonised, complexity disappears—and with it the possibility of understanding why this conflict has proved so tragically resistant to resolution.



A Holy and Joyous Time of Year

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President | CFOIC
Heartland

As you read this article, we will have just completed our month-long autumn holiday season. The season begins with *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year, which is first mandated in the Bible, referred to there as a Day of Horn-Blowing (*Numbers 29:1*) with a specific date—the first day of the seventh month. To this day, we follow the Biblical calendar alongside the regular calendar, and the first day of the seventh month fell this year on 12 September. [The Biblical Calendar is a lunar calendar while our regular calendar is a solar one, which means that each year, the Biblical holidays fall on different dates on the regular calendar.]

On the tenth day of the seventh month, we mark the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and soul-searching. (*Numbers 29:7*). And, finally on the 15th day of the month we celebrate the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles followed by the eighth and final day of celebration, known today as *Simchat Torah*—Rejoicing in the Torah. (*Numbers 29:12-39*)

But what do these holidays mean to us today, as Jews in the 21st century, and especially as Jews living in our beloved homeland Israel?

Biblical holidays are mostly marked by agricultural events and specific sacrifices. The first two holidays however, have no agricultural significance. *Rosh Hashana* is associated with horn-blowing and *Yom Kippur* with fasting. Just these two details however, make it clear that the significance of these holidays is spiritual. We do not celebrate the ingathering of the harvest in any way. We blow horns and we fast. Jewish tradition going back thousands of years, brought meaning and content to these days. We blow a ram's horn on *Rosh Hashana*, the very same animal that miraculously appeared to Abraham as a substitute for the sacrifice of Isaac, his horns caught in the bushes.

The sounding of the *shofar* is both a wake-up call to us as a people and a wordless way of communicating with God. The *shofar* reminds us to return to God, to obey His commandments and repent of our sins. But it is also our call to God to hear us, our beckoning to God to forgive our sins and take mercy upon us.

As we remember the binding of Isaac, we ask God to remember the incredible faith and obedience of our first forefather Abraham, as he prepared to sacrifice his only son, the son that God assured him would be the heir to God's promises for Abraham's descendants to



Christians from around the world visit with Sondra in her Succah. | Photo: Sondra Oster Baras

The combination of introspection and repentance, with rejoicing in God's goodness, reflects who we are as a people. We strive to be close to God while recognising our weaknesses and failings.

become a nation and inherit a land. Abraham couldn't help but wonder what God expected of him. How could He command him to kill his son, running counter to every ethical principle that God stands for? How could He command him to destroy the only possibility for God's promises to be fulfilled? And yet, despite the questions, and despite the horrific pain and tragedy of killing his only son, Abraham was willing to go forward. And the ram represents God's acceptance of Abraham's supreme faith even as it speaks volumes against the very concept of human sacrifice so common in the ancient pagan world.

As we blow the *shofar*, we ask God to remember Abraham and forgive us our sins and enable that same original promise to go forward. The promise is an eternal one and we, Abraham's children, are taking part in the fulfillment of that promise. As we continue to bear children and raise them in faith, as we teach our children the Bible and urge them to follow God's commandments, as we settle and develop the land that God first promised to Abraham, and as we strive to create a kind society in Israel dedicated to God's word, we are intimately connected to that original ram's horn and to the *shofar*.

Rosh Hashana is the Day of Judgement. It is a day when we return to God and repent of our sins. It is a day when we stand in judgement before the Almighty and hope that He will forgive us and

grant us a blessed New Year. But it is not a somber day. We spend many hours in the synagogue praying, but our prayers rejoice in God our King. We sing together as a congregation and after the services, we enjoy large family meals where we celebrate God's blessings—our children, our homes, our health and our sustenance. We dip apple slices in honey to symbolise our hope for a sweet year. And we sing songs of praise together as a family.

Between *Rosh Hashana* and the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, we continue the process of repentance, with special emphasis on introspection, prayer and charity. On *Yom Kippur* we dress in white and fast for 25 hours, no food or drink entering our mouths. We spend many hours in the synagogue where we seek forgiveness, not only as individuals but as a nation. We read an ancient poem that describes *Yom Kippur* in the Temple, when the entire nation waited with bated breath for a sign that all was forgiven. Today, when we approach the end of the day, we pray together just as the gates of heaven are closing and our fate for the coming year is sealed. But at the close of the day, we know we are forgiven and we sing and rejoice in God's goodness.

A quick meal to break the fast at home and then we are all outside our homes constructing the *Succot*, or the booths, that will become our temporary dwellings for the Feast of Tabernacles. And this is a joyous holiday indeed.

Coming just four days after our forgiveness, we enjoy festive meals, hiking all over the country and a celebration of God's bounty. In ancient times this was truly an agricultural festival. Even today, we mark the conclusion of the grape harvest at this time. But even in our modern-day world where we get our produce from a local supermarket wrapped in cellophane, we appreciate this time of year. The harvest is complete and the time for a new season is upon us. We pray for rain so that the new year's crops will be plentiful.

