

If undelivered return to:

Christians for Israel New Zealand
PO Box 12006
Penrose, Auckland 1642

June 2024

The Unseen Suffering

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 40:1-2a

Dear friends and supporting readers,

Following the very successful ANZAC Solidarity Mission, I was able to spend some additional weeks in Israel visiting, listening, and serving. There is so much need, everywhere there are people displaced. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are stuck, not knowing what the future holds. Those from the northern parts of Israel are seeing news of Hezbollah rocket strikes on their homes and businesses virtually every day. As I flew home, in the north Kiryat Shmona was still burning following rocket attacks, and had been for two weeks.

Those living in the south—the Gaza envelope in particular—face a different struggle. Whilst some of the kibbutzim and towns close to Gaza were devastated, in some cases virtually destroyed, others were evacuated due to rocket damage, and then many more homes evacuated simply in the face of the risk of rocket strike and the trauma of the ongoing sounds of battle in very close proximity. Some refugees have already returned to their homes, but for many others yet another tragedy awaits them.

It is now over seven months since the majority of the refugees were forced to leave their homes in the south. Many homes were destroyed in the attack of 7 October, many in the continuing rocket fire, and many refugees left their homes literally under gunfire and with soldiers forming a guard around them. Still others, with the sounds of battle looming and rockets exploding overhead, had only hours to grab some belongings and leave. More refugees followed as the battle escalated and there was no let-up in the volume of rockets being fired by Hamas. Many refugees are already painfully aware of the destruction of their homes, but many tens of thousands are totally unaware of the state they might find their homes in.

The months following 7 Oct. have included the Israeli winter, and Israel is now heading for the heat of summer. Many homes, although not necessarily directly hit by rockets or the initial Hamas attacks, have nevertheless suffered damage.

continued over...



NEW ZEALAND EDITION



Your latest edition of **Israel & Christians Today** is enclosed.

We hope you enjoy and are greatly encouraged by the latest news articles and stories.

Need to change your address or newspaper order?

Simple. Just visit www.c4israel.org.nz/about-c4i/contact-and-subscriptions/

If you would like to donate to one of our projects, please complete the coupon below or on the back page of this newspaper and post or email it to us.

Alternatively, donate online at www.c4israel.org.nz



My Donation

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Israel Solidarity Project | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - \$1460 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Emergency Situation in Israel | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Food Parcels in Ukraine - \$26 each |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Ministry costs, print & post | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Children at Risk - Jaffa Institute |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | <i>thinc.</i> (countering anti-Israel 'lawfare') | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Hineni Soup Kitchen - \$15 per meal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Speak Up (funding for speakers) | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Holocaust Survivors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Aliyah - Ethiopia | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Christian Friends of Israeli Communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Aliyah - One person (Ukraine) - \$300 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Arab Christians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Aliyah - One family (Ukraine) (5 pp) - \$1250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | For Zion's Sake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Aliyah - One bus (Ukraine) (25 pp) - \$6250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Israel Alzheimer's Centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | First Home in the Homeland - \$765 | | |

See over for credit card and other giving options

For some this may have been shrapnel damage to roofing, or a window blown out during a rocket interception. For others something as simple as a window blown open in the wind—or even accidentally left open during a panicked evacuation—has left those homes open to the elements, animals and birds. As water enters a home, power system failures are common. As a result, refrigerators and freezers are no longer operating, with the inevitable destruction of the contents. Water-damaged flooring, walls, textiles, and bedding, with the added contribution of hundreds of birds, rodents, insects or other animals, results in a heartbreaking scene of devastation, and a dangerously unsafe—unliveable—living environment. It is to scenes such as this that many refugees are unwittingly preparing to return.

I was able to spend some time helping a small crew of volunteers from Germany, as we donned protective equipment and proceeded to empty and clean one such home. There are several organisations trying to address this massive task, including the **Hineni Foundation**—one of the projects supported by **Christians for Israel International**.

To those faithful supporters of Israel who continue to stand up for God's nation: Thank you. To those who were able to contribute to the latest **ANZAC Solidarity Mission**: Thank you. Whilst I was able to represent supporters in New Zealand by bringing even just a small blessing and some practical assistance during this difficult time, it made a huge difference to those facing such incredible challenges.

Our brothers and sisters in Israel are fighting right now. They are fighting to get their precious loved ones back, currently held hostage in Gaza. They are fighting Hamas and the Gazans who support it, to ensure that this terrorist regime can never again rise up and repeat such savagery. And they are fighting the swarm of propaganda, of rising violence and antisemitism, of blatant Jew-hatred, that has crawled out of the dark, filthy cracks and crevices of our society and now shouts its messages of hate publicly and proudly. Please consider projects such as **Hineni**, meeting the challenges facing Israelis—challenges they didn't ask for.

Thank you for your continued support.

Bryce Turner
Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

PH 09 525 7564 or 021 127 7214
EMAIL info@c4israel.org.nz
www.c4israel.org.nz

Physical address:
297a Church Street
Onehunga | Auckland

P.O. Box 12 006
Penrose | Auckland 1642
New Zealand

Stand With Israel



c4israel.org.nz

or complete the coupon on the back page

\$ _____ MY TOTAL DONATION TO:
Christians for Israel New Zealand

Thanks for
your financial
support

Internet Banking Ref: Please use your name and donation purpose

Credit Card Visa Mastercard

Card No

Exp Date

The 3 digits of the reverse of your credit card. *CVC

Name on card: _____

Cardholder's signature: _____ June 2024

Easy Ways To Donate



Over the Phone
09 525 7564 or 021 127 7214
(during office hours)



Securely Online
c4israel.org.nz



Bank Transfer
ACC: 03 0166 0834515 000
REF: Member Number (if known)
Or use your name and donation purpose as the reference

ISRAEL

& Christians Today

NEW ZEALAND
and
SOUTH PACIFIC

June 2024
Sivan–Tamuz 5784



Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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



Teenagers mark Israel's 76th Independence Day at Saker Park in Jerusalem, 14 May 2024. | Photo: Flash90

Where Does my Help Come From?

Events are moving very fast in the Middle East. In mid-May, Israel marked a sombre Independence Day and Memorial Day. This year, the commemorations were subdued by the toll of the ongoing war in Gaza. The country is still in trauma after the bloodiest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust: 7 October 2023, when militants of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad invaded Israel in an unprecedented terrorist attack and massacred, raped and pillaged over 1200 innocent civilians and soldiers.

The war launched by Israel to defeat Hamas is far from over. There is growing frustration with the war and criticism of the government's failure to ensure the release and repatriation of dozens of Israeli hostages remaining in Hamas captivity in Gaza, where Israel has carried out more than a half-year-long relentless military campaign.

Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Herzl Halevi was recently quoted for the government's lack of commitment to a 'day after' plan in the Gaza Strip that

would help reckon with the security and political vacuum in the war-ravaged territory. Halevi echoed the frustrations of many who see Hamas fighters resuming operations in areas of Gaza where they were supposed to have been neutralised.

The multi-front war against Israel that started with the Hamas pogrom in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, is now more than seven months old, and there appears to be no end in sight as Israel must change the equation in the war against the so-called Iranian resistance axis.

In April the war escalated to such an extent that a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran could no longer be ruled out. That was after the Israeli Air Force on 1 April killed seven top commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were meeting in a building next to the Iranian consulate in Damascus.

Iran's response finally came on the night of 13-14 April when more than 300 unmanned kamikaze aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles were fired at Israel.

Since then, there have been many developments that will likely affect the dynamics in the region. Iranian President Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash in Iran in mid-May. And on 20th May, International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan announced that he intends to ask the court to issue arrest warrants against not only Hamas leaders but also Israel's political leaders Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Galant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza since 7th October 2023. This is an abhorrent decision, equating the conduct of Israel's leaders seeking to defend their nation with the Hamas terrorist leaders seeking to destroy Israel. It seems like the world is turning upside down.

In the midst of all this, we can be confident that the God of Israel is in control.

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

4 
Iran and the Multi-Front War Against Israel

5 
Walkathon for the Hostages

8 
Why Do They Hate Us?

13 
The Roots of Pentecost



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 Coldicutt
Managing Editor
newspaper@c4israel.org

Marloes van Westing
International Communications Manager
international@c4israel.org

Ian Worby, Bryce Turner, Rita Quartel,
Marie-Louise Weissenböck, Marijke Terlouw

Scripture references: THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

C4I Offices

Christians for Israel International

Leon Meijer, *Chairman*
Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer, *President*
Rev Cornelis Kant, *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, +6421 127 7214
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

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

DISCLAIMER - Articles printed in *Israel & Christians Today* express the views of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editors or that of the Board of Christians for Israel. The printing of articles or advertising in *Israel & Christians Today* does not necessarily imply either endorsement or agreement.

© Christians for Israel International.

Reproduction, or storage in a retrieval system or in any other form, is prohibited without permission. Please contact the Managing Editor should you wish to syndicate or republish any articles or materials appearing in *Israel & Christians Today*.

www.facebook.com/c4israelNZ

Danger of Palestinian Statehood

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

On 10 May 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted another resolution about Palestinian statehood—this time upgrading Palestine's status in the UN. And on 22 May, Norway, Spain and Ireland announced they are 'recognising the State of Palestine'.

All of these are political decisions intended to advance the Palestinians' political claims and further pressure and isolate Israel. None of them change the legal situation or the realities on the ground.

The Palestinian leadership (i.e., the Palestine Liberation Organisation—PLO) claims the Palestinians have a right to statehood in all of the 'Palestinian' territories.

The PLO is supported by about two thirds of the states in the world. In 2012, some of these UN member states adopted a resolution (67/19) granting 'Palestine UN non-member observer status'. That opened the floodgates for 'Palestine' to portray itself as a 'state' on the world stage.

On Friday 10 May 2024, these same states adopted yet another resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The resolution further 'upgrades' the rights of 'the State of Palestine' at the United Nations as an Observer State.

In all of these resolutions, it is a group of about 90 UN member states pushing for the establishment of the State of Palestine. Most of these are Islamic states that are deeply hostile to the existence of a Jewish nation on what is considered Arab/Islamic territory.

Tragically, they are supported by some Western states (like the current Australian government) that are blind to the fact that the current Palestinian leadership is deeply hostile to Western values and interests, and intent on

destroying the Jewish state.

The latest resolution is essentially a political statement. It gives 'Palestine' some procedural rights (e.g., Palestine can participate fully within UN as if it were a state, except it cannot vote in the UNGA or put forward candidates for UN organs). But it does not change the realities on the ground, nor does it affect the legal status of these territories. That is because the UNGA is a political body.

The latest resolution does not make Palestine a state, nor does it grant Palestine membership of the UN. The question of whether Palestine should be a state is a political question, about which UN members are free to discuss and adopt resolutions in the General Assembly. But whether Palestine is a state is not for the UN to decide.

How states are created is a very complex one, on which legal and political opinions differ. Some people (including the Palestinian leadership) argue that the Palestinians have a 'right' to statehood, and that Palestine in fact is already a state.

Others argue that Palestine is not yet a state because it does not have an effective government that controls a defined territory. Moreover, it cannot become a state until it (a) satisfies the conditions of statehood—a defined territory, a people, and an effective government and political independence—and (b) reaches a peace agreement with Israel (as the PLO has agreed in the Oslo Accords).

UN membership, on the other hand, is a matter on which the UN decides. Under the UN Charter, UN membership is open to peace-loving states, and is decided by the UN Security Council (UNSC), not the General Assembly. So far, in the UNSC the United States has opposed every application by the Palestinians for UN membership. With the US elections in sight (November), it remains to be seen

whether the Biden Administration will be able and willing to withstand the growing political pressure on the US to allow Palestine to become a UN member state.

The recent UNGA resolution was intended to ratchet up that pressure. The General Assembly urged the Security Council to favourably consider Palestine's application for full UN membership. According to the General Assembly, the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations.

But the issue of Palestinian statehood is much more than a political or legal question. It is, first and foremost, a military and security matter that forms an existential threat to Israel.

Quite simply—as things currently stand, if a Palestinian state is created it will, in all likelihood, be hijacked by Hamas and other Islamist jihad groups supported, financed and trained by Iran.

This is a situation that Israel certainly cannot be expected to support, and that no peace-loving state in the world should accept. It is therefore alarming that so many states in the UN support the growing claims for a 'two-state solution'.

The reality is that while the Palestinians have a legitimate ambition for independence, there is a long way to go—perhaps generations—before they are likely to develop a peace-loving culture that is necessary to establish a state governed by the rule of law.

Until then, the West must insist that the Palestinians desist from violence, terror and aggression against Israel and the Jewish people, before a Palestinian state can be recognized, and Israel should be supported in carrying out its task of protecting its citizens (Jewish and non-Jewish) from violence and threats of force.

Prayer Points

Protection and Recovery

- *Psalm 121*: "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Give thanks that God preserved Israel when Israel's enemies fired more than three hundred drones and missiles from Iran (Persia) at Israel in one night (April 13-14).
- Pray for the return of hostages and the recovery of those who have been traumatised.
- Pray for unity in Israel. The people and government are divided over the future direction of the country. Pray that the God of Israel may be sought and found to prepare the way for His people.
- Pray for the protection of the Jewish villages in Judea and Samaria.

Standing with the Jewish People

- Pray that the government and police of your nation will guard the safety of our fellow Jewish citizens.

- Pray that the various churches in your country will stand with the Jewish people.
- Antisemitism has increased alarmingly worldwide. Pray that God and His angels will guard over His people.
- "Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." *Numbers 24:9b*. When Balaam wanted to curse Israel, he blessed them instead. When God wants His people to be blessed, no one can go against Him. Pray that Israel's enemies will become powerless.

Christians for Israel

- Thank God for the promises He has made to His people.
- Worldwide, many Jews are still returning to Israel. Give thanks that God wants us to be involved in the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

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

World Antisemitism Report: '7 October Helped Spread a Fire'



Pro-Israel rally in Amsterdam, October 23. | Photo: Christians for Israel

■ JNS

Even before the 7 Oct. invasion, antisemitism was on the rise, but a dramatic spike followed the Hamas attack, according to the 2023 Antisemitism Worldwide report whose findings were released at the beginning of May by Tel Aviv University and the Anti-Defamation League.

The report, *'Concern for the Future of Jewish Life in the West'*, emphasises that while 2023's leap in antisemitic incidents largely followed 7 Oct., most countries with sizeable Jewish minorities also saw increases in the first nine months of 2023, before the war started.

"7 October helped spread a fire that was already out of control," the report states, noting that "from Brazil to South Africa, from Italy to Australia, from Belgium to the United States," antisemitic incidents in western countries rose by dozens of percentage points in 2023 over the year before.

"The aftermath of Hamas's horrific attack on Israel on 7 October was followed by a tsunami of hate against Jewish communities worldwide," said Anti-Defamation League CEO and National Director Jonathan Greenblatt.

"Unprecedented levels of antisemitism have surged globally in the streets of London, New York, Paris, Santiago, Johannesburg and beyond.

"This year's report is incredibly alarming, with documented unprecedented levels of antisemitism, including in the US where 2023 saw the highest number of antisemitic incidents in the US ever recorded by the ADL," he added.

In the United States, the ADL recorded 7,523 incidents in 2023 compared to 3,697 in 2022. The number of assaults increased from 111 in 2022 to 161 in 2023, and of vandalism, 1,288 to 2,106.

In New York, the city with the largest Jewish population in the world, the New York Police Department recorded 325 anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2023 in comparison to 261 in 2022.

In Los Angeles, the city's police department recorded 165 antisemitic incidents, up from 86, and in Chicago, there were 50 up from 39.

Elsewhere in the West

Other countries also saw dramatic increases in the number of antisemitic attacks, according to data collected from governmental agencies, law enforcement authorities, Jewish organisations, media and fieldwork.

In France, the number of incidents rose from 436 in 2022 to 1,676 in 2023, with the number of physical assaults increasing from 43 to 85.

In the United Kingdom, the number of incidents spiked from 1,662 to 4,103 (physical assaults from 136 to 266).

In Germany, antisemitic incidents rose from 2,639 to 3,614. In Italy, they jumped from 241 to 454 and in Austria from 719 to 1,147.

Australia recorded 622 antisemitic incidents in October and November 2023, in comparison to 79 during the same period in 2022.

Argentina saw a jump of 171 incidents in 2023, from 427 to 598. Brazil recorded 1,774 incidents, up from 432 in 2022, and Mexico recorded 78 incidents, up from 21 the year before.

In South Africa, incidents rose from 68 to 207.

According to Professor Uriya Shavit, head of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry and the Irwin Cotler Institute:

"The year is not 1938, not even 1933. Yet if current trends continue, the curtain will descend on the ability to lead Jewish lives in the west—to wear a Star of David, attend synagogues and community centers, send kids to Jewish schools, frequent a Jewish club on campus, or speak Hebrew."