Words cannot do justice to the incredible emotional and spiritual high that this season brings to us. The unique combination of serious introspection and repentance, with rejoicing in God's goodness, would seem to be a recipe for an emotional roller-coaster. And yet, it fits in perfect harmony with who we are as a people, and to some extent, with who we are as human beings. Life is complicated and our spiritual centre is complex. We strive to be close to God even as we recognise our weaknesses and failings as human beings. And perhaps that is the greatest gift that God has given us—the ability to come close to Him and at the same time to understand our finiteness, to appreciate His all-present infinity while accepting our physical existence.

I have written often during these past three years of the odd combination in our daily lives of the stress of war and the constancy of ordinary life. And perhaps it is this combination of closeness to God and the physical reality of humanity that enables us to get through it all, perhaps even to thrive. Even as we fear for our physical safety, even as we cope with the consequences of prolonged war and our young men's frequent forays to the battlefield, we know that God is with us, that He will continue to keep His promises to us. "The Eternal One of Israel will neither lie nor relent: for He is not a man that He should change His mind." (1 Samuel 15:29) He is eternal and He will not rescind His promises to the Nation of Israel. There is a parallel modern phrase that is often sung as a statement of faith in Israel: "The Eternal Nation does not fear a long road." It may take a long time, we may suffer along the way, but we know that God will keep His promises to us and that we will prevail. *Am Yisrael Chai!* The Nation of Israel Lives!

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



Jewish Life—Argentina

■ Joanna Moss

Hola, welcome to Spanish Jewry centred on Buenos Aires, Argentina, a city of more than 17 million. Argentine Jewry is the largest diaspora community in South America sitting around 400,000 using its widest definition with a core of around 170,000-180,000. Jews represent less than 1% of Argentina's population, but about 7-8% in central Buenos Aires; making it a significant group. The community is divided between *Sephardic* and *Ashkenazi* streams, but many Jews are unaffiliated and assimilated into the community. They learnt the hard way. Antisemitism, political upheavals and economic shocks have decimated their numbers. Today's community is a far cry from the *Judíos Argentinos* heyday in the early 1960's, but its presence is still shaping Spanish Jewry across the globe. Like much of the new world, if Argentina was to prosper, it needed people to populate the vast areas to the west. Europeans were preferred, but others were admitted under an open immigration policy. Argentina welcomed Jews who came with the immigrants as well as those who were part of the great wave that left Eastern Europe 1880-1924. Argentina's doors remained open to Jews right up until WWII when America's doors had shut, but many immigrants had to get a transit visa for New York, and this proved difficult.

The first Jews were *conversos* arriving in the 16th century and most assimilated. But the first wave is remembered as forming the 35 major agricultural settlements of the Jewish Colonial Association financed by Baron Hirsch with "Moisesville", established in 1889, being the symbolic heart. These communities spawned the legendary Jewish *gauchos*. However, the communities were short-lived and not much remains. Lack of agricultural skills, hard work, food shortages and uncertain crops drove the settlers to the towns and many to flourishing Buenos Aires.

The second wave comprised Jews arriving around the turn of the 19th century; who populated the major cities. Moroccan Jews arrived in 1880's, then Syrian Jews, followed by *Ashkenazim* from 1890s. The Buenos Aires community was established in 1862, with the first synagogue built in 1875. Eastern European Jewish women were lured to work in brothels in a sordid community scheme in 1860s. Annually between 1906-1913, 13,000 European and Ottoman Empire Jews were arriving, adding to an already strong foundation. They referred to each other as "Russian" or "Turks" respectively. In 1919 the sole pogrom took place. By 1920, the community numbered 150,000. Banned



Plaza de Mayo in front of Rosada (pink) Presidential Palace hosts the marches for the disappeared. | Photo: Shutterstock

from serving in the government or military, Jews became farmers, peddlers, artisans and shopkeepers. Later, some successfully moved into the arts, professions, business and academia, well positioned for the wealth and progress that created modern Argentina in the early 20th century.

Jews continued to arrive post WWII. Juan Peron, President (1946-55 and 73-74) was duplicitous in his support for the Jews allowing 45,000 to enter, but also allowing many Nazis into the country creating an uncertain climate for the Jews. This uncertainty was exacerbated when the *Junta* took power closing Jewish institutions. Jews were involved with labour movements and resistance and thus became targets. Around 1% of Argentinians disappeared, (known as *los desaparecidos*), but of this group, alarmingly 12% were Jews; leaving a big scar and protests. This was the beginning of the exit. From then onwards some chose not to mention they were Jews. Today, most are secular and cultural Jews.

During the 1950s and 60s there was vandalism and desecration of Jewish cemeteries. But the community flourished. Historically, Jews faced antisemitism from the Catholic Church and Catholic elites and then the military became obsessed with them, creating fictitious notions that Israel would invade Patagonia!

Things improved when Alfonsín came to power in 1983, and he appointed many Jews to high positions. But then came the calamities of the 1990s. First the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and then the bombing of the AMIA multi-storey community headquarters in 1994 in which 84 were killed and up to 300 injured. It was a bitter blow. The new striking AMIA building and the Embassy garden of remembrance stand as witnesses to community survival.

Jewish institutions are heavily fortified. Christina Kirchner (2007-2015) had ties to Iran, something that did not go down well as Iran/Hezbollah was believed to be connected to the bombings. To date no one has been charged with either bombing. Current President Milei is pro-Israel.

Ethos & Make-Up

Argentine Jews have a deep fondness for their country; the culture, the language, the lifestyle, the community and the climate. They have endured much hardship, yet many remain, some even returning from Israel. The community looks after their poorer members well with the few wealthy families subsidising the poorer members, ensuing they don't lack the basics. In times of hardship, the US Joint Jewish charitable organisation provided top-up support for those struggling to survive.

Surprisingly, in 1927 a ban on conversions was instituted, that has never been revoked. As Jews married out, they traditionally left the community. Since the early 1960's the community has consolidated as numbers keep declining.

Around 200,000 Jews live in Buenos Aires and 90,000 in Cordoba with a smaller community in Rosario. It is predominately *Ashkenazi* in culture (80%) with distinctive *Sephardic/Mizrahi* communities. There are more than 70 synagogues. Jews from around Latin America are drawn to Buenos Aires for the lifestyle and community.

For young Jews, their parents were Orthodox, Conservative or Zionist, but for them people are either Jews or non-Jews. *Chabad* has been in Argentina since 1955. They have 55 synagogues/schools and social organisations

Governing Bodies & People

Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), established 1894, is the primary

community body. DAIA is the political body. The ORT is a non-profit institution providing primary, secondary and tertiary education in the science and technology fields as well as Jewish studies. Prominent Jews include Nobel laureate Dr Cesar Milstein, filmmaker Daniel Burman and Alberto Nisman, the prosecutor who investigated the AMIA disaster.

Education

In 1884 a law was passed separating church and state and prohibiting education in religious buildings. All state schooling was free of charge. Today 50% attend Jewish schools with 33% receiving Jewish secondary education totaling 25,000 students. Sadly many schools have closed. There are currently 70 Jewish education institutions (75% in Buenos Aires) starting from nurseries and kindergartens to high schools and teacher training schools. A rabbinical seminary opened in 2024.

Culture

Early on Jews established *Yiddish* press and a number of *Yiddish* theatres for entertainment. Jewish musicians arrived in the 1930s in numbers. High culture remains a key element of Argentine life. In the 1940s a centre for *Yiddish* studies was established. There is a Jewish hospital and Zionist organisations flourished early on. The Museum of Argentine Jewry traces the community's colourful history. Sport is as important to Jews as to Argentines with Club Maccabi providing teams and sporting facilities. The Hebraica centre provides a country club environment with apartments attached in the suburbs of Buenos Aires for weekend leisure. There's even a *kosher* McDonalds in Buenos Aires!

Antisemitism & Aliyah

Since 1948, 75,000 Jews have made *Aliyah*; mostly for ideological reasons. Others moved north to USA and Canada, for bigger and safer communities and better opportunities. The largest exodus was in 2001 during the economic crisis. Israel is now seen as a land of opportunities for those with tech abilities.

Jews have been accepted as one of many minority communities. The economy goes up and down. Increasingly, many Jews question a future for their children based on economic realities. They reason it's better to go when they are young to pick up the Hebrew language and establish careers and lives there. Argentine Jews have made *Aliyah* joining others from Uruguay (15,000), Mexico (4,000) and Chile (5,731) and retain their Spanish language and culture.

Unlike French, British and Canadian Jews, currently Argentine Jews are not being squeezed as their President is very pro-Israel. Some say Argentina is the best country for diaspora Jews currently.



When Israel Errs

■ Ilse Strauss

International Education Director
| Bridges for Peace

He'd done his homework. That was clear within the first five minutes of the interview.

I'd been told the goal was a portrait of life in Israel during war. Instead, the reporter arrived with a list. Not sweeping charges, but specific things: an incident here, a soldier's conduct there, an accusation pulled from an interview, a decision made in the heat of battle. He started in 1948 and worked forward through the wars and intifadas, building toward a single question. "How do you justify these things?"

"I don't," I told him simply.

Let me explain. Like any nation, Israel has her triumphs, and her failures: dark moments of shame and wrongdoing that any country could match. We expect mistakes to happen. And when they do, we expect governments, armies and courts not to justify, but to investigate, hold accountable and render verdicts. Israel does exactly that. Inquiries are held. Blame is placed. The guilty are punished. But justified? Never.

"To err is human", Alexander Pope wrote, borrowing a much older Latin proverb. Say it about any nation and we nod in understanding. Of course, governments err and armies miscalculate. They're made of fallible people, doing an impossible job under impossible pressure, and sometimes they get it catastrophically wrong. We don't like it, but it's true. Obvious, even redundant, when put like that.

So why doesn't the same apply for Israel?

A Tale of Two Statues

I'm often told that Jews spit on Christians in Israel. I'm Christian. I've lived in the Jewish state among Jewish neighbours for nearly nine years. They know exactly who I am. I've known nothing but welcome from them.

Yet the incidents are real. In August, six Jewish Israelis spat on the entrance of a monastery in Jerusalem. In April, a man assaulted a nun. That same month, a soldier in southern Lebanon took a sledgehammer to a statue of Jesus.