Shavit added, "With bomb threats against synagogues becoming a daily occurrence, Jewish existence in the west is forced to fortify itself, and the more it does so, the more the sense of security and normalcy is undermined."

While noting that the State of Israel's ability to help Jewish communities in the Diaspora is limited, he criticised it for not doing "even the little that can be done."

"The main contributions of the government are pompous statements and sporadic initiatives," Shavit said.

In the report, former Canadian Justice Minister and Attorney General Irwin Cotler offers an 11-point plan for globally combating the rising Jew-hatred.

The plan calls for governments to enact national action plans to combat antisemitism, more Holocaust education and celebrating the positive contributions of the Jewish people.

Short News

Returning Home



Six months after the massacre of 7 October, seventy per cent of residents from Israeli villages near the Gaza Strip have returned home. For towns and *kibbutzim* that lie further from the Gaza Strip (such as Sderot), the percentage is higher than from communities directly at the border. This is due to the fact that many homes very close to the border were completely destroyed. | Photo: Flash90

PA Seeks UN Membership

The PA has taken the first steps in applying for an official vote to join the UN. The Palestinians' application for full recognition was formally launched in 2011 and ended with the PA obtaining official observer status a year later, but that is not full voting membership.

Torah Scroll out of Solidarity

Two years ago, Ukrainian President Zelensky wrote the first letter of a new *Torah* scroll, and in early April, Israeli President Herzog wrote the final letters. In doing so, a beautiful initiative by the Ukrainian Chief Rabbi of Kiev, Jonatan Markowitz, was completed. Rabbi Markowitz came up with the initiative shortly after the outbreak of war in Ukraine to underscore the solidarity and connection between the Jewish people in both countries. The *Torah* scroll, which is dedicated to peace, will be on display in the Kiev synagogue in the coming months.

UNRWA Ties Cut



Israel has decided to cut all ties with UNRWA. UNRWA is the organisation that coordinates all aid to the Palestinians. The reason Israel provides is that UNRWA is part of the problem: "UNRWA intensifies the conflict instead of trying to alleviate it." | Photo: Flash90

Iran and the Multi-Front War Against Israel

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

The multi-front war against Israel that started with the Hamas pogrom in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, is now more than seven months old. There appears to be no end in sight as Israel must change the equation in the war against the so-called Iranian resistance axis.

In April, the war escalated to such an extent that a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran could no longer be ruled out.

That was after the Israeli Air Force on 1 April killed seven top commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were meeting in a building next to the Iranian consulate in Damascus.

Among the slain IRGC commanders was Mohammad Reza Zahedi, the commander of the Quds Force in Syria, and his deputy, General Hadi Haj Rahimi.

That liquidation in Syria, the 18th since December 2023, was too much for Iran, which vowed to take revenge and, through its leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, announced that Israel would be “punished”.

Iran’s response finally came on the night of 13-14 April when more than 300 unmanned kamikaze aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles were fired at Israel.

Ultimately, 99 per cent of those projectiles were shot down inside and outside Israel by a coalition secretly formed in 2022 by US General Frank McKenzie supplemented by Jordan’s air force to the surprise of many. More about Jordan’s motivations for its surprising intervention later.

Israel responded in the early hours of Friday, 19 April, when a radar-invisible hypersonic missile struck the air defences of the Natanz nuclear reprocessing plant near the city of Isfahan.

The Israeli government originally decided to carry out a major retaliatory attack on a series of selected targets in Iran, but this was abandoned under American pressure as President Joe Biden’s administration did not want to risk being drawn into a regional war.

The purpose and how the attack was carried out (from Iraqi airspace) sent a clear signal to the regime in Tehran: Israel was able to hit Iran’s nuclear facilities without Iranian air defences detecting it.

The escalation was over, and Iran, as well as Israel, appear to have returned to what the IDF refers to as the “MABAM doctrine”, the ‘war between the wars’ that characterised the battle between the two archenemies for years.

Iran, meanwhile, is working hard on its imperialist plans for the Middle East and the world and is trying to expand its influence into Africa.

Defence ties with Sudan were recently strengthened, with Iran selling scores of attack drones to the country at the Red Sea. Relationship with Niger has also greatly improved.

The latter is related to Iran’s nuclear programme because Niger has large reserves of yellowcake, a substance used for uranium production.

However, Iran also continues to try to expand its imperialist programme in the Middle East. In this



Israeli soldiers remove the remains of a missile fired from Iran a few weeks ago, near the southern Israeli city of Arad, 2 May 2024. | Photo: Flash90

context, there are fears in Israel that Iran will attempt to bring neighbouring Jordan under its sphere of influence.

Iran already uses Jordan as a smuggling route for weapons and ammunition to the various terrorist groups in Judea and Samaria, the heartland of Israel. However, there are signs that Iran may want Shiite militias now stationed in Syria to infiltrate Jordan.

This is a nightmare scenario for Israel but also for the Hashemite regime of King Abdullah II.

For this reason, the presence of IDF troops in the Jordan Valley has already been increased, and increased attention is being paid to arms smuggling to Judea and Samaria.

Iran already uses Jordan as a smuggling route for weapons and ammunition to the various terrorist groups in Judea and Samaria, the heartland of Israel.

At the same time, Jordan previously carried out unprecedented air strikes on smugglers in southern Syria.

The situation on the so-called heartland front has recently reached worrying proportions as Iran has managed to convert the cities of Tulkarm and Jenin in Samaria into forward IRGC bases.

Islamic Jihad, which is fully funded and armed by Iran, has made Jenin its headquarters and has complete control over what happens in the city.

The IDF, for its part, has long been on an offensive to frustrate the build-up of the terror infrastructure in Judea and Samaria with raids carried out daily in Palestinian towns and villages, usually resulting in long firefights with the terrorists, who are increasingly better equipped with Iranian help.

In Iraq, meanwhile, Iran is trying to use its proxy umbrella organisation, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq (IRI), to eliminate the US military presence in both Syria and Iraq.

After a short break, almost daily drone and missile attacks on the US bases in the two countries by IRI were resumed on 22 April. The US response to this aggression has been minimal, encouraging Iran to continue its attacks.

IRI is also directly involved in the fight against Israel

and regularly attempts to carry out drone attacks on targets in the Jewish state but has so far been unsuccessful.

Then there is the front with the Ansar Allah or Houthi militia in Yemen, which has become a major problem for international maritime shipping in both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Ansar Allah (The Helpers of Allah) operates as a full-fledged division of the IRGC and has highly sophisticated weapons with which the militia has carried out nearly 60 attacks on ships it says have ties to Israel since November 2023.

Ansar Allah has also sabotaged fibre communications

cables in the waters off the coast of Yemen and disrupted internet traffic in Africa.

At the beginning of May, Ansar Allah leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi announced that his militia would now also attack Israeli shipping in the Mediterranean. For the time being, however, it is unclear how Ansar Allah would be able to execute these attacks, given the distance from Yemen to the Mediterranean Sea.

Finally, there is another worrying development concerning Iran. According to Rafael Grossi, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA, Iran is now just two weeks away from achieving breakout capability in its nuclear programme.

The Islamic Republic now has enough highly enriched uranium to produce five nuclear warheads for its ballistic missiles, experts say.

Grossi had previously reported that IAEA inspectors had lost track of developments in Iran’s nuclear programme. At the same time, senior IRGC officials indicated, after the escalation with Israel, that Iran could now start to produce atomic weapons.

This now is the state of affairs in Iran’s asymmetric war against Israel and the United States.

Originally published at www.jns.org. Republished with permission.

Walkathon for the Hostages



(Left) On 7 April 2024, exactly six months after their abduction from Israel, around 1,000 people took to the streets in Vienna, Austria, to show solidarity with the 133 hostages still in captivity of Hamas-terrorists in Gaza. | Photo: C4I Austria. (Right) Israeli flags, posters of the hostages and yellow vests were seen during the Walkathon (march) in the old city of Vienna. | Photo: C4I Austria.

Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Chair | Christians for Israel Austria

Over a thousand people took to the streets in solidarity with the hostages and their families on 7 April 2024, in Vienna, Austria.

On 7 October 2023, over 240 children, women and men were forcibly abducted from Israel to Gaza by terrorists led by the Palestinian terror organisation Hamas. Many of these innocent people had been dragged from their homes and from a site where a music festival was taking place.

Exactly six months later, on 7 April 2024, 133 hostages were still being held by Hamas. Among them is a 15-month-old toddler, Kfir, and his four-year-old brother, Ariel. The oldest hostage is 86, and there are also several young women aged between 18 and 26, as well as chronically ill people. To date, the hostages have not been visited by the

Red Cross, have not received any medication, and their families do not know whether they are still alive.

The peaceful Walkathon (march) through Vienna demanded the unconditional and immediate release of all 133 hostages and drew attention to the gross violation of their human rights.

The Walkathon was organised by Christians for Israel Austria, WIZO Austria, JöH (the Jewish-Austrian Student Union), ZusammenVienna (Israelis living in Vienna) and Vienna BringthemhomeNOW.

Rally

After an hour's march through Vienna's old city, during which leaflets with information about the hostages were handed out to onlookers, the thousand participants reached the Square of the Dome of St. Stephans, Austria's biggest cathedral, where a moving rally was held. Touching reports about the

hostages, as well as the last telephone conversations before their abduction, were presented by prominent actors and well-known personalities as well as relatives of hostages. The rally ended with a Jewish prayer and the singing of *Hatikva* (hope), the national anthem of the State of Israel.

Support from Jewish and Christian Organisations

The Walkathon was supported by an array of organisations, including Bnei Akiva Vienna, Chabad House Vienna, Habait Israeli Community, Hashomer Hatzair, The Jewish Community of Vienna (IKG), Jad be Jad, Jewish Women Austria, Jewish Welcome Service, Jewish Institute for Adult Education (JIFE), Keren Hajessod Austria, Coordination Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, Mizrachi, Ohel Avraham Synagogue, and others.

Short News

99-year-old Holocaust Survivor Tends Graves of Soldiers



There are some stories that need to be told, just like the story of 99-year-old Yaakov Lubinewski from Kadima-Zoran. His entire Polish family was murdered by the Nazis during World War II. Since the 7 Oct. attack, Yaakov has been heading to the cemetery on his scooter every day to tend the graves of two soldiers from his town who were killed during Hamas's invasion of southern Israel. "It feels like they are my own children. I know what pain is. The pain will not pass, and it will be hard to recover, but remember there is something to live for." | Photo: Rina Castelnovo/JNS

Illegal Entry

Since 7 Oct., Israel has been tightening its checks on who can enter Israel from the Palestinian territories in the West Bank for security reasons. The measures have also left many Israeli companies without employees. As a result, thousands of Palestinians are now entering Israel in all sorts of illegal ways to still be able to work, especially in construction. Meanwhile, 2,900 people have been arrested so far for illegally entering Israel.

McDonald's Stays in Israel



McDonald's plans to buy back all its franchise restaurants in Israel. There are 225 restaurants involved. Local McDonald's are struggling after the franchise owner announced it would give free meals to soldiers fighting Hamas in Gaza. This led to all kinds of boycotts, which now put thousands of jobs at risk. With the repurchase of the restaurants, employees will keep their jobs, and the chain will continue to be located in a variety of places in Israel. | Photo: Flashgo

If We Could Turn Back Time

Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

While in Israel members of the recent ANZAC Solidarity Mission met with Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency. Christians for Israel sponsor some of the work they do. The following is an excerpt from Danielle.

"If we could turn back time. If we could somehow use that ability of superman to change the earth's rotation and go back, not to when we were young, not for a winning lottery ticket, but simply go back to 6 Oct., to the last day in which our lives as Israelis, as Jews, seemed to make sense. When all of us in Israel could take a deep breath without feeling tears sneak up in our eyes or a clenching grasp in our throat. When we still believed with every

fabric of our being, that the state of Israel assured us that the fundamental promise of never again, would be fulfilled.

Never again will there be times like in all the 2000 years before 1948, when entire Jewish communities were defenceless, at the mercy of a cult of death seeking to murder us, simply because we are Jews. The Jewish Agency for Israel, the organisation I am so proud to serve, has upheld that promise for every Jewish community around the world since 1948—rescuing the Jews from Yemen, Iraq and Egypt, from Ethiopia in astounding airlifts, from the crumbling Soviet Union, from war-torn Yugoslavia and of course, even now from Ukraine. We proudly promised never again and never once believed this promise would be broken, on Israel's 75th year, in our

own homeland.

The Jewish Agency stands by the weakest of our society, by the elderly and Holocaust survivors, the new *olim*, the children and families at risk, and of course the many thousands of victims of terror and dozens of communities attacked.

We are committed to not leaving anyone behind, including the business owners who found themselves after 7 Oct., not knowing how they will put the next meal on their family's table, or how their business can recover after they do reserve-duty in Gaza for 3 months.

Thank you for your partnership with the Jewish Agency. With your help, together, we will be okay. Because we are the Jewish people. Am Israel Chai."

Read more on page 15.

To Answer the Question

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

To answer the question... I took a few days to gather my thoughts on this, because someone asked me if I was scared while I was in Israel, and they were really concerned that I was in danger. They couldn't understand why I went there, and they really couldn't understand why I stayed there when the attack from Iran was imminent.

One day while we were walking through the Old City of Jerusalem, while Ramadan was still going, we entered through the Lion Gate which you enter from coming up the Kidron Valley. We'd walked from Gethsemane on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives, up and through the Lion Gate to visit the Pools of Bethesda. Then continued further into the Old City through the Muslim Quarter, and out through the Damascus Gate and then a short walk up the road to the Garden Tomb.

When we walked out the Damascus Gate, I noticed a security box with Israeli armed police and security—which we'd seen plenty of throughout the Old City as well—and everything was very peaceful. We were grateful for that of course, but I remember walking through the Damascus Gate, seeing lots of young men and women walking along, and thinking that any one of them could potentially be wielding a weapon that they could use to attack anyone walking by. We kept going and I didn't think anymore of it.

That night I read a report—and saw security video confirming it—of the police and armed security arresting a young man at the same security box I'd walked past earlier that day. The young man had a huge kitchen knife taped to his torso. The security personnel prevented a terror attack that day when they captured him. I don't know if that took place before or after I'd been there, but it definitely took place where I'd been hours earlier.

I was safe in Israel, quite possibly safer in Israel than elsewhere in the world.

Was I afraid after that? I can categorically say no, I wasn't afraid.

Look, while we were in Israel, while Israel is in the middle of a war; with rockets being fired into Israel in the north on a daily basis from Hezbollah terrorists; while they have hostages still experiencing horrifying abuses every day and may even be dead at this stage; with terror cells being exposed and violent clashes happening in Muslim cities throughout Judea and Samaria, and the unprecedented attack from Iran that Israel was miraculously protected from...several terror attacks took place in my home country of Australia.

In fact, between the 6th and 12th of April, 34 terror attacks took place in 13 different countries. Those attacks resulted in 172 deaths and 229 people injured. In March alone, there were 157 terror attacks in 22 different countries that resulted in 771 killed, and 688 people injured, 7 of those attacks were suicide bombings.

Terrorism is happening all over the world, it's not unique to the conflict between Israel and the Arabs.

If my information is correct, there is currently war and terrorism taking place in Nigeria from terrorist insurgency, Somalia with civil war, Burkina Faso from terrorist insurgency, Mexico with its drug war, Syria with civil war, Mali with civil war and terrorist

insurgency, Democratic Republic of Congo with terrorist insurgency, Ethiopia is experiencing civil war, Yemen has civil war, Pakistan is dealing with border conflict with Afghanistan, Haiti has both civil war and gang war going on, Colombia has civil war and a drug war, Israel is at war with Hamas for their terrorist insurgency and proxy war from third parties in Lebanon and Yemen.

In just 2022/2023 there were wars not only in the countries I just named, but also in Iraq, South Sudan, India, Cameroon, Niger, Philippines, Central African Republic, Uganda, Mozambique, Chad, Benin, Togo, Libya, Ghana, Tanzania, Algeria, Mauritania, China, and Tunisia. How many times have we heard that a terror attack has happened in the UK, or France, or New Zealand or the USA or some other place in the world we would ordinarily consider to be safe as houses? The world is a much smaller place these days.

I know that God cares for all people around the world, and He has made Himself available to all who would call upon Him. That's the kind of God He is. But there's only one nation on earth that He's made specific promises to, and that's Israel.

Psalm 121:4-6 says, "No, the Guardian of Israel never slumbers or sleeps, Adonai is your Guardian; at your right hand Adonai provides you with shade—the sun can't strike you during the day or even the moon at night." (CJB)

2 Chronicles 6:5-6 says, "Since the day I brought My people out of Egypt, I chose no city from any of the tribes of Israel to build a house, so that My name might be there; nor did I choose anyone to be the leader of My people Israel. But now I have chosen Yerushalayim, so that My name can be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel." (CJB)

I mean WOW!!! God has chosen the city of Jerusalem for His name to dwell. God has made a great many promises to His chosen people Israel, and the land inheritance He promised them. So why wouldn't I want to be there? Why wouldn't I feel safe there?

Everyone is going to die some day, in fact ten out of ten people die. It's going to happen somewhere...at home, driving a car, in a hospital bed, or perhaps while we're overseas. Going to Israel wasn't a death wish, I love life...but I also worship a God who loves life, and who promises abundant life to those who know and love Him.

So to anyone who wondered why I would travel to Israel while she's at war, it was to love, bless and stand in solidarity with God's people. It was to show them consideration and compassion at a time when the entire world seems to have lost its collective mind and moral compass, and turned against them for defending themselves in a war that was foisted on them through an orchestrated terror attack that was so vile and deranged, it's hard to describe.

Israel is not the villain, Israel is the victim and she's determined not to be anymore. Why wouldn't I stand with God's people? Why wouldn't I pick my side and stand firmly on it, choosing life and justice, over terror, evil and death?

I was safe in Israel, quite possibly safer in Israel than I might be elsewhere in the world. If you ever have the opportunity to travel to Israel, take it. With both hands, take it. It will change your life, and just might open your eyes to a reality you never expected.

| Photos: C4I Australia



The police watch tower overseeing the Damascus Gate.



The very busy Damascus Gate with the police watch tower.



Our ANZAC team on the Mount of Olives overlooking Old Jerusalem.



Our ANZAC team outside the totally destroyed Sderot Police Station.



At the Nova Dance Festival grounds where 364 youth were murdered.

The Second Visit's Surprising Difficulty

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

For some reason I thought that visiting a second time would be easier. Rather than a hasty view from a distance, the ANZAC Solidarity Mission members walked the grounds in person. This time there were other people around, we were a group, and the site has changed considerably as it has morphed from a farm party venue into a national memorial.

There's a feeling, hard to explain, but a kind of heaviness. Even without the sombre scenery of flags, signs, and freshly-planted trees, the air itself seems sad.

Hundreds of people died here, or were taken captive by depraved monsters to face either a delayed death, or worse.

Genesis 4:10 speaks—albeit in an entirely different context—of a murder, the first recorded killing of a precious human life.

“Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground, like a voice calling for revenge”.

Maybe that’s it. The blood of so many brothers and sisters is crying out to me from the ground, “like voices calling for revenge”.

Some scream silently of unspeakable grief, the photos, the messages, they testify to a life taken by murderers.

The trees, the light bush, it feels a lot like a eucalyptus grove somewhere in Australia. The ground is dusty, with tufts of grasses and small shrubs scattered thinly, dry leaves forming a gentle carpet in between. Leaves in the canopy cast gently moving shadows on the ground, yet one can still easily see through the trunks. But not just trees, for scattered around what was supposed to be a place of peace and harmony jarring bright colours interrupt the serenity. Small structures, hastily erected, and adorned with photos and messages, protrude. Out of place, they don't belong here. Some scream silently of unspeakable grief, the photos, the messages, they testify to a life taken by murderers. Others, however, are different. Even for those unable to read the Hebrew, these other signs speak of perhaps an even deeper tragedy. They speak of the agony of not knowing. Families, loved ones, children, parents, all sit in the most incredible pain as they await news—any news. The absence of news means that the chaotic cloud of news media, social media, opinions—informed and clueless—all descend and fill the mind. The genuine concern, and the conspiracy theories; the speculation, and the testimonies of

released hostages—testimonies of terror; the messages of hope for a hostage deal, the news of Hamas cruelly changing the rules again; the interview of a survivor healing and living again, the news of more young soldiers killed; all fill the vacuum of information, with the solicitude of not knowing anything.

The Nova Party—or more correctly, the Nova Festival—was meant to be a celebration of peace. In a tragic irony, it was a gathering of like minded souls devoted to finding a better way in a country surrounded by violence and hatred. Kindred spirits— whether Jewish, Arab or anything else—danced with joy, together, the pressures of selfish agendas banished by the music.

Now, the blood of 364 murdered Israelis—including 17 Police officers—calls from the ground. Forty partygoers were abducted to Gaza.

Initially the subject of a string of conspiracy theories about supposed Israeli involvement in the killings, right through to the Palestinian Authority’s preposterous claim that Hamas wasn’t involved at all— that the IDF had deliberately bombed the civilian partygoers—survivors and family members had to cope not only with the

incredible trauma of the massacre, but the insult of those trying to deny what had happened. The Palestinian Authority took its claim to foreign ministries worldwide, and the UN (no surprises there).

Perhaps due to the overwhelming evidence—literally hundreds of videos and photographs taken not only by partygoers, but by the Hamas savages themselves— there are no longer any such formal claims. Predictably the PA then withdrew its claim, stating that it was no longer its ‘official position’.

As is becoming regular practise now, as more evidence is revealed that totally debunks Hamas claims, those around the world who have based their condemnation of Israel on such lies simply—quietly—change the figures and move on: No apology, no retraction, no effort whatsoever to address the damage already done.

There were some 3500 people attending the Nova Festival on 6/7 October. Around ten percent were slaughtered. The aftermath is unfathomable. Many of the survivors suffered significant physical injuries— many from gunshots. But the psychological damage, the part that is not so easily seen, is impossible to



Photos of Israelis who were murdered by Hamas terrorists at the Nova festival grounds. | Photos: C4INZ



Banners at the Nova Festival grounds.



Posters of festival-goers who were murdered or taken hostage at the Nova Festival grounds.

measure. Young Israelis will be haunted by the effects of this trauma for the rest of their lives. The Nova site has been carefully cleaned by the Zaka teams, the blood-spattered, bullet-holed port-a-loos have been removed. The fridges, tables, tents and speakers are all now gone, taking with them many of the individual stories of the murders that took place around them. What remains is a quiet place. Trees have been planted in memory of each innocent victim of the massacre. There is a board with a map of the site as it was on 7 October. The Genesis story continues with Cain’s guilt-ridden response to God’s question

of his brother’s blood.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?”

From the far side of the earth, members of the ANZAC Solidarity Mission travelled to visit this site, painfully aware of the blood that cries from the ground.

Yes. I am my brother’s keeper. The privilege of walking that ground comes with a responsibility: A responsibility to face a world that is determined to justify the massacre by re-painting it as somehow ‘acceptable’, ‘understandable’ behaviour. It is our job to tell the truth of what happened here.

Why Do They Hate Us?

■ Mandy Worby Christians for Israel Australia

During our ANZAC Solidarity Tour to Israel in March this year, we had several goals;

- To be there with the Jewish people in a time of great trauma and grief.
- Learn the truth to arm ourselves with the facts on the ground to counter the lies being spread around the world.
- Do something practical because we wanted our love and support to have some substance to it.



Ian Worby with Avi Chai, raspberry farmer, who asked why everyone hates them. | Photos: C4I Australia



Our team and Jewish volunteers working inside the raspberry farm.



ANZAC solidarity team being informed by the ZaKa volunteer on what happened to the people inside the shot up and burned out vehicles.



Ian Worby, donating blood to Magen David Adom, along with the rest of the ANZAC Solidarity team.

The practical help we were able to give was in three primary areas. We helped sort through clothing donated to an amazing charity called Eran's Angels in Tel Aviv. This charity receives donated clothing, food, toys, bedding, toiletries, homewares and so much more to help provide for the needs of both soldiers on the front line, and to displaced people (refugees) who've had to leave their homes because of the threats of war on their communities.

We rolled up our sleeves and spent hours sorting through clothing and other goods, so that families and soldiers could have their needs met. It was particularly satisfying to have done something so very practical to help Israelis so dreadfully impacted by the war.

Another practical means of help that the majority of our group participated in was donating blood to Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency services much like our Red Cross and Ambulance Service. We were informed that after making our donations, at least 3 people would be saved within 72 hrs from each donation. So we really did leave a little of ourselves in the Holy Land. Also, we volunteered a morning to assist on a raspberry farm up in the Golan region, not far from the Syrian border. It was a very rainy, wet morning when we arrived, and we were very grateful to the farmer who provided us with gum boots to protect our shoes.

Half our group went into the open field to prepare for the next seasons planting of raspberries by digging the furrows and laying the volcanic rocks in the bottom for drainage, while the other half of our group went into the large green house to tend the trellis lines for the raspberry plants to grow up. Just so you know...the greenhouses aren't waterproof. It was wet, a bit cold, super muddy and so much fun.

“Why do they hate us so much? We didn't attack anyone, we didn't start a war. Why do they hate us so much?”

Spending time with the farmers and some of the young volunteers who were using a gap year between finishing school and joining the IDF was a great opportunity to share our love with and for them.

Once we'd finished and slowly made our way to have a coffee and a bite to eat with them, I say slowly because our boots were so caked with mud it was really hard to walk...but we did laugh a whole lot.

I was chatting with the main farmer 'Avi' about his farm and also how he was coping since 7 October and he was, understandably, very subdued. He's a religious man who was not immediately aware of the events of 7 October because all his technology was turned off because it was the religious holiday of *Simchat Torah* and it was *Shabbat*. But when he did become aware, he sat stunned, horrified and in overwhelming shock at what was unfolding on his TV screen.

He went on to tell us that he'd just recently returned from reservist duty in Gaza where his task was to collect dead bodies and body parts resulting from the battle. I just looked at him because I didn't know how to respond. What does a person do with that kind of information? He was grieving and traumatised...who wouldn't be?

He took a little time to describe his conflicting feelings, trying to understand how anyone could commit such pointless, hate-inspired evil such as took place on 7 October, but then he asked me a chilling question. “Why do they hate us so much?” And he wasn't talking about Hamas.

Hamas hates Jews because of its radical, demonically-inspired ideology. Everyone knows that. What Avi wanted to know was why the world hates them so much, because no sooner had the atrocities of 7 October been reported, then the world swiftly and virulently turned his hatred upon the victims, blaming them for their own slaughter.

“Why do they hate us so much? We didn't attack anyone, we didn't start a war. Why do they hate us so much?”

You can't answer that with a long theological dissertation on the Biblical and spiritual reason for the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.

You can't use the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 and the relentless campaign of disinformation and the rewriting of history that has infected the hearts and minds of the Arabs in the region for the past 75 years.

You can't even use the radical religious ideology ingrained in generations of Arabs from cradle to grave. You can't use those answers—even if they're credible and demonstrably provable—because even they don't make sense, and those answers only deal with the Muslim/Arab issues.

Why Does the World Hate Israel So Much?

I can only give one answer and it's found in *Psalms 2*. What God loves, the world hates, and the world in its rejection of God will do anything and everything it can to throw off any accountability or responsibility to Him. They conspire among themselves to make war against God thinking they have that kind of power.

Psalms 2 says, “Why are the nations in an uproar, the peoples grumbling in vain? The earth's kings are taking positions, leaders conspiring together, against Adonai and His anointed. They cry, ‘Let's break their fetters!

Let's throw off their chains!’ He who sits in heaven laughs; Adonai looks at them in derision. Then in His anger He rebukes them, terrifies them in His fury. ‘I Myself have installed my king on Tziyion, My holy mountain. I will proclaim the decree: Adonai said to Me, ‘You are My Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask of Me, and I'll make the nations Your inheritance; the whole wide world will be Your possession. You'll break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot.’ Therefore, kings, be wise; be warned, you judges of the earth. Serve Adonai with fear; rejoice, but with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish along the way, when suddenly His anger blazes. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”

The world hates what God loves, and God loves Israel. He always has and He always will. The world is conspiring together against God, His people and His ways, and while it is putting the Jewish people in a very dangerous and precarious position, the world is pitting itself against God Almighty.

God will fight for His people, of that I have no doubt, and ‘Christians For Israel’ will continue to stand with, comfort and advocate for Israel and the Jewish people.

According to *Psalms 2*, the efforts and machinations of the nations of the world and their plans for the destruction of Israel have not taken God by surprise, in fact He's laughing at them. The world is subject to a warning by God Himself...turn from their scheming and hatred, turn to Him, submit to Him...or they'll be crushed.



We Can't Stop Now!

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel NZ

In what became recognised as some of the most pivotal battles of WWI, soldiers from the farthest regions of the world stood together, fought together, died together, in a campaign that would ultimately pave the way for the re-establishment of the State of Israel. Fighting the Muslim Ottomans, the outcome of the battles for the Levant would ultimately see borders re-defined, nations born or reborn.

Soldiers, known as ANZACS, came from two of the youngest nations in the world, travelling by ship to a strange land. These men formed a bond that would stand across many subsequent battle fields and even the rugby fields. There are memorials to many of these battles, and there are graves of our young men who never came home.

Over a hundred years later, an extremist Islamic threat once again looms over the land. This time, however, much of the world has foolishly taken the side of the savage attackers. The citizens of Israel feel alone.

In the spirit of the ANZAC expeditionary forces of a century ago, Christians for Israel NZ and Australia assembled a small team of the brave and the willing, volunteers who would once again stand side by side in the Holy Land. (Full article by Mandy Worby inside!)

The ANZAC *Solidarity Mission* saw the intrepid team visit many sites. Not just the usual ones, however, we began at ground zero. Devastated Kibbutzim, a cemetery of bullet-riddled and burned cars, and the site of the Nova Party massacre—now a very solemn memorial to the gang rapes, the amputations, and the hundreds brutally murdered, as well as those taken captive back to Gaza.

But we didn't go just to see, we served. Packing donated clothes, working in agriculture—in the pouring rain!—and even donating blood, we were able to offer even but a small token, a contribution that always meant far more morally to the Israelis we engaged with, than the volunteer work itself.

We saw, we served, now it is time to speak up. The team members are now all safely home, all ready to tell of their experience. All are willing to testify that what the media and the opposition supporters like to scream, simply doesn't match what we saw and experienced on the ground.

On behalf of supporters across New Zealand, it was a great privilege to be able to stay on in Israel after the ANZAC tour, to impart many blessings to those suffering in Israel right now and to interview survivors and the families of hostages. Our regular email updates will bring more detail on these.

Our friends in Israel right now face some huge, seemingly insurmountable challenges. Most are in the hands of the military and political leaders, and the leading of God. But at the same time there are countless smaller needs that can still be met. In the weeks following the tour, it was a privilege to be able to contribute something from my (day job) skills. Repairing electrical systems, equipment, even simple tasks like repairing the light in a dark bedroom, seem like relatively simple chores. But to those who had no light, no power, they meant a lot. Many hours were spent sorting and folding donated clothes, and then distributing these to needy families in various communities. It was during this project that I was able to spend time with some wonderful Bedouin people in their village.

The opportunity to spend time with many refugees—Israeli refugees, the ones the news media doesn't care to mention!—was very powerful. Listening to their stories, feeling their hearts, is deeply humbling. Whilst refugees from the north are still in a never-ending state of not knowing their future, it is not even clear what condition their homes and businesses are in. People from the south, however, who evacuated during the initial Hamas attack are also stuck, but in a different way. As the Hamas rockets are slowly coming to an end, many from less-affected areas are now able to return to their homes. This is where

another, unreported tragedy is looming. We are aware of some of the devastation wreaked upon the villages and kibbutzim, where most or all of the buildings will have to be completely rebuilt. But there are tens—hundreds—of thousands of people in less-affected areas who are returning to their homes only to find them uninhabitable. Water damage, birds and animals etc over the 7+ months of absence have, in many cases, all-but destroyed the homes. Refrigerators and freezers, following power failures, are now septic health-hazards. Beds, furniture, are filthy at best, but in many cases will have to be dumped due to health risks.

This is something that tugs at my heart constantly, and I was able to assist with repairs to such homes—one in particular was a huge project, in conjunction with a team of German volunteers! As Israel is at war, there is a huge shortage of skills in building, construction, maintenance etc, as so many of the people who would normally hold these roles are serving in the army. Many of the people and projects we support are straining to help with these enormous needs. Benjamin Philip at the *Hineni Foundation* is engaging in some of this work, Danielle Mor at the *Jewish Agency* also.

The only sure thing is that none of the 'proper' organisations will help. The *United Nations* certainly won't lift a finger. This is the UN who has only just revised their Gaza casualty figures down virtually 50% (accepting what we have been telling them all along, Hamas lies!).

The most important we must do right now, is keep standing. The hostages are not returned, Hamas—who have promised to repeat these attacks again and again—is still in power in Gaza, and so the war continues. Uninformed 'useful idiots' all around the world are backing the extremists.

So we must stand strong, for what is right. We stand for Israel.

Available Now

NEW 18-month Calendar

July 2024 - December 2025

ORDER YOURS NOW

\$35

PLUS POST & PACKAGING

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL NZ
CALENDAR 2024-25

A unique 18-month calendar designed especially for New Zealanders that showcases the Biblical Sites in Israel.