Terrible. And in every case, prosecuted. The six Israelis were in police custody within hours. The nun's attacker was indicted, facing a doubled sentence. The soldier with the sledgehammer, and the man who filmed him, were jailed. Police pledged to treat incidents against Christians with utmost severity, and President Isaac Herzog affirmed that Israel deals with such hostility "aggressively." Then came the harder work. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar appointed George Deek, an Arab Israeli Christian, as Special Envoy to the Christian World, the first such post anywhere, tasked with confronting anti-Christian incidents head on. In short, Israel saw a problem. And instead of justifying it, Israel acted.

Now compare that to New York City. In August, a man vaulted a church fence, pulled out a hammer and smashed a statue of the Virgin Mary, the fourth such attack on that parish since 2024. Weeks earlier, another church had its doors defaced and a statue damaged. Elsewhere in the city, police pursued suspects behind a string of vandalised churches.

I have yet to hear anyone call New Yorkers a people



Israeli Border Police stand guard near Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem's Old City Christian Quarter following an incident in which ultra-Orthodox Jews spat at a Christian procession carrying a cross. 4 October 2023. | Photo: Flash90.

Israel doesn't need a fan club that flinches every time she stumbles, but friends who don't expect a standard they wouldn't hold themselves to. Friends see each other as they are: human, fallible, trying, sometimes failing, always answerable.

who hate Christians. The crimes are ascribed to those who committed them, not the eight million people who share their city. Did Israel get such mercy? The same category of act, prosecuted faster and more visibly than in New York, still becomes proof of what Israel is, not what Israelis did. To err is human, and for every other nation, we accept that. But when an Israeli errs, the error somehow becomes Israel's identity; not individual mistakes, but proof, supposedly, of what the Jewish nation itself is.

Guilty Until Proven Guilty

Once the identity sticks, it becomes the lens through which everything Israel does is seen. When a Gaza hospital was hit, the story was Israel struck it, for days, before evidence pointed to a misfired Hamas rocket. Churches damaged near weapons caches Hamas had stored beside them are reported as Israeli crimes. People identified as doctors or journalists killed in strikes are, months later, confirmed as Hamas operatives. But nobody unrings a bell. The retraction never travels as far as the accusation. The debate no longer starts with whether Israel is guilty but rather with how guilty.

For the Jewish people, it's an old production with a new cast. Every mistake becomes ammunition, every accusation becomes fact, because the goal was never justice. It's all part of the case against the Jewish state, waiting for evidence to fill in the blanks.

There's a word for holding a nation to a standard you'd never apply elsewhere, then vilifying it for failing to meet that impossible standard. That word is antisemitism, a double standard rooted in Israel's identity, not her conduct.

Our Own Rose-Tinted Glasses

There's a flipside too. Loving Israel can quietly slide into a version of the same error. It's easy, once you love a people, to start viewing them through lenses tinted

just enough to soften the edges. That reporter expected me to explain away, to justify. I didn't, because Israel has never needed to be perfect for me to stand with her.

God made that clear from the start. He didn't choose Israel because she was better, smarter, holier or more deserving than other people (Deuteronomy 7:7–8). Chosen, in the biblical sense, isn't about superiority but about function and purpose, selected for a role in His plan. Still, it slips the mind. The desert blossoms. The economy booms. Ballistic missiles are shot down midair. The start-up nation turns out one invention after another, and it becomes tempting to read all this as Israel being better, rather than God's hand of blessing on her.

But Israel is human, prone to failing like anyone else. And when that happens, as it will, disappointment tends to follow.

Israel doesn't need a fan club that flinches every time she stumbles, but friends who don't expect a standard they wouldn't hold themselves to. Friends see each other as they are: human, fallible, trying, sometimes failing, always answerable. That's simply love that was never tied to performance.

None of that is justifying. Excusing is what happens when perfection was expected, and the gap suddenly needs explaining away.

Standing with the people of Israel is bound up with standing with the God of Israel. He is perfect. His plans and purposes are perfect. That's not a call to defend a sinless ideal, or to keep the rose-tinted glasses on for a people God never asked anyone to see as anything but human. It's simply what it looks like to walk alongside a nation still doing the hard, messy work of holding itself accountable.



The Afterlife According to Scripture—Part 5

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Director | Beth Melekh International

An Everlasting Solution to an Unrelenting, Perpetual Problem

God the Creator, knowing the end from the beginning, saw the problem of rebellion and sin before anything was created. Therefore, He established the solution before the problem existed.

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:8 KJV

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Ephesians 1:4 KJV

Just as there is a foreordained solution for establishing redemption there is also a foreordained solution for the imprisonment of the wilfully and perpetually unrepentant, who might otherwise poison the Olam Haba World to Come, in the same way they have poisoned the present sin-affected created order.

Satan desires to be God. Having been created by God, Satan is now established forever from the decision of his rebellion forward, as the perpetual enemy of God and His creation. It appears that Satan believes, albeit under delusion, that in spite of Scripture it (he) can usurp God’s authority and reign in His place. He cannot. However, the problem of its (his) determined and continuing goal must be met by an established and everlasting solution. That solution is the Lake of Fire, everlasting punishment.

Those who join Satan and its (his) angels in the Lake of Fire will be those who are determined to reject God’s sacrificial offer of reconciliation through the atoning blood of Yeshua.