- Shows Biblical & Jewish festivals
- Shows Israeli holidays
- Displays Western & Hebrew dates
- Shows NZ public holidays & school terms
- Large date area for notes
- Monthly verses
- Proudly Kiwi designed and printed
- Supports Christians for Israel NZ



Order your
Christians for Israel
New Zealand
2024-25 Calendar
from our webshop at
www.c4israel.org.nz

Please include the number of calendars you wish to purchase and pay by internet banking (put your NAME and CALENDAR as reference) or credit card.

Or complete the coupon on the back page and post or email it to us.



Palmerston North Arises

Joanna Moss

Way back in 1967, when the Six-Day War began, Roger Ell was so captivated by the details and concerned for the plight of Israel that he rang the Embassy in Wellington to ask if he could enlist, and he did. The Ambassador at the time was amazed and delighted that a gentile from the Ends of the Earth would be so moved. By the time Roger got ready to go, the war was over. But it sowed a love for Israel that has never died. Over the years, Roger has been in various churches in Hawkes Bay, Tauranga and Picton and has always been involved with Israel-related events. A few years ago, he moved to Palmerston North with his wife Georgina.

Roger had been monitoring the pro-Palestinian events in the Square and was horrified by what he was hearing. Frustrated, he stood in the middle and shouted out “Lies, lies. It’s all lies”. But he wanted to do more.

When he heard that Tony Kan, the President of NZ Friends of Israel (NZFOI),

was coming to speak at Church on Vogel on 23 March, he was keen to hear what Tony had to say. Following the lengthy presentation covering the conflict, media biases and lies, Joanna Moss issued a challenge to the local believers. It had been nearly six months, and when they were going to make a stand for Israel, given that the Pro-Palestinian supporters were out in the Square on a weekly basis? After some prayer, Roger felt it was time to organise a rally in the Square and began making arrangements for it with Georgina assisting. The first one was held on 20 April on the same grounds as the opposition. In the meantime, a new local prayer group for Israel was set up, and it has been growing by leaps and bounds. The second rally was held on Saturday, 11 May, to coincide with Israel Independence Week, including *Yom HaZikaron*, remembering the fallen soldiers, so apt this year. A much larger group turned up as word got around. They came from a wide variety of churches.

Holding Israeli and NZ flags and the distinctive red kidnapped cardboard



Supporters at the 20 April Palmerston North Rally. | Photo: Georgina Ell

placards with the hostage images, supporters marched around the Square and stood facing down Fitzherbert Avenue, the main thoroughfare towards Massey University. Drivers and pedestrians could easily see the demonstration and images. Many drivers tooted and many more so in the second rally clearly showing the hidden support. Participants were very moved by it.

Towards the end, the pro-Palestinians got wind of it and tried to disrupt it. Mid-April was the school holidays, and there were activities in the centre of the Square attracting much more foot traffic than usual. The same was true for the second rally just before Mother’s Day. It’s clear there is solid support for Israel and the hostages in Palmerston North. Please pray for them.

Nelson City, a Microcosm of a Fallen Sword

Nick Dalgety

Most in our community have rejected the God of the Bible. Following the great evil committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023, propaganda chants have echoed down our streets. As believers in *Yeshua* (Jesus), let us bless Israel and the Jewish people by sharing about their Messiah in their hour of need.

Early on the morning of 7 October 2023, about 3,000 Hamas terrorists and Gaza ‘civilians’ entered Israel, slaughtering 1,200 people and seizing 240 hostages at the music festival and in small adjoining Israeli villages.

Believe it or not, Guterres, the head of the United Nations, was right in a grotesque sort of way when he said this event “did not happen in a vacuum”. This evil event finds its source in unbridled hatred of the Jewish people that goes back millennia to the likes of Pharaoh, Amalek, and Haman.

Within days a group calling themselves *Te Tau Ihu Palestine Solidarity*, marched down Trafalgar Street, the main street of our city, expressing support for the Gaza people and their collective plight!

The Jewish have a term for such behaviour: *chutzpah*, meaning unbelievable gall! Rather than the local Muslim community coming alongside our Nelson Jewish community in their

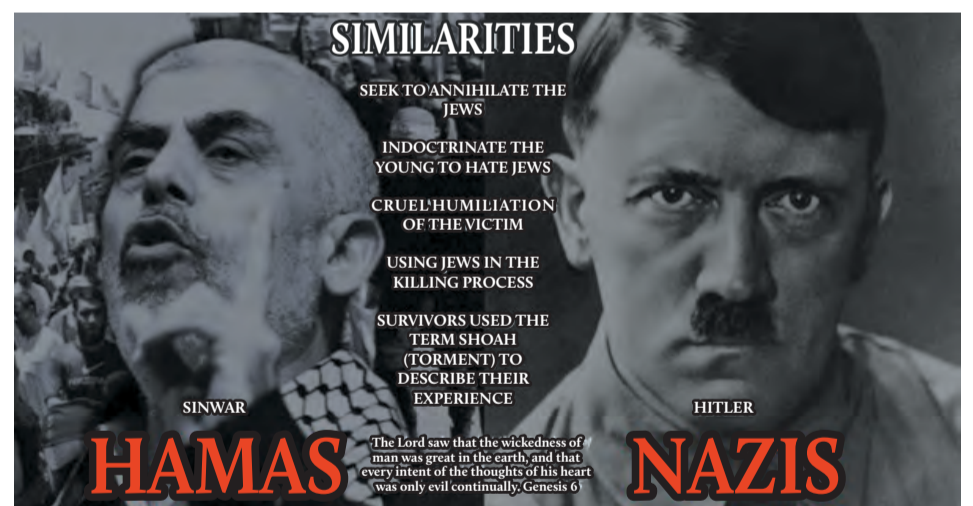
pain, they chose to side with the evil perpetrators, Hamas. What a contrast when we recall five years ago how New Zealanders—along with our local Jewish community—came alongside the New Zealand Muslim community after the Christchurch Mosque massacre.

These Palestinian marches have continued every week. They gather on a Saturday morning at the foot of the church steps, march down our main street, then pass through our special food and artisan market. They are spiritually seeking to dominate our local Nelson culture with Islamic and woke ideology.

They utter what, in my view, is pure propaganda like:

From the *River to the Sea, Palestine will be free*—people chanting this are rejecting Israel’s right to exist, claiming that the entire land of Israel, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, should be Jew-free. A historic call to arms for terrorist groups like Hamas. Just like Hitler stirred up the German people to have hate for and then seek to exterminate every Jew in Europe.

Israel is an apartheid state—yet roughly 21% of Israel’s more than nine million citizens are Arabs. There are Arabs in every role in Israeli society, from judges to politicians, from athletes to actors.



Our family has been blessed; many Israelis have stayed with us over the years; friendships forged through two trips to Israel, and thankful for insights gleaned by meditating on God’s enduring love for His Chosen People.

This commenced about four weeks after the massacre. I headed down one Saturday morning and set up a stand on the main street with placards highlighting the truth to counter this propaganda. For me, never again means never again. Other believers have joined me.

Destiny Church in Nelson is also active in standing up for Israel, individual believers on Saturday mornings, and prayer groups. Some members of the Jewish and Israeli community, though

under siege, are active.

Satan is on the back of this evil act of 7 October 2023; his violent spirit is animating the deeds of Hamas as he did the Nazis in the 1930s. Similarities between these two groups are summarised in the image above.

God is regathering his people back to the Land in preparation for the Messiah’s return. Paul, the apostle, makes this truth known when writing to believers in Rome, “... Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”

Looking ahead. Let us continue sharing the Gospel in Nelson and wherever you are, to the lost in what is a fallen world.



Picton Prays for Israel

Julian & Monica Hawken

Israel needs our prayers like never before! There is a national emergency, and the Lord made it clear that we should hold a *Bless Israel Day*. We realised it was strategically important for us to stand up for Israel against antisemitism and for Jews and Israelis around the world (*Esther 4:14*). Praise the Lord, Christians and Messianic Jews from both North and South Islands converged in Picton for a *Shabbat* gathering on 27 April, to pray and declare solidarity with Israel.

We had a 12-hour programme, 9am to 9pm, exclusively focused on Israel, where we worshipped, danced, heard anointed teaching and prayed. Over the years we have organised many similar *Bless Israel Days* in New Zealand and

Asia, but we became aware that this day would be special. After an initial time of worship, we had *One Minute* of silence to pray for Israel. Our first speaker, Pastor Nigel Woodley, shared *God's Amazing End-Time Plan for Israel* followed by *Public Advocacy for Israel*. We became aware that we are truly living in the last days and need to position ourselves to support God's people.

During the afternoon, we received teaching from Joanna Moss about *First Fruits from a Messianic Perspective—At the Appointed Time* and later, *Passover Reflections on the Plagues of Egypt*. Pastor Julian Hawken spoke about *Aliyah*. Then, friends from Nelson and Wellington taught us a number of Israeli dancing steps, and we sang the *Hatikva*, Israel's National Anthem. Throughout the day, we became increasingly burdened to pray for Israel.



Supporters at the Picton Bless Israel Day. | Photo: Julian and Monica Hawken

Finally, in the evening, we were challenged through a message by Lise Afele on, "*When God Calls from the Ends of the Earth to Jerusalem*", to go and serve in Israel! There was a deep sense of the

Holy Spirit's presence and His desire to use us in these last days. Many of us are now seeking the Lord for ways we can be available to help further His purposes for Israel.

Yom HaShoah Reminds Us



Kristopher Clancy (right) Education Director, Holocaust Centre of NZ

Yom HaShoah this year marked a more somber note than usual as a result of rising antisemitism. The first commemoration took place in Auckland

on Sunday 5 May in the old Corran school premises in Remuera, now the home of the Auckland Jewish Community. The Auckland Hebrew

congregation has moved from Grey's Avenue along with Kadima school to the new compound. On Monday evening the event was then held in central Wellington.

Yom Ha'Shoah is the Jewish day for Holocaust remembrance. The focus is more on Jewish remembrance than the UN-designated International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. Traditionally, few Christians go to the Jewish event, respecting the privacy of Jews to remember together. However, this year, an invitation was extended to Holocaust Centre supporters and some Christians to stand in solidarity.

80 years ago deportations began for Hungarian Jews, making it especially poignant for those who are Hungarian and those with Hungarian heritage;

both categories are represented amongst the NZ community. Provincial Jews were rounded up first. The deportation was only stopped as they were nearing Budapest due to local pressure, a poignant reminder to us today. A memorial of shoes left behind cast in bronze on the edge of the River Danube signifies the awful plight of Hungarian Jews who were shot there.

Hosted by Kristopher Clancy, Education Director and Gillian Wess, CEO of the Holocaust Centre of NZ, the events featured candle lighting, music, diary entries and moving testimonies from second and third generations of their family Hungarian stories. Auckland Vera Krukzeiner played a key role in both ceremonies and other survivors were present. Both finished with Kaddish and a moment's silence.

Yom HaZikaron in Dunedin

An Israel support group hosted a *Yom HaZikaron* ceremony in Dunedin's Queens Garden on Sunday 12 May. It was made up of three groups: local Jews, Israelis and Christians. *Yom HaZikaron* is the day to remember fallen soldiers and terror victims, so it was apt the hostages' names were read out. A prominent display of NZ and Israel flags showed how the groups had come

together in unity. Both national anthems were sung followed by Jewish and Christian prayers. Some local visitors joined in. Support from cars tooting gratified the group. Despite media bias, there is obviously huge, silent support from Kiwis. Supporters tend to fall into one of four groups: active, on-the-sidelines waiting, passive or non-committal.

Call to Action

Israel supporters fit into four categories:

1. **Active (using their gifts)**
2. **Waiting on the sidelines**
3. **Passive**
4. **Non-committal**

Think about yourself and the people you know—which category do they fit it? Look at the active people around NZ from these inspiring stories. What about your area? We need people to write letters, contact their MPs,

Councillors and Mayors or MFAT, form new prayer and local support groups, organise rallies, donate, pick up others and turn up to rallies with instruments, songs, prayers, *shofars*, flags or signs and importantly, encourage Jews and Israelis everywhere that they are not alone.

Ask yourself: What does it take to move people from one category to another? What can I do? It's time to wake-up and act.



Legal Aspects of Possible ICC Arrest Warrants

■ Andrew Tucker

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

On Monday 20 May 2024, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Mr Karim Kahn KC, announced his intention to ask the Court's Pre-Trial Chamber to issue arrest warrants against Israeli leaders including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar (Head of the Islamic Resistance Movement ('Hamas') in the Gaza Strip), Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, more commonly known as DEIF (Commander-in-Chief of the military wing of Hamas, known as the Al-Qassam Brigades), and Ismail Haniyeh (Head of Hamas Political Bureau), for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza. This has provoked strong reactions. Israeli government and Parliament have condemned the move. The US President called the decision 'outrageous'. Political leaders in the US have threatened to retaliate with sanctions against ICC personnel. The UK Prime Minister called the move 'unhelpful'. Hamas has also rejected the decision.

In our view, issuing warrants against Israeli leaders at this time is highly problematic.

ICC Lacks Jurisdiction in Gaza

The ICC's role in relation to the Palestinian-Israel conflict is highly controversial. The Court was established in 2000 to investigate and prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It only has powers in relation to states that are parties to the Rome Statute. Many states (including Israel and the USA) are not a party to the Rome Statute.

The Palestinians have been trying for decades to engage the Court to prosecute Israeli leaders. In 2021, in a controversial

ruling, the Court decided that, even though 'Palestine' is not a state under established principles of international law, the fact that Palestine has obtained 'non-member observer state' status in the UN means that it was entitled to join the Rome Statute, and therefore the Court has jurisdiction to prosecute Israelis for crimes committed on the territory of Palestine (including Gaza).

Israel and many other states object that the Court has no powers relating to alleged Israeli crimes on Palestinian territory. In our view, this decision undermines the basic principle underlying the Court, namely that it only has the powers that sovereign states confer on it. Palestine is definitely not (yet) a sovereign state, and Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute—so neither can have conferred any powers on the Court. The ICC simply has no business in Gaza.

Nevertheless, since October 2023, the ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan (a British/Pakistani lawyer) has stated publicly that the ICC is investigating both Israeli and Hamas leaders and will prosecute them if it finds that they are committing crimes.

Even if it is accepted that the Court has jurisdiction, issuing arrest warrants at this time would open the Court to criticism for many reasons.

Politicisation of the Court

The Court is already widely criticised for being ineffective and inefficient. With a multi-million dollar budget and a staff of hundreds, the Court has only managed to achieve a handful of convictions in the last twenty years. Choosing to focus on Israeli leaders will expose the Court to the claim that it has become a political instrument used by Israel's enemies, including the Palestinian leadership, to delegitimise Israel and undermine its lawful military objective to destroy Hamas' capabilities. If the ICC wants to protect its



Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a press conference in March 2024. | Photo: Flash90

reputation as an independent and trustworthy tribunal based on the rule of law, it will not take one-sided steps.

Complementarity

The ICC only has power to act if the national court of the alleged criminal is unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute (the principle of 'complementarity'). Israel has a robust legal system and diligently investigates any alleged crimes or violations of the law. Therefore, it is hoped that the Prosecutor will refrain from issuing any arrest warrant against Israeli nationals unless and until he issues a ruling on the matter of complementarity, which is one of the pillars of the ICC criminal system.

'War Crimes' and 'Crimes Against Humanity'

The ICC was established to ensure an end to impunity for "the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole". Israel is exercising its legitimate right of self-defence in Gaza. Inevitably, Israeli leaders and soldiers will make mistakes and maybe even violate international humanitarian law or even commit crimes. Such violations should be addressed and punished where appropriate. But the Court was established to prosecute the worst criminals who deliberately flout the law and commit the most heinous crimes. It is a travesty of justice to isolate Israel for such heinous crimes when it is fighting a massive war against Iran and its proxies and allies in the region.

Evidence of Crimes

Issuing an arrest warrant would mean the Prosecutor believes he has conclusive evidence that crimes have been committed. However, it is impossible to establish that Israel is committing war crimes or other violations of international law. Concerning the crime of genocide, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) recently ruled that it cannot be proved at this time that Israel is committing the crime of genocide. Other war crimes mentioned in the Rome

Statute can only be proven if a Court can examine and reach conclusions on all the facts of specific cases. Legal and military experts remind us that Israel has done more in the past six months to protect Palestinian civilians than any other army has done in the context of complex urban warfare, more remarkable given Israel is fighting an enemy (Hamas) that intentionally violates international law to maximise civilian casualties. The facts are simply not yet available.

An Arrest Warrant at this Stage Would be Counter-Productive

An ICC intervention at this time to brand Israeli leaders as war criminals will also be counter-productive. It will not change Israel's behaviour and may simply embolden Hamas to refuse to release the hostages.

The war in Gaza is at a critical point. Israel is preparing to enter Rafah in southern Gaza to seek to eliminate the remaining Hamas battalions hiding in tunnels under the city. Israel is also engaged in complex negotiations with Hamas for the release of Israeli hostages. Foreign diplomatic officials like US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the UK's Foreign Secretary David Cameron expressed their hopes last weekend that Hamas would accept Israel's latest 'extraordinarily generous' offer for a hostage deal that would see a 40-day pause in fighting and the release of potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 33 hostages in an initial phase.

Criminalising the Conflict Feeds Antisemitism

More problematically, criminalising this conflict will inevitably feed into the narrative that Israel and the Jewish people are criminals and thus fuel the flames of antisemitism around the world.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international lawyers who challenge the delegitimation of Israel and promote the fair use of international law. You can support the work of thinc. by making a donation to Christians for Israel. For more information about thinc.: www.thinc-israel.org

Expressions of Interest
OPEN NOW

Journey to Israel 2025

March 9-24/28 (optional Petra extension)

If you would like to join our **March 2025** tour, please contact us with an **'Expressions of Interest'**.

Please email info@c4israel.org.nz with your name(s), and contact details, with **'EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST'** in the subject line.

CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

SUPPORTED BY



rhema media

The Battle for NZ Cities

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

On the evening of 29 November 2022, a leader in the Zionist movement sent me a photo which depicted a Palestinian flag flying from the main municipal building of the Hastings District Council. I was shocked, and the following morning, I sent an email to the mayor, Sandra Hazlehurst, offering my heartfelt infuriation at seeing such an image in my home city. This is a copy of some of that email:

“I was a bit shocked to see yesterday a Palestinian flag flying from the Council flagpole. I guess Council is wanting to be inclusive and all-embracing, but please let me point a couple of things out:

1. The flying of the Palestinian flag is premature as the Palestinians agreed in the Oslo Accords that a state would eventuate only with open negotiations with their peace partner Israel, and land disputes would be settled for what is called a final status agreement. The reason no state has eventuated as yet is because the Palestinians quit negotiating over a decade ago and are now trying to circumvent negotiations by going for a unilateral declaration of statehood at the United Nations. This breaks the forementioned agreement in Oslo and will not lead to peace but to more conflict.

Such slanderous lies are made by opponents of Israel who wish to smear Israel with this and other outlandish statements such as ‘Israel is an apartheid state’.

2. By flying the Palestinian flag from Council Buildings, the HDC is basically recognising the legitimacy of a Palestinian state without the agreed negotiations. It plays into the hands of terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, who are emboldened by such moves to continue their campaign of hate and destruction against innocent Israelis.

3. I have found the Palestinian movement in New Zealand to be very inaccurate in their reporting and assessment of the situation in Israel, and they have set themselves up in this nation to denigrate and criticise Israel unfairly. I believe that the move to allow them to fly their flag is playing into their politics, and their campaign against Israel in this nation will continue.

4. What would Council’s response be if I were to ask for the flying of the Israeli flag on 14 May next year in recognition of Israel’s 75 birthday?

I would love the opportunity to speak to you further about these things and if

you would like that to take place then please let me know.”

The result was that I spent 45 minutes in Mayor Hazlehurst’s office and offered a compromise:

“If the Hastings District Council agree to not allow any further flying of a Palestinian flag until a peace agreement with Israel has been signed, then I will settle with that. However, if Council are going to allow the flying of that flag in the meantime, then I demand that the Israeli flag be flown on 14 May 2023 to commemorate Israel’s seventy-fifth anniversary celebration.”

The mayor said she would consult her senior staff and get back to me. I was subsequently advised that I could fly the Israeli flag on 14 May 2023. So, as part of our public celebration for Israel’s 75th anniversary, which we held at the Hastings Clock Tower—the iconic centre of the city, the Israeli flag flew for the entire weekend from the HDC municipal building—from Friday afternoon, 12 May, through to Monday morning the 15th. Local New Zealand media were not interested in reporting the event, but the Israelis were. *The Jerusalem Post* reported the event with a video of their flag flying from Hastings Council Chambers at the ends of the earth. Thousands of Israelis were watching and could see that Israel has support in a faraway city called Hastings, New Zealand.

Prior to 7 October 2023, I had emailed every mayor in New Zealand after I heard that John Minto, on behalf of the Palestinian Solidarity Network, had approached them. After introducing myself and respectfully making my reason for writing to them known, I then laid out a few bullet points to counter the information that my detractor had given them, some of which follow:

- The National Party, who were in government, no longer supports the resolution (UNSC Res.2334 of 23 Dec. 2016) and regrets the underhanded way in which it was slipped in without Cabinet consent. This was stated by Simon Bridges when he was their leader in 2018 <https://youtu.be/Et5Jq3CWfo?t=3>
- Israel does not practise ‘brutal repression’ of Palestinians. Such slanderous lies are made by opponents of Israel who wish to smear Israel with this and other outlandish statements such as ‘Israel is an apartheid state’. The State of Israel is fully democratic and



Israel flag flying proudly at the Hasting District Council building. | Photo: Nigel Woodley

not apartheid. It does its best in the difficult political reality to treat the Palestinians in the disputed territories with respect. There are activists on both sides of the conflict. However, Israel is constantly under attack by terrorists from the Palestinian side who are incited by their leaders to do so.

- The Israelis have stated, and they wait for the Palestinian leaders to rejoin them at the negotiating table, a table the Palestinian leadership vacated years ago.
- The Israelis do not consider Jewish settlements in some parts of the West Bank as illegal simply because it is their ancestral and historical homeland. It would be like telling the Māori people that some parts of Aotearoa are out-of-bounds for them. The Palestinian Authority has stated they want no Jews living in the disputed territories at all, whereas, within Israel, there are some two million Arab citizens of Israel who happily co-exist with the Jewish population.

- Israeli technology and expertise in many areas of interest to New Zealand should be counted as something to be embraced and not to be boycotted. Your Council could benefit greatly from the innovations that Israel has to offer.

I was grateful at the amount of replies I received from the mayors showing no respect for Minto’s communication to them, and perhaps best summed up by this reply—“Have no fear, John Mintos email was duly filed in the trash bin.” Within two weeks of this campaign the 7 October onslaught took place and since then New Zealand cities have been turned into battlefields by the pro-Hamas supporters.

On 28 November, I zoomed into the Dunedin City Council, explaining why they should not recognise a Palestinian State nor fly the Palestinian flag on the

29th, commemorating the United Nations Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. One of the points I made was that presently, that flag is covered with the blood of innocent Israelis, and it would be insensitive to fly it. Other advocates for Israel spoke, too. The leaders of Dunedin listened, and instead of flying the Palestinian flag the next day, they flew the New Zealand flag at half mast to respect all the innocent victims on both sides who had been affected. Dunedin listened.

Prior to this, I had travelled to Wellington in late June, where I was given five minutes to explain to the Wellington City Council why they should not pursue a twin-city relationship with Ramallah, the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority and a hotbed for terrorism, which administers stipends to terrorists and rewards them for killing innocent Israelis. Other advocates were there speaking for Israel’s case as well. In a tight and passionate debate, the WCC decided to pursue the idea. I and others who witnessed the debate and my part of it felt that Mayor Tory Whanau rudely cut me off from uttering my final line and would not allow me to finish. The final line was the most important—“If you go to bed with terrorists, you will wake up with terrorism next to you!” Unfortunately, Wellington did not listen like their southern counterparts.

Perhaps something I have written may inspire you as an ordinary ratepayer to add your bit to the conversation in your city or town and speak up for Israel’s sake. When we remain silent, we provide a vacuum for Israel’s enemies to exploit, but when we speak up or sometimes just show up, we are countering the onslaught of falsehood and misinformation that many may otherwise embrace.

From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



Believe Me, A Day Will Come!

On 5 May we commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel. A few days later, we

honoured those who gave their lives in defence of the nation. The following day, the nation marked our 76th Independence Day.

This year, however, these momentous dates have been observed under the cloud of events that have rocked Israel since 7 October. The memory of the atrocities and slaughter perpetrated by Hamas is still fresh. The entire nation is still clamouring for the return of the hostages held by Hamas. Hundreds of fresh graves have been added to military cemeteries across the country. All along, every day, the IDF battles the aggression of Hezbollah along Israel's border with Lebanon while the residents of the region remain displaced. Most Israelis have never lived under such circumstances. Indeed, we have experienced wars and terrorism, but not to the same extent. Certainly not an auspicious background for celebration.

Israel will continue its struggle to bring back our hostages. Most probably, we shall have to pay a painful price, but the fate of the people held by Hamas is far more important. The anguished cry of their families as well as posters with the faces of the hostages across Israel's thoroughfares, remind us of our duty as a nation. That is our most immediate mission.

The tasks we face are mind-boggling: Putting an end to aggression on all fronts is but the first step. Communities along the Gaza and Lebanon borders need to be rebuilt, and their residents must be assured that the experiences as of 7 October shall never recur. Furthermore, the demand for accountability of those in government and the military will not subside. Truly a herculean task.

During our War of Independence, a famous theatre actor wrote a song called, *Believe Me, a Day Will Come*. The song, interpreted by Yaffa Yarkoni, one of Israel's top performers for many years, is a promise that a day will come when all will be good. It became one of the songs most associated with that war. I am no singer, but as an 8th generation Israeli, I am certain that a good day will come, I promise you.

ANZAC Day in Wellington

ANZAC Day is held annually on the 25th of April, the anniversary of New Zealand and Australian soldiers landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915, to commemorate and honour all returned servicemen, women, and those who died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations from the first World War up until the present day.

Notable heroes include the 28th Māori Battalion during the Second World War, whose soldiers liberated the Risiera di San

Sabba concentration camp in northern Italy, a transit camp for Jews to be deported to Auschwitz.

Deputy Chief of Mission Yael Holan acted as Chargé d'affaires to represent the State of Israel and lay a wreath at this year's National Commemoration Service at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in Wellington.

(Right) Deputy Chief of Mission, Yael Holan, laying a wreath at this year's commemoration.



Cook Islands Commemoration

In the First World War, almost 500 Cook Islanders fought for New Zealand. Men from every island in the region became known as the 'Rarotongan Company' and served in both Europe and the Middle East.

It is not known exactly how many Cook Islander lives were lost overall, though Māori Medical Officer Māui Pōmare reported that "they must have lost upwards of 150".

During the Second World War, the Cook Islands was a territory of New Zealand. Cook Islanders served in the New Zealand Defence Force, the Cook Islands Local Defence Force, and as civilians in the Coastwatchers.

Deputy Chief of Mission Yael Holan attended this year's ANZAC Day Cook Islands Commemoration in Wellington. The ceremony was held at 'The Conch' Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in Wellington, a 4-metre-high bronze conch shell sculpture. It is designed in memory of the conch shell left in the Arras Tunnels by Cook Islander soldiers who were stationed beneath the town of Arras in France from 1916 to 1918. The Deputy Mayor of Arras came from France to attend this year's commemoration in Wellington and lay a wreath.

(Right) Deputy Chief of Mission Yael Holan at the ANZAC Day Cook Islands Commemoration.



The Be'er Sheva Anzac Memorial

In Be'eri Forest, the Negev, is an ANZAC Memorial which commemorates the New Zealand and Australian soldiers who fell in the Land of Israel. Nearby, the military cemeteries from the First World War are the final resting places of 186 soldiers from New Zealand and 544 from Australia.

Twice, on 26 March and 19 April 1917, the ANZAC and British forces attacked the Turkish fortifications in Gaza but were forced to retreat with heavy losses. The lookout tower at the top of the memorial offers a view of the battlefields.

Even in the present day, the Be'eri forest, which is located next to the Gaza Strip, is not peaceful. It is part of the area where the 7 October massacre took place. Nearby, fighting against Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip is still taking place in order to restore security to the region



The Be'er Sheva Anzac Memorial in Be'eri Forest

and release the 132 hostages.

The memorial was designed by architect Yedidya Eisenshtat. The cornerstone was laid in April 1967 on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. It is shaped like the letter 'A' in honour of the first letter of the acronym ANZAC. The

shape of the building was designed to resemble the heads of charging horses in honour of the Australian and New Zealand mounted cavalry, whose actions are regarded as one of history's last great cavalry charges.

First Nations of North America Welcome Aotearoa Delegation from IEJ

Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem Directors, Hon Alfred Ngaro and Dr Sheree Trotter, have been invited by Grand Chief Lynda Prince, President of the First Nations of North America, to the *First Nations of North America Leadership Summit* on 27-29 May in Auburn, Washington, USA.

An indigenous embassy has long been a desire of the First Nations People of Turtle Island (the North American continent). Prince led a delegation of one hundred First Nation leaders from the North American continent to Israel in 1999.

Prince explained, “We met with the Israeli Knesset, adhering to proper protocol by asking permission to come into the land of Israel to release our prayers through song and dance for the peace of Jerusalem and Israel”. It was on this trip that the delegation further expressed their desire for an Indigenous Embassy in Israel.

Prince has also acknowledged the Māori leadership of the embassy and tells of her close relationship with the late Māori leader, Monte Ohia. Ohia founded the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People and held the inaugural meeting in Rotorua in 1996, where the indigenous of the nations were welcomed onto the Te Papaouru

marae in Ohinemutu. According to Prince, Ohia supported her desire to include Israel and Jewish People as a part of the WCGIP and took the hit from opponents of this idea. She wrote, “He was the tip of the spear that led us globally and had the stamina to take the onslaught of antisemitism and replacement theology that caused him to lay his life down for Israel”.

IEJ co-director Trotter remarked, “It was only recently that I learned of the 1996 meeting Ohia led at Te Papaouru marae. I was very moved, as I am from Te Arawa and that is a marae to which I *whakapapa*.”

Regarding the opening of an indigenous embassy in Jerusalem after all these years, Prince stated, “We are extremely elated that the IEJ has become reality, and thank the Māori who assisted to push it through to fruition... We want to thank properly by doing protocol with all who brought to fruition this great victory.”

Former MP, Hon Alfred Ngaro, co-director of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, stated, “We are deeply honoured to be invited by the esteemed Grand Chief Prince to this gathering. We are looking forward to meeting with the First Nations of North America to build



Māori leaders and *kaumatua* (elders) at Ohinemutu, near the Olive Tree gifted by HE Ambassador Ran Yaakoby. | Photo: Perry Trotter

our communities’ connections and share the remarkable story of the establishment of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem”.

According to Trotter, “Antisemitism has seen falsehoods driving the popular narrative is that Jews are foreign colonisers to the land of Israel. Indigenous people with any sense of

history know this to be an absurdity. Amongst several purposes for the establishment of IEJ is for indigenous people to affirm the indigeneity of the Jewish people to their own land and to express their solidarity in the face of the existential threats faced by the nation of Israel.”

First Nations Stands with Israel

Israel needs our prayers like never before! Karen Restoule is a First Nations woman and a proud Canadian. In December she spoke at a large pro-Jewish gathering in front of Parliament in Ottawa. Below is an expanded adaptation of Karen’s poignant remarks:

“It is with honour that I stand with you here today. I raise my hands to all of you, and to all of those who have come before you, for the courage that each of you carry.

We cannot let the darkness of lies shroud us from speaking out truth.

I see it. Just by virtue of who I am, and where I come from, I see it. I, too, come from a long line of people who have struggled to fight hatred, prejudice, displacement, negative stereotypes, and discrimination. I empathise with you. I see and recognise what you are going through.

Much like us, it is clear: Jews are

Indigenous Peoples of the Land of Israel from time immemorial. And I am proud to stand with you today and every day.

However, it must be said that while our experiences exist in parallel, they are not the same. Some have suggested correlations between Hamas and Israel in the Middle East and the reconciliation work led by First Nations here in Canada in the West. Over the past weeks, here in Canada, we have heard the use of the terms ‘coloniser’, ‘settler’, and ‘decolonise’

to justify terror, violence, kidnapping, rape, and targeted civilian massacres. I fundamentally reject the politically motivated adoption of our historic and ongoing relationship with the Crown by some Canadians to justify this.

To be clear: there must never be an acceptance, tolerance, or justification for evil actions by terrorists and

criminals in modern Canadian society. And while, yes, these realities have existed at one time in our shared history as Canadians and Indigenous Peoples, we have found ways—and will continue to find ways—to peacefully resolve our differences through truth-sharing, dialogue, action, and growing mutualism. As a First Nations woman and as a proud Canadian, I commit to stand witness, to be a Keeper of Truth. Every Canadian across this country is a witness to the events that unfolded on 7 October and to the steep increase in antisemitism that has transpired since then, including here at home in our country.