Contrary to popular belief God doesn’t send people to everlasting punishment, they choose it out of wilful, unrelenting hatred of Him. The sinful human being is headed toward the Lake of Fire based on his or her choice to sin and continue in it (*Ecclesiastes 7:28; Romans 3:10, 23*), but God Himself has intervened with the ultimate act of self-sacrifice in order to make a way for the sinner to be atoned for and reconciled to right relationship in Him. Thus by receiving God’s intervention the repentant human being is prevented from ending in torment.

God, being holy and exhibiting His love in the sin affected creation as a decision established through sacrifice and maintained in commitment, will not force His love on creation. Love cannot exist without free will or predestination.



Ancient narrow alley in the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

Our salvation is secured in Salvation Himself and is reliant not on our actions, but on Him. Having received Yeshua, we are assured that we have already passed from death into life.

Both are required. Free will concerns the receipt of intimacy and justice. Predestination, the knowledge of security. Salvation and forgiveness are offered to all but only the repentant receive them in love.

Scripture doesn’t speak of names being added to *Sefer Hachaim*, the book of living (Lamb’s book of life) following the foundation of the world (*Revelation 17:8; Daniel 12:1*) but does mention names being blotted out of the book of living (*Exodus 32:32–33; Psalm 69:28*).

Therefore, it is wilful rejection of God that leaves a person vulnerable to everlasting fire. After all, it is God’s will that none should perish, but His emotional desire for the reconciliation of all creation does not eclipse His justice and the reality that some will reject His love and by their own pursuit of self-deification will end up in the Lake of Fire (*Matthew 18:8; 25:41; Revelation 19:20; 20:10–14*).

We note that those who trust in *Messiah* “will not perish but have everlasting life,” whereas those who reject Him (meaning they have had an opportunity to receive Him, but continually reject Him) are “condemned already.” (*John 3:16–18*)

God is just, therefore every person from Adam to the last human being is afforded an opportunity to receive or reject the King *Messiah*.

We may not know how this works in exceptional circumstances but we trust God’s character and ability to make it work. Scripture requires that a human

being come to God the Father through the Son (*John 14:6*) and that death is the cut-off point unto the judgement (*Hebrews 9:27*). It does not say that God is unable to meet people in the womb or in a coma, or in any other space between conception and death. Salvation (*Yeshua*) Himself holds creation together. *Yeshua* is all existing, resurrected, trans-locational, God with us.

Eternal Security for the Redeemed

The follower of *Yeshua* the *Messiah*, having received redemption through *Messiah*’s saving work, need not be anxious or fearful of condemnation or everlasting punishment. Our salvation is secured in Salvation (*Yeshua*) Himself and is reliant not on our actions, but on Him.

Many mistakenly conclude, based on the misappropriation of decontextualised Scripture passages, that a *Messiah* follower can lose salvation. This is as ridiculous as saying that *Yeshua* can be lost. How? After all, in and through Him (*Yeshua*) all things are created, live, move, and have their existence (*Colossians 1:16–17*). In *Messiah* “the new is come, the old has gone” (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). In Him we have already “passed from death into life,” everlasting (*John 5:24*). “Whoever trusts in Him will have everlasting life.” (*John 3:16*)

What Scripture Says About the Security of Our Salvation

John 3:16; 5:24; 6:37; 10:27–29; 11:25–26; Romans 8:1; 8:30, 38–39; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:17 Ephesians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians

5:23–24; Hebrews 7:25; 10:14.

Ref Jude 1:1, 24–25; 1 John 5:10–13, 6:39, 40; Philippians 1:6, 3:20–21; Ephesians 1:13, 2:8–10, 4:30; Romans 6:23, 8:28–34, 11:6; Hebrews 5:9, 13:5; 2 Timothy 4:18; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Peter 1:4–5.

Final Thoughts

In God the Father and in *Messiah* we live, move and have our being (*Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:16–17*). *Messiah Yeshua* is God with us, everlasting. Therefore, being alive in Him we are assured that we have already passed from death into living (*John 5:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17*). Having received *Yeshua* we are approved by God through atonement (*Hebrews 10:14*). We no longer seek to live for God as those trying to earn His approval, rather we live out of His approval in *Messiah* (*Acts 10:34–35; Romans 8:31–34, 35, 38–39, 15:7; Ephesians 3:17–19*). We live this way according to the guarantee of His Spirit Who indwells us and with the certain hope of the resurrection and everlasting life (*John 11:25–26; Ephesians 1:13–14 and 2 Corinthians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; Hebrews 6:19–20*).

In conclusion, we are left to consider the fullness of Scripture as revealed in *Messiah* by the Holy Spirit and accept the many and intersecting ideas that it teaches regarding salvation, sin, death, everlasting life, and everlasting death (fire). Too often the hubris of academics and lay teachers is entertained in order to ease our emotional dislike for some of the passages of Scripture concerning the wrath of the Lamb (*Yeshua*) and the justice of God. We often seek a gospel without justice because the alternative makes us feel bad. We have blindly bowed down to the lie of universalism, and in doing so have failed to note that the very idea of it makes the sacrifice of *Messiah* redundant and the God of the universe an unjust simpleton.

Like so many false choices offered to the body of believers, the false choice between a God that loves and a God that punishes is too often accepted without critique. We have been sold god who loves like a fallen human being and a solution which reads like a *Star Wars* film, filled to the brim with eastern esoteric spirituality that absorbs matter into an impersonal soup of purposeless eternity. It’s time we had the courage to accept the truth of God’s word for what it says and trust God to be all that the Scriptures describe Him to be.

According to Scripture rightly divided and understood by the revelation of God, there is both everlasting life and everlasting torment. Anyone who says otherwise is an apostate.



The Resurrection of Israel—Part 5

The Flesh of Growth & Development—Rebuilding

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up
New Zealand

“And when I beheld, lo, ...the flesh came up upon them”. Ezekiel 37:8

As the bones are gathering through *Aliyah*, and the sinews of strength are securing the nation, so the flesh of growth and development is rebuilding what had lay desolate for many generations. In doubling her population in the first three and a half years of statehood during the mass immigration period (1948-1951), Israel needed some huge development. Housing, transport, food, water, sewage, electricity, and employment were all going to be major challenges for the young state. But the prophets had promised: *“I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt”,* and, *“Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the Lord* (Jeremiah 31:4 and 28).

The rebuilding of Israel was vital in the process of the regathering of her exiles: *“And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first”* (Jeremiah 33:7). The immediate problem with the new arrivals was shelter—where would they be housed?

Rebuilding the Cities of Judah

Up until statehood some 200 new Jewish villages, *Kibbutzim* and *Moshavim*, had been established in *Eretz Israel* since the Modern Zionist era began in the 1880s. For the four and a half years following statehood another 345 new villages were established to cater for the mass ingathering of the “exiles”. The towns of Israel grew into cities, and many took on their biblical names from antiquity. Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beersheba, Beit She’an, Eilat, Lod, and many other towns also began expanding into cities with the new *olim* arriving. At the entrance to Ashkelon, which had been a Philistine stronghold in Bible times, I found these words inscribed by the local council when I visited there in 1985: *“And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity”* (Zephaniah 2:7). The Psalmist stated, *“For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it”* (Psalm 69:35).

Tent Cities

Israel became a melting pot with Jews from a hundred nations returning



Construction taking place in Jerusalem, November 2018. | Photo: Nigel Woodley

home. Initially there were not enough established dwellings for the newcomers, so temporary housing was organised. Tent cities sprang up all over Israel to provide a short-term solution to the problem. At the end of 1949 during the mass immigration period there were 100,000 people living in tents. “The country was crowded with tent-cities, like one great army camp” wrote Mati Alon (Alon 696). Hosea wrote, *“I will make you live in tents again”* (Hosea 12:9). Jeremiah said, *“I will restore the fortunes of Jacob’s tents and have compassion on his dwellings”* (Jeremiah 30:18). Tents and dwellings. One was temporary and the other permanent.

In 1950 the Israelis came up with another plan—the *Ma’barah*. This was a transitional work village with temporary housing as a short-term fix for the housing crisis. The *Ma’barot* (plural) consisted of canvas walled huts or tin shacks, which provided a temporary answer until enough housing was built. By the mid-1960s these transitional camps were disbanded as enough dwellings had been erected. Between independence in 1948 and 1975, over 680,000 housing units were built in Israel, making it on a *per capita* basis, the highest rate of construction in the world.

The transitional housing camps gave way to Israel’s modern cities. Israel was turning a desert into a modern metropolis—*“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations”* (Isaiah 61:4).

Irrigation

Israel embarked on a huge water project

to transfer water from where it was abundant to where it was not at all. The National Water Carrier would transfer millions of cubic metres of water every year from the Sea of Galilee by channeling it down to the Negev Desert in the south. It meant that Israel could grow vegetables and flowers in the desert, still happening to this day. *“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland”* (Isaiah 43:19).

Reforestation and Rejuvenation of the Land

The Jewish National Fund (JNF), a financial body set up by Theodore Herzl to help finance the Jewish National Home, has funded the planting of over 250 million trees since the beginning of the twentieth century. The Jewish people of Europe, where 88% of the pioneering *olim* came from in the early waves of *Aliyah*, were not by tradition agriculturalists. What they have achieved therefore is remarkable. They quickly learned to drain malarial infested swamps, set up proper irrigation (Israel leads the world in irrigation technology today), and to sow and plant crops, grow and tend orchards etc. The result today is flourishing agriculture, viticulture, and horticulture markets from Israel.

Originally the Jezreel Valley in central Israel was termed the “breadbasket of Israel”. Today, over 80% of her agriculture is growing in the most arid of places—the Negev Desert. Amos stated that as Israel would plant their crops, so God would plant them: *“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and*

inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” Says the Lord your God (Amos 9:14-15).

German Reparations

It is paradoxical that the nation which was responsible for the annihilation of six million Jews should then play a key role in restoring them. There was a huge debate in Israel in the early 1950s when the issue of German reparations was raised. Pragmatic Israeli leaders saw the need of German financial restitution at a time when Israel was strapped financially. Other leaders vowed not to take a single dollar from the Germans. Common sense prevailed. The German Government began huge financial reparations to the State of Israel. The Germans built the National Water Carrier. They built up the railway and electrical networks, and the power stations.