There has been a disturbing trend to normalise boycotting Jewish Canadians, to normalise calling for the eradication of Jewish peoples from their historic homelands, and to target Jewish-led businesses, schools, and places of worship. We cannot let the darkness of lies shroud us from speaking out truth. The truth that 7 October happened. That it

targeted innocent civilians with unimaginable scales of hatred and violence. We must all speak out courageously against antisemitic hate in our own land today. We share a collective responsibility to address wrongs. To act. To make things better.

It’s fitting that we gather here this week, as soon, in just a few evenings, hundreds of thousands of Jewish Canadians and friends will join together to light the menorah, remembering the miracle of the oil that lit the temple for eight days, the temple whose foundation rests to this day in Jerusalem.

As our days shorten, it’s a reminder that there is a miracle of light burning in all of us, from a power beyond us. Let’s remember that light in the days, weeks, and months ahead. Let us speak truth, show love, and work relentlessly toward lasting peace.

Published on Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem website. Republished with permission.



Promises, Covenants and Israel—Part I

■ Christopher J Archer

Co-chair of the New Zealand Israel Friendship Association Inc.

It is easy to regard the current Middle East conflict as another round in the interminable battle between Israel and her Arab neighbours and to think that the inevitable outcome will be yet another Israeli victory against the 'Axis of Evil' that wants to see Israel removed from their ancestral land. Victory in the current war would raise the tally from four to five (or ten) major wars, two Intifadas, endless border clashes, missile strikes and assorted terrorist attacks inside Israel. We might base our hope of victory either on Israel's military or moral superiority and, as we slowly digest the full horror of the vicious and cowardly attack on the Israeli communities in the South of Israel by the Hamas terrorists and 'innocent' Gazans, we are constantly amazed at the skill, discipline and humanity displayed by Israel's youthful soldiers. We also might wonder why anybody chooses to live in such a terrifying environment. Is Israel alone in this trial? Many people are praying for victory, but it often seems that Israel's friends are fickle. It is still true that "He who watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" (*Psalms 121:4*).

In one of the more reputable blog pages that reported on the war, I recently came across this posting:

An Israeli scientist, a Doctor of Physics, who worked for several years in the defence industry on projects that are still on the cutting edge of the State of Israel, reflecting on the barrage of more than 300 missiles which were launched by Iran against Israel on the night of 17 April 2024, wrote the following words to his rabbi:

"On *Shabbat* night, something happened here on the scale of splitting the Red Sea. When I look at what happened on a scientific level, it simply cannot happen. Everyone, and I mean everyone, acted as one man in overall unity."

"The likelihood that everything works out just as it should does not exist in complex systems like the defence systems that were operating. They have never, I mean never, even beyond the State of Israel, been tried in real time. I took a pencil and dove into the calculations to check the likelihood that such a result would materialise. The large number of events that had to be handled at precisely the right time doubles the chance of making a mistake."

"With all these high technologies, the expectation was for a breach in the defense of the skies of the State of Israel. Even if we got 90% protection, it would be a miracle. What happened, though, is that everyone, I mean everyone—the

pilots, the system operators, and the technology operators—acted as one man at one moment in total unity. If this is not an act of God, then I no longer know what a miracle is... The rescue that took place for the people of Israel on *Shabbat* night is simply impossible naturally. I believe that this miracle saved the lives of many people from Israel."

Recently, my wife and I tuned into the recent Holocaust Memorial commemorations at Yad Vashem. To say this was a deeply moving ceremony is an understatement. The highlight, if such a term may be employed at such a grievous time, was the testimony of six Holocaust survivors who lit torches of remembrance on behalf of the Holocaust survivors' community. While it is always a heartbreaking experience, I never tire of hearing the stories of tragedy, courage and survival shown by these ageing yet unassuming heroes of Israel. Having had the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem and other Holocaust memorials around the world and, more recently, the Jewish Ghetto in Krakow and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, the graphic detail provided in their different narratives is not hard to envisage. In the closing moments of each testimony, there was a recurring theme which helped to answer the question, "Why would Jews want to live in Israel?" For Holocaust survivors, the prospect of reaching Israel was a sustaining hope during their darkest days of suffering. In a phrase repeated many times, they each declared, "We had nowhere else to go." The hope of returning to the land of their forefathers has always been the hope of the Jewish people throughout their long exile among the Gentile Nations.

For the Sons of Jacob, the Land of Israel has always been "The Promised Land." God spoke to Abraham in *Genesis 12:7*, saying, "To your offspring [or seed], I will give this land." This promise is repeated three times throughout the book of *Genesis*. I have the privilege of living in New Zealand. My maternal grandmother emigrated to New Zealand from Scotland in 1886. Four of my children and eight of my grandchildren now live in other countries. As a family, we do not have a 'Promised Land'. Neither do the Arab descendants of Ishmael, although they do have a share in an Abrahamic blessing (*Genesis 17:20*). Even the *Qur'an*, the Muslim Holy book, affirms the right of Israel to possess the land as their inheritance among the nations. It states: "Moses said to his people: O my people! Remember the bounty of God upon you when He bestowed prophets upon you, made you kings, and gave you that which had not been given to anyone before you among



Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-II-Birkenau in German-occupied Poland, 1944. | Photo: Betty Archer



Main gate at Auschwitz. | Photo: Betty Archer

the nations. O, my people! Enter the Holy Land which God has written for you, and do not turn tail; otherwise, you will be losers." (*Surah 5 ayat 20 and 21*). Islamic scholars validate this text.

People who do not understand this truth make a terrible mistake. They view the apparent legitimacy of Israel's occupation of the Holy Land as being grounded in UN Resolution 191, which was formally adopted on 29 November 1947 by the Post-WW2 member-nations and which, in turn, led to the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. Many politicians think solely in terms of the past 76 years and, foolishly, ignore the previous 3500 years. God does not.

The question of land ownership goes deeper. Within the pages of the *Torah* in the Hebrew *Tanakh*, Israel is cautioned as follows, "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers" (*Leviticus 25:23*). On two occasions in its ancient history, a major segment of the nation was driven into exile as punishment for apostasy. God warned the people well in advance of the first exile, which took Israel into captivity in Assyria (circa 721 BC) and Judah into Babylon (circa 585 BC). The third book of the Pentateuch declared, "You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing

you to dwell may not vomit you out" (*Leviticus 20:22*).

During this time of exile, ownership of the Land was never transferred to another people group, nor was it during the 2000-year exile following Bar Kochba's rebellion against the Romans in 135AD. In this short article, we do not have space to discuss the circumstances that led to this catastrophe or the many promises of restoration and return which are to be found throughout the Old Testament. Most readers are well aware of these prophecies. Instead, I would like to examine the important concept of covenant.

SOCIAL WORK VACANCY

Wai Ora Christian Community Trust is looking for expressions of interest for a registered Social Worker to work with *rangatahi* (aged 13-18 years) and their families, starting June/July 2024.

This position is likely to be part-time and working with one other Social Worker working in the local region of Whanganui.

Please email admin@waiora.org.nz for more information.
www.waiora.org.nz





Thank God We Made *Aliyah*

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President of CFOIC Heartland

For weeks, we have been hearing about the terrible riots on university campuses in the US. Students, fueled by an irrational hatred of Israel, are accusing Israel of genocide against the Arabs of Gaza while they themselves call for the genocide of the Jews of Israel. The infamous slogan, “*From the River to the Sea, Palestine Shall Be Free*”, is a direct call for the removal of all Jews from any part of the Land of Israel.

Not content with aiming their slogans and statements at the Jews of Israel, many Jewish and Israeli students have been attacked both verbally and physically. Shai Davidai, a professor at the Columbia University Business School, warned Jewish and Israeli students that they were not safe, that the administration that he works for was not protecting them. The rabbi of the campus issued a warning to all Jewish students at Columbia just before *Passover*, urging them to go home and not return to campus.

Columbia University was indeed the first to open its doors to radical protestors, who set up an encampment in the centre of the campus. Rather than call upon security officers to evacuate the violent protestors immediately, the university engaged them in conversation. Nothing was accomplished. Only after the students took over one of the campus buildings, causing damage to property, did the university call in the local police to evacuate the building. In the meantime, similar demonstrations spread to campuses across the country, from New York to California.

As an Israeli, I was horrified to see the terrifying rise in antisemitism in a country that is considered one of Israel’s most important ally. As someone who was born and raised in the United States, I was ashamed at what this wonderful



Sondra and Ed Baras with a few of their children and grandchildren enjoying an Israeli nature reserve. | Photos: Sondra Oster Baras

country has become. But I am particularly horrified at what has happened to Columbia University, a campus that was my home for three years and where I studied for six years, earning a Bachelor’s Degree in History and English literature and, afterwards, a Law degree.

I first came to Columbia in September 1976 after having spent a year studying the Bible in Jerusalem. I loved my year in Israel and was determined to make *Aliyah*, to make my final home in Israel. But before that, I wanted to study at Columbia, a university with a wonderful reputation for scholastic achievement.

I had grown up in a fairly sheltered environment, having been educated from primary school through high school in an Orthodox Jewish school. Columbia was my first foray into a larger, secular world. I had specifically chosen Columbia, however, because of its warm, welcoming environment for religious Jews. There were Jewish activities on campus, including *Shabbat* services and festive meals. A significant number of Jews walked around campus with a *Kippa*, a knitted skullcap worn by Orthodox men. There was a campus Zionist organisation, which I ended up running for one year. And the *Shabbat* programme was directed by Ed Baras, the man who would become my husband. At Columbia, we received an outstanding academic education and were able to create a wonderful Jewish student community.

How Did Everything Change?

We have all seen the dangerous rise in progressive ideologies, which have corrupted lofty liberal ideals and turned them on their head. In the name of protecting minorities from discrimination, the David has become the Goliath. The irony, of course, is that Jews were long discriminated against in the US for their minority status, and

their entrance to Columbia and similar universities was severely limited until the 1960s. Then, when Jews were finally recognised as equal citizens, they were shortly thereafter turned into white colonial oppressors. The Arabs have become the persecuted minority, even though their numbers and their economic power far exceed those of most ethnic groups in the world! The result—the Arabs could do no wrong, and the Jews could do no right.

Video footage from the massacre on 7 October could not dent this narrative. The Arabs were believed, and the Jews were spurned. And somewhere along the way, the moral compass of the intellectual elite of the US (and of many other countries) disappeared.

The Jews of America face a difficult challenge. They are experiencing hatred and persecution like never before in that country. As an Israeli, I call out to my American brothers and sisters and urge them to make *aliyah* as I did, to join the one Jewish country where they will always be welcomed as their true home. But many of these same Jews look at our lives in Israel, attacked by murderous terrorists on 7 October, attacked by more than 300 Iranian missiles on a single Saturday night, attacked daily by Hezbollah terrorists in the north, attacked by terrorists in Judea and Samaria. And they ask us—can you really tell me that you are safer than we are?

This is my answer. Yes, we face terrible threats from vicious enemies on all sides. But in Israel, we can defend ourselves. We are not dependent upon a university president to call in the police when she herself is a Muslim who sympathises with the anti-Israel bias. We do not have to argue for our place in our own land, repudiating the ridiculous slogan “*From the River to the Sea*”. Yes, things are

difficult in Israel. But this is home. Here, we are responsible for our own fate. We are not passive. We can act.

As I reflect on what my life would have looked like had I stayed in the US and sent my children to Columbia, I look at the life my husband and I built for our children here in Judea and Samaria. Yes, we are surrounded by hostile Arabs, but our children serve in the IDF, and our young men are part of the emergency teams protecting our communities. We may not always have enough funds for all the equipment we need, and for that, we are eternally grateful for the support you have given us. You have partnered with us to take an active role in protecting the Jewish people. We are not hiding in campus dorms, waiting for the violence to subside. We are taking action. And with God’s help and protection, we will prevail, here in the Land of Israel.

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 coupon on the back page and select CFOIC (Christian Friends of Israeli Communities).



Sondra Oster Baras in her Columbia University dorm room.



Ed Baras together with a friend, proudly celebrating their graduation from Columbia. Both men have *kippas* under their graduation caps.



Calendar Themes

Throughout this year, we will be elaborating on the themes of the C41 2024 Israel Calendar: Symbols of Israel and significant festivals.



June: Lion

A Lion image was chosen for the month of June to reflect the symbol of the City of Jerusalem as Jerusalem Day falls in June. The Lion is the symbol of the tribe of Judah, and Jerusalem sits within the tribal area. It's a key feature of the Jerusalem flag that is shown for the month. Like Israel's national flag, it has twin blue stripes representing the *tallit*. Then, in the centre lies the municipal symbol of Jerusalem in a crest form—a stylised lion set against a yellow wall representing the *Kotel* (Western Wall) with olive tree symbols on the sides coming to a point at the bottom.

Shavuot: 11-16 June

Shavuot is the *Festival of Weeks* we call *Pentecost* because it is 50 days from *Passover* to *Pentecost*. Like *Passover* and *Easter*, this year, *Pentecost* and *Shavuot* fall on different days far apart. *Shavuot* is symbolised by a basket full of produce, often the seven species, because by the time it falls, the spring harvest is complete, and summer is just around the corner when no rain falls. Messianic *Shavuot* falls later on a Sunday to reflect the timing after a normal *Shabbat*.

Eid Al-Adha: 16-19 June

This festival, often called '*Eids*' or *Feast of Sacrifice*, is one of the three major Islamic festivals. It commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmail from Chapter 37 of the *Quran*. It was also when the Wellington City Council passed their resolution on friending Ramallah, thereby linking the cities.



July: Dates

Dates are found all over the Middle East, but dates are also the national fruit of Israel. There are several types. Most Kiwis are familiar with Arabian dates, yet Israel produces the dominant world share of Medjool dates. Hardly surprising, given Israel's commitment to excellence in agriculture, these dates are the best in terms of taste and value. Do try some and see for yourself.

Me Too... But Not You

■ Cheryl Hauer

International Vice President | Bridges for Peace

I am deeply sick at heart when I think of the dozens, if not hundreds, of Israeli women who were sexually assaulted on 7 October and for those in captivity beyond that date. Women whose lives had once been occupied with the usual things that occupy most women: homes, families, children, careers, religion, politics, what to make for dinner, what to do when the kids all need to be in different places at the same time. Women like me—and maybe like you—who were busy with normal life. Unlike me, however, they were women who were accustomed to the scream of air raid sirens, the rush to a bomb shelter or safe room to escape an incoming missile. They were women to whom those missiles had become a way of life; Israel had not had a terror-free year since 1968. Yet despite that constant threat, they were women who never in their wildest imaginations could have anticipated the horror that would engulf their lives on 7 October 2023.

Nor could those who survived have imagined the reaction of the world to that horror. Of course, the responses of world leaders immediately after the massacre were filled with support for Israel and condemnation of Hamas. But that didn't last long. The news was soon filled with reports of throngs of people gathering to vilify Israel and lend support to the very monsters who had slaughtered their friends and families before their eyes and violated them in the worst manner possible.

As some courageous victims of sexual assault began to come forward, telling their stories of unimaginable pain and humiliation, they were further dishonoured when the truth of their reports was questioned, when usually outspoken women's groups worldwide were silent and when there was no outrage, only accusation.

War's Oldest Crime

Sexual violence against women in conflict situations has been called war's oldest, most silenced and least condemned crime. Since the earth today is the home to more armed conflicts than at any other time in its history, the problem of rape as a weapon of war is mushrooming. Although the sophistication of weapons, rules of engagement and other aspects of war have evolved through the ages, the protection of women and children has made precious little progress.

Throughout history, this type of violence has taken many forms. In ancient Greece, since women were considered property and legitimate 'booty' for the victor, such violence was



Relatives of Israelis held hostage in the Gaza Strip calling for their release in Tel Aviv. | Photo: Flash90

considered well within the rules of warfare. In the Middle Ages, it was considered an indication of a man's success on the battlefield and a form of compensation for soldiers who were rarely paid. In more recent history, rape has been used as a means of psychological warfare in order to humiliate and terrorise an enemy. It can also be recognised as genocide when it is committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a targeted group.

It would seem that Hamas had both in mind. Unleashing such unrestrained and violent hatred certainly had its desired effect in terrorising and traumatising an entire nation. And if through the use of rape, Israeli women could be totally demoralised, families—which are the bedrock of Israeli society—could be destroyed as well.

It was not until the 21st century that rape as a weapon of war was finally recognised as a crime against humanity and a war crime. The United Nations Security Council resolutions number 1820, 1888 and 1889 declared that victims should have access to justice and reparations. However, since its inception in 2002, the International Criminal Court has prosecuted fewer than ten soldiers accused of sexual violence against women.