Israel’s modern fleet of Dolphin submarines, capable of carrying Israel’s nuclear deterrent, has been built by Germany. The Germans have tried through reparations to put right their grotesque wrong against Israel. Nahum Goldmann was president of both the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organisation during the early years of the State of Israel. He was instrumental in negotiating reparations from Germany on behalf of the State of Israel. In a television interview in 1976, he had this to say about the effect of German reparations: “Without the German reparations, the State of Israel would not have the half of its present infrastructure: every train in Israel is German, the ships are German, as well as the electricity, a large part of the industry... without mentioning the individual pensions paid to the survivors... In certain years, the amount of money received by Israel from Germany exceeds the total amount of money collected from international Jewry, two or three times as much” (*Germany’s Holocaust Payoff*).

In the modern resurrection of Israel foreseen in *Ezekiel 37*, the flesh of growth and development, covered only in part here, can be summed up in a prophecy to the final generation—*“For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory”* (Psalm 102:16).

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Hope in the North: Cello in Metulla

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

In more than two years of war in Israel, two regions have suffered the most—the *kibbutzim* along the Gaza Strip and the towns along the Lebanese border in the north of the country. It is precisely here that Christians for Israel (C4I) ambassadors are traveling to bring hope—especially to the survivors of the *Shoah* who have since returned.

“For our working trip last summer, I had the north on my heart,” says Claudia Schall, who has been working part-time at C4I-Germany since the beginning of the year. “The border region had been severely affected by the war. That’s how we met Irit, who runs a hotel in Metulla with her mother, Miriam.”

“We left right away on 8 October; we didn’t even wait for the official evacuation,” Irit recalls of the day after the Hamas massacre in the south, when Hezbollah began launching rockets at northern Israel. “I just had a feeling that this was going to last a while.”

Within a five-kilometre radius, more than 60,000 residents were forced from their homes. Two years later, every other house had suffered severe damage. Many families have yet to return, but things are looking up again—including for the Beit Shalom Hotel.

A Fresh Start & a Special Idea

“All the windowpanes were shattered by the rocket strikes,” says Irit. “Animals had taken up residence, and the grounds had become overgrown. When Claudia arrived with her team in August, we felt as though we were in *Snow White*. These Christians from Germany worked so hard! They started at 7am, and by the afternoon everything looked beautiful! They helped us get back on our feet. A few weeks later, we were able to



A small group of Holocaust survivors in Metulla received visitors from Germany. | Photos: C4I

They helped us get back on our feet. Hearing the songs and sharing this special gathering with Holocaust survivors was a wonderful reminder that they are not alone on Israel’s northern border.

welcome our first guests.”

Now the story has taken a moving turn. The family-run hotel has not only weathered dramatic years of war, but also brings to light the story of Irit’s grandparents—both Holocaust survivors from Krakow.

“When I saw the room with the exhibition, it occurred to me what it would be like to invite a group of Holocaust survivors here,” says Claudia.

Plans were made, flowers were ordered, and Claudia even managed to find a cello. Eti, an employee of the Israeli Holocaust Survivors Authority, brought the elderly guests. Two Russian-speaking survivors from Gita Koifman’s network also made the trip.

Klavdia—Deported

“I was ten when the Germans invaded our home in Ukraine back then,” Klavdia recalls. “Grandpa took us to his farm in a horse-drawn cart. ‘The Germans are good people,’ he said. That’s why we didn’t leave. After the harvest was brought in, we were deported toward Odessa, 200 kilometres on foot. A quarter of the people never made it and died along the way.”

Klavdia’s mother heard some prisoners making escape plans along the way and joined them.

“After dark, we escaped into the forest. Suddenly, my little brother started crying. He was hungry, and Mom didn’t have any milk left. That’s when the

others threatened to suffocate my little brother so he wouldn’t give us away!” Tears well up in Klavdia’s eyes as she recalls that moment.

“Grandpa and Grandma ran into an acquaintance along the way who gave them a ride for a bit. Their names were Chaim and Menya. We never saw them again. Grandma died on the way. Grandpa walked the entire way to Bogdanovka. When they arrived, the men were lined up at a dug-out trench and shot.”

Klavdia and her family found refuge in the Romanian-occupied Shabokrych ghetto, but that, too, became a death trap for many. Klavdia survived the war with her family, the years of famine that followed, and Soviet antisemitism. In 1990, she and her family were aboard one of the first flights to Israel.

Reunion in Northern Israel

In Kiryat Shmona, she met Roman, who had grown up in Shabokrych when it was still a Jewish *shtetl*, and who lost almost his entire family in a mass shooting in a single day. These are just two of the survival stories shared at the gathering.

Claudia and Livia Tiersch, also new to C4I-Germany, perform music for the survivors with a small, talented team, conveying the message that they are not alone even on Israel’s northern border. They share hugs and flowers.

“It did the survivors so much good to get out for a change,” says Irit. “To experience this appreciation, to hear the songs. It was a wonderful gathering.”

The music also drew onlookers. “Afterward, a man came up to me,” Livia recounts. “He was so moved by our event. His parents survived the Holocaust in Hungary. It touched him so deeply to see us perform.”



Claudia, C4I-Germany, with Leon, a Holocaust survivor from Poland.