The *MeToo* movement, which began in the United States and quickly spread to become a global phenomenon, purported to be a vehicle to bring an end to sexual violence of any kind. The movement advocated support for victims who were willing to come forward with stories of their abuse. They were first and foremost to be believed, after which perpetrators would be held accountable. However, the movement was conspicuous in its absence when Israeli women came forward with their

testimonies of sexual violence. As the truth of their reports was questioned, there was no voice from the *MeToo* movement advocating for them, reminding the world that victims who are willing to come forward should be believed.

Cherished Equality

Judaism teaches that women are equal to men, not in the "anything you can do, I can do better" sense. But in recognising differences and embracing callings which place women at the forefront in creating a godly environment for the raising of children, working in tandem with men to present a living picture of the God of the universe and maintaining solid marriages that present to the world a picture of God's desire for His relationship with His creation. Women are cherished, honoured and respected. Tall men, the *Talmud* (rabbinic commentary on Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures) teaches, should stoop to hear every word spoken by their wives. A husband should go without in order to provide everything his wife needs. And every woman is endowed with *Binah*, a deep godly intuition that gives women a deeper spiritual understanding than men.

It was with this view in mind that Israel saw its daughters abused, beaten, raped and humiliated. There are few attacks that could have impacted the entire nation, such as this one. And nothing could have shouted, "Anti-Semitism!" louder than the international community's indifference.

I can't help but ask, where is the outrage? How is it in this, the most intimate of betrayals, that Israelis are again held to a different standard?



Settling the Land—Part I

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

“You are robbers because you stole the land” (11th century Jewish sage Rashi on what the nations of the world will say to the people of Israel when they regain their heritage).

“One-third of Generation Z voters (18–24 years old) say Israel doesn’t have a right to exist as a nation” (April 2024 US poll).

The UN defines ‘indigenous people’ as inheritors and practitioners of a unique culture and way of relating to the environment; they retain social and cultural characteristics distinct from the dominant society in which they live. The Jewish people amply fulfill these criteria generally and in relation to the Holy Land.

In the *Tenach* (Old Testament), the Lord promises the Land of Israel to the people of Israel over 100 times; Jerusalem is referred to over 600 times. In *Psalms 137*, the people sing, “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.... If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning.” The *Tenach* repeatedly prophesies the scattering, regathering and eventual renewal of the Jewish people in the Land.

No surprise then that examination of the history of the Jewish people and of the Land confirms the strength of their claim to the Land in terms of both deep cultural attachment and tenacious actual settlement.

This is not to sweep aside the rights of the Arab inhabitants. However, in terms of religion, the Koran and associated *hadith* do not refer at all to the Land, whether as *Cannae*, *Philistia* or otherwise, and Jerusalem is only mentioned once, indirectly. Muslim interest in the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosque (built upon the Islamic conquest of the Land in the 7th century) has waxed and waned, with the buildings sometimes in disrepair, sometimes refurbished. Neither is the focus for the religious to the extent that Jerusalem is for the Jews.

In terms of government, the 2,000 years from Roman rule until 1948 see no period of local rule, no Palestinian ruler. Arab rule accounts for less than 150 years. Until the Ottomans (1517–1917), the Land is tossed back and forth between warring—mainly Islamic—empires. With so many different empires and occupying armies, the population inevitably becomes racially mixed. As elsewhere, the Jews are less prone to such mixing because they hold themselves apart as a people under the requirements of Mosaic law and tradition.

In terms of settlement, travelers’ journals, academic studies and official records taken together help us discern broad patterns amidst the seemingly endless wars and factions and our own modern political divides. In Part I, I cover the 1st to 18th centuries. Part 2 focuses on the 19th and 20th centuries.

The First Millennium

The first and second Jewish revolts against Rome (66–70 AD, 132–135 AD) are catastrophic, with a Jewish death toll of one million plus. The Emperor Hadrian renames the land ‘*Palaestina*’ and Jerusalem ‘*Aelia Capitolina*’; he bars Jews from Jerusalem and furnishes Temple Mount with a temple to Jupiter. Hyenas and wolves roam the ruined cities, and the rabbinical hierarchy moves to Tiberias and Safed in the Galilee, where they write the

Jerusalem *Talmud*. Under Emperor Constantine (4th century), Byzantium succeeds the Eastern Roman Empire. Jews return to Jerusalem in 438 courtesy of Empress Eudocia. With Jewish support, the Persians captured Jerusalem in 614 but then turned against their allies. When the Byzantines briefly regained the city in 629, the Jews again suffered.

Sultan Umar conquered the land for Islam in 637. He declared freedom of religion and allowed Jews to worship in Jerusalem. His successors subjugated *dhimmi* (non-Muslims) and, in 720, banned Jews from worshipping on the Temple Mount.* The 11th century Sultan al-Hakim ordered all churches and synagogues in Jerusalem demolished. Rapid power shifts destabilise the Land, and Jerusalem’s inhabitants are slaughtered in 1077 after a failed revolt. Jews and Arabs alike defended Haifa and Jerusalem against the 1st Crusade in 1099. Victorious, the crusaders massacre them. Contemporary maps show flourishing communities in the 6th century become skeletal by the 11th century. The Land is torn, yet the Jews remain.

Travellers’ Reports

The Kurdish leader Saladin crushed the Crusaders in 1187 and invited the Jews to return. From the 12th century on, records from travellers to the Land are known and provide a consistent picture. With occasional bright spots, Jews are severely oppressed and impoverished and at risk from massacre—right up to the 20th century. Yet, population loss—from disease, poverty, starvation and murder—is replenished by immigration along difficult and dangerous routes from Europe. As the traditional *Passover Seder* concludes: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

In the 12th century, the great Jewish sage Maimonides visited, and the Spanish poet Yehuda Halevi emigrated. The monk, Benjamin of Tudela, records small numbers of Jews in the towns. The 13th century siege and sack of Jerusalem by the Tartars and subsequent rapid succession of conquerors batter the population. However, by 1326, the Moslem pilgrim Ibn Battuta found a busy city. In the 15th century, under Papal pressure, many Christian ships bar Jews from travelling toward the Holy Land. Nonetheless, late 15th century travellers report “many Jews” in Jerusalem. Visiting rabbis estimate that Jewish families are residents there at 150 to 250—in any case, they are a minority.

The Ottomans

The Ottoman conquest of 1517 brings disorder and slaughter of Jews. With order restored, surviving tax records indicate rapid growth in Jewish households over the next 40 years, particularly in Jerusalem and Safed—perhaps by families expelled from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497) who fled to Ottoman territories. The reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–66) is the pinnacle of the Ottoman Empire. He seeks to revive



Illustration of Saladin, Kurdish leader. | Photo: Shutterstock

the Land and is favourable toward the Jews. He invites the Jew Joseph Nasi to build a Jewish community in Tiberias and to develop vineyards. Safed flourished and, in 1577, gained the first Hebrew printing press in the Middle East.

The Ottoman Empire’s decline after Suleiman is mirrored in the Land. 17th and 18thC accounts paint a picture of depopulation and land going to waste. Even the ports of Jaffa, Haifa and Acre are recorded in the Ottoman registers as mere villages. In Safed, the death of famous sages, a massacre in 1660 and decline of the local textile industry results in rapid population loss.

The general deterioration in Ottoman Palestine comes from a combination of factors, notably: lax and corrupt administration; growth in piracy, banditry and extortion; high and unwise taxes (a tax on trees!); absentee landlords and insecure land tenure. Failure to maintain irrigation and drainage systems turns arable lands into desert or swamp.

The late 17th century is probably the nadir. It also yields our best snapshot of the region. The Dutch scholar and linguist Adriaan Reland travels extensively throughout the region in 1695, mapping and recording in detail even tiny settlements. In 1714, he published the results in a vast tome: *Palaestina, ex monumentis veteribus illustrata*. He notes that most of the settlement names originated in Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Roman, not Arabic. He finds much of the land utterly desolate, with few inhabitants outside the semi-ruined towns. The largest Moslem settlement is Shchem (Nablus): 120 people, plus 70 Samaritans. Jerusalem has the biggest population: 5000, mostly Jews. However, unlike Europe, Jews often work the land. Tiberias is mostly Jewish (engaged in fishing, etc.), and Jews account for half of Gaza’s population, cultivating vineyards, olives and wheat. Bedouins provide seasonal labour. Even at this nadir, the Jews persevere and buttress the economy.

In sum, the overwhelming evidence is that from the time of Hadrian to the end of the 18th century the Jews were extraordinarily and uniquely persistent in clinging on in the Land through invasions, expulsions, massacres, repression, deep poverty, and economic collapse. And at the centre, the magnet of Jerusalem.

*Still in place—to calm Moslem concerns.



Story of Jews in Muslim Lands—South—Part 2

■ Joanna Moss

As Jews returned to Israel beginning in the 1880s, so too did the Jews in these Muslim lands find a seismic shift was occurring in their ability to stay in their homelands. Some left in stages, and others in mass groups. Danger was associated with leaving, but it was dangerous to stay too. The advent of the state of Israel and the Six-Day War were the last straws for many countries, and the remaining Jews were mostly persecuted or forcibly exiled. The story of the Jews in each of these Muslim countries is radically different. Few Jews remain today, along with discarded synagogues and a vanished way of life.

Factors

Before we look at the individual nations' stories, there are a number of factors to consider that have shaped each community, such as the size of the community numerically and proportionally, how prosperous, isolated or integrated they were, the gentiles' attitudes to the Jews as well as the dispensable/indispensable role the Jews played in the larger society. What makes the Jews in Muslim lands so different from European Jewry is the length they have lived in their respective lands and that they always existed as a minority in status terms. Under Islam, they were given *dhimmi* status, some paying a special *dhimmi* tax. Jews had a 'minority mindset' where preserving the religion, culture and distinctiveness were deemed important. Assimilation into Islamic society was never on the cards.

They were generally neither desirous of integration, as many European Jews were, nor hungering after universal suffrage. In many cases, they had limited political power, but a few enjoyed a great deal of power and wealth. Yet when these Jews arrived in Israel, they embraced democracy and created a distinctive conservative political force anchored in the Likud party. They had to leave behind their 'minority mindset' and become part of the majority in Israel, but it took time. Few were able to take many possessions when they left, often at short notice. Many could not return to their homelands for a visit for fear of death. Most Muslim nations don't even recognise Israel, as part of the 1967 Arab League's Khartoum resolution called the *Three No's*. Now, as the Abraham Accords have reshaped the region, tourism is more permissible in some countries but not others.

Jews leaving had a choice: to go into the diaspora and remain a minority or to go to Israel, the ancient homeland where they would be in a majority. Some Jews joined established communities elsewhere in the world making it easier to transition. Sometimes, this choice was economic, and those with less means ended up in Israel. When they arrived in Israel, they were often traumatised and bereft of all that they had left behind. It's not easy to leave behind a community of thousands of years of history for a new way of life. For the displaced Jews from Europe, their world had disappeared. There was nothing to go back to. For Jews from Muslims lands, their world still existed, but they were no longer a part of it. It took time to pick up the pieces, to re-establish themselves and find their niches in society. They were entering an Israel that had been established with European foundations by predominantly Ashkenazi Jews, a world unfamiliar to the Jews from Muslim lands. But they had two things



Classic Yemeni cuisine on *Sabbath*—Jewish Holiday. | Photo: Shutterstock

in their favour: they were used to the climate and ate traditional foods that were more suited to the environment, and many spoke Arabic fluently, which proved very useful.

South of Israel are the lands of Saudi Arabia, Yemen (including Aden), Oman, Djibouti, Eritrea, the Gulf States, and Egypt, all nations bordering seas.

Aden

Aden was previously the capital of South Yemen until it combined with North Yemen to form one nation in 1990. The British controlled Aden, a strategic port city, from 1839-1967. The 1869 opening of the Suez Canal enhanced its strategic importance. Rioting began in the 1930s. In 1947, more than 80 Jews were killed as part of the Aden riots (post Res 181), in which their property was looted and schools burned down. The future of the Jews looked grim, and the British were unable to protect them. Nor did the ensuing court cases bring justice. From 1947-67, most Jews left for Israel.

Yemen

Yemenite Jews have an ancient history, and some can even trace their tribal lineage. Historically, they were very religious. Much of the Jewish learning was passed down orally and so the language was preserved. This is why Yemeni Hebrew is regarded as being 'pure'. This aspect has made a huge contribution to the authentic sound of Modern Hebrew. Yemeni boys began Jewish education from three years old. Memorisation and recitation were key features. Women were also included in a limited way, only for *kashrut* (Kosher rules) and purity reasons. Visually, the elaborate wedding outfits that Yemeni Jews wear are famous. In the 1970s, the importance of culture, wedding customs and dress was revisited so that they wouldn't be lost. Many Israeli Yemeni Jews were agricultural labourers (1920-50) preparing land for tree planting. Gadera has a 50% Yemenite population. Music was also key. Food-wise, they brought Malawach, Jachrun and Kubaneh bread to Israel. These are their legacies.

There have been several waves of Aliyah from Yemen starting in 1881, when 14% of the population left for Israel. *Operation Magic Carpet* (June 1949-Sept 1950), organised by the American Joint Committee, brought 50,000 impoverished Jews from Yemen, Aden, Saudi

Arabia and Eritrea to Israel. A smaller exodus happened 1950-62. Since then it has been small groups leaving, often in clandestine circumstances.

Bahrain

The only Jewish community remaining on the Arabian Peninsula lies in Bahrain. It is an ancient community that generally has good relationships with Muslim citizens but is tiny. Jews play an active role in both the government and civil life.

Egypt

Although Egypt is mostly west of Israel, a portion of it lies to the south. It is a special case as it is not really part of the traditional Maghrebi story of the western North African nations. Obviously, the story of Jews in Egypt goes back to biblical times, but our focus is more on the 19th–21st centuries. The traditional community is comprised of Karaite and Rabbanite Jews based in Cairo and Alexander. Interestingly, Ashkenazi Jews arrived in Egypt following European pogroms, making up 10% of the Jewish population, as did Jews fleeing Ottoman Palestine military service during WWI. Sephardi Jews also arrived. Such was the prosperity pre-1947 that many Jews left Palestine for Egypt! In 1948, the community numbered 80,000+. It was comprised of 10% Very Rich, 60% Middle Class and 30% Poor, reflecting social mobility and the integration within the growing Egyptian economy. Jews flourished under British rule (1886-1956). They were involved in the service sector, industry and infrastructure. The pogroms beginning in the 1940s, culminating in the 1950 exodus (Arab-Israeli war 1948-52), saw 57,500 leave. Next came the Suez Crisis (1956), when Jews were declared enemies of the state. Economic and legal measures were used to displace Jews and seize assets. Many left with one small suitcase and a little cash, leaving behind large fortunes. In 1967, men were thrown out of the country or put in camps, so 35,000 went to Israel. Others went to France and the USA. The synagogues remain today but with only about 100 Jews left. Egyptian Jews were able to use their modern skills and global contacts to integrate into Israeli society, especially linguistic skills, and were successful in Israel financially and in social status terms. Their legacy is integration and prosperity.

Believing Without Israel No More Distinction Between Jew and Greek—Part II

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

In this series of articles Rev Cornelis Kant explains how it happened that the role of Israel was seen as insignificant in the development of our Christian faith and in the history of Christian theology.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.” (*Galatians 3:26-29*).

From the perspective of replacement or enlargement theology, this passage is also often referred to. It no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek (Gentile). What matters is being baptised into Christ. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring. When you read this, it sounds like we as believers in Christ are the offspring of Abraham, taken over from the Jewish people. In other words, no longer the Jews, but Christians, have become the offspring of Abraham, the new Israel. On first sight, that sounds very plausible. But if we read this passage again carefully and reflect on it, we come to different conclusions.

Man and Wife, Slave and Free

First of all, it would be remarkable if Paul were to claim here the opposite of what he says in his letter to the Romans. Then the Bible would become a book of contradictions, which would be confusing and detract from the Bible’s authority as Holy Scripture, God’s revealed Word. If there would no longer be any difference between Jew and Greek, why does Paul write so extensively about the ongoing position of the Jewish people in all other letters? Why all this attention

if they no longer matter?

Paul similarly says that whether you are male or female no longer matters. Yet in other letters, Paul speaks at considerable length about the role of women in the church and the role of husband and wife in marriage. Why does he do that if man and woman no longer matter? Paul similarly says that whether you are slave or free no longer matters. Yet in the letter to Philemon, he speaks of how he sends Onesimus back to his master Philemon as a slave, asking him to receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother. And in his letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts slaves to be obedient to their lords “with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of heart”. And the masters, in turn, should treat their slaves well and “give up threatening” (*Ephesians 6*).