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A Church Called to Remember

■ Dennis McLeod

Today there is a cancer sweeping the world. Is it new? No, but it has a new lease of life activated by 7 October. It started long before it had an official name, even before Israel was again an official state. People will now be thinking 1948, but no, millennia even before true recorded history, and that is antisemitism. Today it is back with a vengeance, ready to attack and destroy the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. Haman was responsible for first attempting to destroy the Jewish identity. He promised the King far more than thirty pieces of silver to obtain a signature from the King for the destruction of all the Jewish people of the land. The Greeks and Romans also tried and failed, as have many nations since. However, the promises of God stood by His people. Over the years, many of the new believers in the Jewish *Messiah*, the followers of the way, met with a terrible end, but the truth grew, and truth cannot be stopped, and spread across the world. With this expansion of truth, many Gentiles came to believe, and churches sprang up throughout the nations. As time passed, the number of Gentiles soon outnumbered the Jewish believers, and they took control of the New Way movement. It did not take long for the Gentiles to turn on and speak against their Jewish brethren. Over the centuries, there was much ethnic cleansing of the Jewish population, from the sacking of Jerusalem by Titus to the terrible massacres and pogroms of the Jewish population. As far back as Richard the Lionheart of England, on the surface, appeared good towards the Jews of England, but at his coronation in London, he forbade the Jews to attend. However, many stood across the road from the cathedral. When the public saw them, they attacked and killed many of them.

In 1292, the banking system had been initiated in England, so the Jews were no longer required. Up to that point, Jewish people used to handling people's money because of the Bible imperative about not taking interest. The Jewish people were expelled from England in the 13th century. Some were placed on sandbars in the English Channel for the incoming tide to swallow them up. Jews did not return to England until the time of Cromwell some 350 years later. In the 6th century, the church brought in laws preventing Christians from marrying Jews. Other laws did much the same as Antiochus Epiphanes did at the time of the Maccabees; preventing every aspect of Jewish worship. During the persecution in Spain some 500 years ago, many Jews were forced to convert to Christianity on pain of death, then killed anyway for fear they would return to Judaism.



| Photo: AI

The Church has to wake up. We have stood back and kept quiet for far too long, and even fed the fires of antisemitism throughout history.

There were many massacres in Poland during the 17th century. In Ukraine, there is evidence that up to 200,000 Jews were killed in the war that took place there. Even Bonaparte limited the legal rights of the Jewish population. In America, Jews were not given full legal rights until after the War of Independence. These measures took place in supposedly Christian nations. After WWII, when the Jewish people returned home to Poland to claim their property, they were attacked and over 40 were murdered. Their land and homes had been claimed by the local population, who were not going to give the homes back.

As time progressed, Jewish people have been blamed for everything from the Black Death in the Middle Ages to the invasion of Spain by the Muslims from Morocco a few weeks ago.

Non-Christian Nations

These attacks on the Jewish people from the beginning has sadly been initiated by the church, or what are so called Christian nations. When Spain expelled the Jewish people from Spain, Arab nations took them in. At that time the Arab nations were more friendly to them than Christians. Is it any wonder that the Jewish people are so weary of Christians? During WWII, China settled a large number; yes, non-Christian countries did what we should have done. After WWII, New Zealand restricted Jewish people from settling here. A lady in Invercargill told us when she was a child in the 1920s, she was called a Christ killer, and had to go home to ask her mother what a "Christ killer" was?

to the sea rhetoric; in many cases, it has embraced it. Since 7 October, I have not had a single invitation to speak in a church. Speaking to Christians in the street, it does not take long before one can tell who they stand for, or worse, who they stand against. The church has to wake up, for in the words of Mordecai to Esther, if you keep quiet, do you think you will be safe? 7 October proved his words; the terrorists shot everyone they came upon, Jewish or not! Present-day Nigeria is showing what Muslims think of Christians.

Church's Role

The Church has been responsible from the beginning of its establishment for what is called antisemitism and replacement theology. We have acted like the big brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. We have thrown our toys out of the playpen, stamped our feet, and claimed it all for ourselves, claiming every promise of God to His chosen people is now ours. We are so focused on our salvation that we have forgotten the words of Jesus, first to the Jew and then the Gentile. Whether we want to admit it or not, the church is responsible for where Israel finds itself right now. We have stood back and kept quiet for far too long and even fed the fires of antisemitism throughout history. It is time, right now, to stand up and be counted, for in the words of the Lord in *Matthew 25*: "Whatever you do for one of these my brothers, you do for Me. It is time to remember who brought us the message of salvation and take it to heart."

We must take note of relevant scriptures, such as *Isaiah 40:1*, "Comfort my people". Also *Romans 15:27*, "It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things".

In Germany, during the war, churches were easily persuaded to fall in line with Hitler, and even placed Nazi flags behind altars. Here in New Zealand, I have heard Christians complain about the flag of Israel being in the church. England's new Archbishop of Canterbury has directed the Church to accept a letter condemning Israel from the Arab church in Israel.

I have travelled the length of our land, speaking on Israel, and had but a handful of pastors attend the meetings. I listen and teach on Israel. After thirty years, attention to Israel is not improving; it is getting worse. With the flood of hatred, disguised as anti-Zionism or anti-Israel, towards the Jewish people, the church is not immune to the call of tide from the river

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