No Need to Become a Jew First

Why would Paul still say these things if it no longer matters whether you are slave or free anyway? We need to read this passage carefully and discover what Paul really intends to say. Literally it says: “There is not Jew and not Greek...” In other words, it no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek. And in what respect does it no longer matter? To believe in Christ, to be baptised in Him and clothed with Him. In other words, you no longer have to become a Jew first with all the rules, commandments and customs that belong to that, but you may now as a Gentile accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Redeemer, believe in Him, be baptised in His Name and clothe your whole life with Him. You may come to God as a Gentile in Jesus Christ without first becoming a Jew. In the letter to Galatians, Paul vigorously counters those in the church who believe that Gentile believers must first become Jews and live Jewish lives, including circumcision, kosher food, etc. Paul emphasises that only faith in Christ and devotion with one’s whole life to Him is sufficient. Man does not have to contribute anything of



| Photo: Shutterstock

his own as a kind of supplement to the grace in Jesus Christ. So it no longer matters whether you are Jew or Greek in order to believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life. Of course, there will remain Jews and Gentiles. Just as there simply remain men and women, and likewise slaves and freemen in the Greek and Roman society of the time. Nothing has changed with this statement by Paul in the specific position and uniqueness of Jews, men, women and slaves. Similarly, nothing has changed in Israel’s position in God’s plan of salvation.

Offspring of Abraham

Paul ends this passage by saying that when we are in Christ, we are the offspring of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. Does he mean that as Christians we have now suddenly become the biological and genealogical offspring of Abraham? That would mean that all Christians have become Jews, distant descendants of Abraham as the consequence of being ‘offspring’. Clearly, he could never have meant it that way. So what does he mean? He explains it in *Romans 4*. When Abram was called by God and promised a son despite his

advanced age, Abram took God at His word. That faith was counted to him as righteousness, even before circumcision was instituted as a covenant sign. He thus could become a father of all believers: “So that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them” (*Romans 4:11*). By faith, we too, as Gentiles, are credited with the righteousness of God. This does not mean that we become physical and biological descendants of Abraham, but we are adopted as children and heirs in a spiritual sense. So we may together share with the Jewish people in the blessings of the covenant with Abraham. Again, this passage does not mean that we take over the position of Israel. Nor does it mean that all covenants and promises with the Jewish people have come to an end. On the contrary, we may share in the blessings of God’s eternal covenant with Israel through faith in Jesus. In this sense, therefore, we have become co-heirs. We do not merge with Israel, nor does Israel join the Christian church, but we may share in the blessings.

Yad

In this series, ‘Signs of Faith’, objects, procedures and concepts that express Jewish faith are explained and discussed.

The word *yad* means hand. However, a *yad* is also a pointer used when reading the *Torah* scroll. Of course, a *yad* is always beautifully designed as a pointing hand, usually in silver.

The *Torah* is read in the synagogue not only every *Sabbath* but also on Mondays and Thursdays. The five books of Moses are divided into 54 parts, one for each *Sabbath* so that in a year, the entire *Torah* is read. The public reading and explanation on

Mondays and Thursdays (traditionally market days) was instituted by Ezra the Scribe, according to Jewish tradition.

The reading in the synagogue is done by a trained reader. Each weekly section in turn is divided into seven paragraphs. Before each paragraph, someone from the congregation is called to recite the blessing over reading the *Torah*, after which the reader continues. In doing so, he uses the *yad* to tutor himself. Why can’t he just hold his own finger to the text?

The text of the *Torah* is read from a scroll—in Hebrew: *Sefer-Torah*. Such a scroll is made of parchment, made from the skin of a kosher animal. The ink is made according to a special recipe.

The *Torah* is God’s Word that He revealed to Moses on Sinai.

So, the text is holy, but it also makes the scroll holy. That is why you are not allowed to touch it with your hands. The classic Hebrew expression for this is (curiously enough) that the *Torah* scroll ‘defiles the hands’ (and not the other way around: the hands defile the scroll). You may only hold the scroll by the two sticks on which it is rolled. To prevent any touching, a cloak is also hung around the scroll when it is put away.



Recommended Reading

Foundational Reasons Behind the Conflict in the Land of Israel

by Kelvin Crombie

The massacre of 7 October 2023 deeply impacted those of us with a heart for Israel and the Jewish people. Having lived in Israel for some 25 years it hit my wife and I deeply. For my three older daughters, it struck even harder, as they were 'Sabra' Gentile Israelis, having all been born and grown up there. My youngest daughter, was also deeply affected as she was, and still is, living there and working at Christ Church in Jerusalem.

Over the following days, we heard comments from people involved with our church, which were troubling, mostly because it revealed a serious lack of understanding of the big picture. It became progressively apparent that this lack of understanding of the bigger picture, of the broader dynamics of the conflict, was precipitating a negative attitude towards Israel and Jewish people.

A week after the massacre/pogrom, I was on a flight from Sydney to LA to begin a speaking tour of the US. There was no way my mind could rest, so as soon as the meal ended, I took out my laptop—and before touchdown in LA, the first draft of *Foundational Reasons for the Conflict in the Land of Israel* was completed.

The purpose of the booklet is not to present all the data relating to 7 October and subsequent events but to provide some foundational understanding and to help Christians and others become familiar with the spiritual dynamics of the conflict—as it is a spiritual conflict at the highest level. It is a battle related to the culmination of Almighty God's worldwide plan of redemption and for the integrity and character of Almighty God. If Israel and the Jewish people can be destroyed and or discredited, then this reflects upon the integrity of Almighty God, who has entered into a covenant with Abraham and given promises relating to the people and land of Israel.

The booklet does not set out to answer all questions nor provide all information. Hopefully, however it does help join some of the dots relating to the bigger picture of Almighty God's great master plan of worldwide redemption—and believe me, it was quite a challenge putting this into just 50 or so pages!

The booklet can be obtained from Kelvin Crombie, email: kelvin@heritageresources.com.au or Heritage Resources, PO Box 565, Mundaring WA 6073, Australia



To Provoke Them to Jealousy

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

Provoking Israel to jealousy is the task of the whole body of Messiah (*Romans 10:14-19*).

There is only one way to salvation. This was the starting point of Paul's train of thought: Only the person "who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (*Romans 10:13*). On this foundation, he built the logical chain of 'to call upon'—'to believe'—'to hear'—'to preach'—'to be sent'.

Under normal circumstances, faith is generated through the act of listening with understanding to the words of the preachers that were sent. But with Israel, it is different. Israel heard but still did not understand.

Instead of blaming the Jewish people for their disbelief, Paul stated: "They were not able to believe, because Isaiah said again (*Isaiah 6:9-10*): 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart so that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and return and be healed'".

Without going into detail, by quoting Isaiah, the apostle points out that the Lord himself blinded the Jewish people—a fact that is significant in God's history of salvation. They could not believe—even if they would have wished to do so!

Challenging Israel to jealousy was and is the most fundamental calling of the Gentile Church for Israel.

Therefore, God used a means that they should actually understand: In the same way, they provoked Him through a non-god, the Lord says, "I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people". And, as they made Him furious through their idolatry, "I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (*Deuteronomy 32:21*). God appoints a 'non-people', a 'not understanding people', people who are not gifted in the same way as God's people of Israel are, in order to provoke His chosen people to jealousy.

In the next chapter, Paul emphatically repeats the following statement, which is crucial to his theology regarding Israel:

"To you, the Gentiles, I say: Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentile nations I praise my ministry in order to somehow arouse my blood-relatives to jealousy [through my evangelising the Gentiles]



Mishkenot Shaananim— an old area of Jerusalem in the evening. | Photo: Shutterstock

and [thus] save some of them." (*Romans 11:13-14*)

He did not name his or God's love for the non-Jews as the reason for being proud of his calling. "Paul praises his apostolate for the nations [also] not for its own sake, not because his evangelistic effort among the nations is remarkable and ever more churches are being planted. Rather, he praises his mission in view of possible indirect effects it might have on his own countrymen". The theologian Wengst puts it as follows:

"The mission to the Gentiles in general, as well as his own calling to the nations in particular, are not sufficient in

in order to provoke them [i.e. Israel] to jealousy". This is the very reason for the calling of the Gentile nations: That Israel may become jealous and emulate them and in the come to saving faith.

Of course, we as Gentiles are delivered from evil, and God has "predestined us unto the status of children" "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (*Ephesians 1:5-6*). Of course, we have "heard the word of truth," have become believers, been sealed with the Holy Spirit, become his "purchased possession", and have "obtained an inheritance," "that we should be a praise of His glory" (*Ephesians 1:11-14*). God's glory is and always will remain the final goal of God's salvation history with this world.

If, however, we want to talk about the inner-worldly function of the Church, then we should remember: We have not been saved in order to become missionaries or evangelists. We, as non-Jews, were not saved primarily to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth through social welfare work. All of this is unquestionably part of the Church's calling and should in no way be considered any less important. But according to the Apostle Paul, salvation through Jesus Christ has come to the Gentiles for the primary purpose of making Israel jealous.

"To preach" is an exclusive task reserved solely for those who are 'sent' by God. Provoking Israel to jealousy, however, is the task of the whole body of Messiah. There are no Christians who are not called, who were not redeemed for the very purpose of making the Jewish people jealous.

Challenging Israel to jealousy was and is the most fundamental calling of the Gentile Church for Israel.

themselves—so that Israel might be forgotten in light of their great success [among the Gentiles]. Rather, they happen within Israel's 'horizon' and thus remain permanently related to Israel".

So, the apostle to the Gentiles had Israel's salvation in mind while spreading the gospel among the Gentiles. The Jewish people were the goal and purpose of his task, even though he could not do anything directly for the salvation of his fellow Jews.

Schlatter says: "When he created the Gentile churches, in whom Jesus reveals himself completely in His wonderful salvation, he also provided Israel with evidence of Christ, which should be a powerful provocation for them to believe". According to Paul, evangelising Gentiles is the most effective form of Jewish evangelism.

Paul concludes correctly in *Romans 11:11* that salvation "has come to the Gentiles,

Israel at War: Is This Gog & Magog?

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

The fire and fury of the Middle East war and unprecedented global attention provoked many to wonder: Is this the prelude to *Ezekiel 38-39*? Apart from Armageddon (*Zechariah 14*; *Revelation 16:16*), the Ezekiel prophecy is the best-known of the major end-time events.

Gog & Magog

Summary: The Gog and Magog campaign is a massive, spontaneous, latter-day invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations led by a great power from the north. Israel will be at peace, unsuspecting, and unprepared. This unexpected invasion is so overwhelming that, humanly speaking, the Jewish state cannot survive. Yet, at the eleventh hour, God Himself intervenes, annihilates Gog and its allies, and Israel is saved.

Here are some details (all references are from Ezekiel):

Who's Gog: Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (*38:1*)

Main Allies: Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia or Sudan or Eritrea), and Phut (Libya—*38:5*)

Secondary Allies: Gomer, the house of Togarmah (Turkey?) and many people with them (*38:6*)

Timing: In the latter or last days; after 'many days you will be visited' (*38:8, 17*). There is disagreement about where the Gog campaign fits in the prophetic calendar: before, during, or after the tribulation or after the Millennium (*Revelation 20:7-10*). We need to watch and pray (*Matthew 26:41*).

"I have seen a vision. I saw in this vision a great war that encompasses the world. I saw this war recess and then start again, actually being two wars..."

Target of the Invasion: The people of Israel living in the land of Israel. Israelites are gathered out of many nations, on the once barren mountains of Israel but now dwelling in safety (*38:8*). Israel would be 'living in peace.' Do the October 2020 Abraham (Peace) Accords with Israel with four Arab nations point in that direction? Or does the menace of antagonists like Iran and its proxies prevent 'safe living,' thus deferring the Magog invasion?

Reason for the Invasion: Spoil will be seized, plunder carried off, livestock and goods confiscated (*38:12*). Will Israel's natural gas reserves in the Mediterranean Sea be part of the booty?

God's Response: God goes against Gog



Illustration of Gog & Magog. | Photo: Adobe Stock Images

and his allies, sends fire from heaven, and destroys the coalition (*39:1-6*); it takes seven months to bury the dead (*39:12*). Ultimately, it is God who draws out Gog and company to battle and destroys them. When this happens, the nations will glorify the name of the Lord (*38:16*).

Israel's aftermath: Instead of being destroyed, Israel will experience the final ingathering of the exiles (*39:27-28*). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them (*37:14*; *39:29*).

Who is Gog?

This is the million-dollar question: we need to identify the key player. Magog, in all probability, means 'from the land of Gog.' So, let's focus on Gog himself, the main character. Who is he? The normal interpretation is Russia. Why?

Because it is a great power from the North (*38:15*). Russia's long thousand-year history, which reputedly began in Kiev before gravitating towards Moscow, has incorporated an empire larger than any except the Mongols and Muslims.

Most commentators nominate Russia as Gog. The old Soviet Union was a tailor-made villain for this title—until it collapsed on Christmas Day 1991. Also, some teachers say 'Mesech' equals Moscow and 'Tubal' is Tobolsk. But is this the case?

This author is not completely convinced that Russia equals Gog. The main verse, *Ezekiel 38:15*, says Gog comes from *Tzafone Yereka*. *Tzafone* is 'north', so the adjective *yereka* is a keyword. In Strong's Concordance, H3411 is translated *yereka*

as side (21x), coasts (3x), parts (2x), border (1x), and quarters (1x).¹ ESV translates *tzaphone yereka* as 'uttermost parts of the north' but KJV translates it as 'north parts.' Other modern translations speak of 'far north.' In any case, the notion that Ezekiel is saying the furthest north is debatable, and leaves open another possibility for Gog. While Russia has been an imperialistic power in the past, and some would argue it still is, it has also been a Christian nation for a thousand years. In 1889 Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), a British missionary to China, gave a memorable prophecy about Russia in the last days.

"I have seen a vision. I saw in this vision a great war that encompasses the world. I saw this war recess and then start again, actually being two wars. After this, I saw much unrest and revolts that will affect many nations. I saw in some places spiritual awakenings. In Russia, I saw there will come a general all-encompassing, national **spiritual awakening** so great that there could never be another like it. From Russia, I saw the awakening spread to many European countries. Then, I saw an all-out awakening, followed by the coming of Christ."

Another consideration: could Gog be Turkey, which is also north of Israel? The key is the place names written in Scripture, such as *Gomer* and *Togarmah*, could be in Turkey. Likewise, 'Mesech' and 'Tubal' may not be 'Moscow' and 'Tobolsk' after all.

In any case, let's have open minds, reject dogmatism, have hearts of grace, and be open for the Holy Spirit to give clarity. Next time, we will look at *Zechariah 12-14*.

¹*Ezekiel 38 (ESV)—The word of the Lord. Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 3 Mar, 2022. tterible.org/esv/eze/38/1/s_840001*

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Can I Get an Amen?

In my travels and talks in non-denominational churches, I often hear pastors use the expression, "Can I get an Amen" in their messages. In return, the congregation would respond with a thundering affirmation—"Amen." Indeed, Amen is a powerful word; however, its biblical introduction in the *Five Books of Moses* would make it an expression least likely to be used in corporate and free-flowing prayer.

In *Numbers 5*, we encounter the word Amen when a husband accuses his wife of adultery. To prove her innocence, she must drink the 'bitter water.' Prior to ingesting the potion, the accused must say Amen to the priest's oath. The Amen acts as a legal functionary, whereby the oath becomes hers.

The second time we confront Amen is when Israelites respond to the curses pronounced at Mount Ebal in *Deuteronomy 27*. This Amen functions as one who signs off that he or she read the fine print and is still willing to sign up.

The usage of Amen by the early church went from being part of a blessing/prayer (*1 Corinthians 14:16*) to an expression of hope and as a worshipful term for Jesus (*Revelation 3:14*), exalting him as "The Amen, the faithful and true witness." However, Judaism employed Amen as a way to fulfil one's prayer obligations when hearing the congregational leader reciting the liturgy.

With such negative associations related to Amen in the *Five Books of Moses*, how did it end up as the most popular word in faith? In *1 Chronicles 16:36*, Amen was used to praise God and acknowledge His sovereignty in the world when the Ark was placed in the Tabernacle during King David's time. Amen is also mentioned in the *Book of Psalms* in praising God's authority and protection (*41:14*; *72:19*; *89:53* and *106:48*).

While the Hebrew root of Amen is *emunah* (faith), Jewish commentators view the word as a three-letter acronym—*El melekh ne'eman* (God is faithful king). The Amen response to praises and affirmation of God is based upon the concept of sociality of blessing. Just as two witnesses are required to make any legal proceeding effective, so too when one blesses God and the other responds Amen, they are both authenticating it.

Amen is the way a society can officially endorse an act of worship, give it status and importance. We need partners to glorify God in the world. Belief in God is more than knowing He exists. Biblical faith requires knowing God's trustworthiness. Can I get an Amen?

Iran Attacks—God Protects

■ Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel International

“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,”

Let Israel say,

“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side

When people rose up against us,

Then they would have swallowed us alive,

When their anger was kindled against us;

Then the waters would have flooded over us,

The stream would have swept over our souls;

Then the raging waters would have swept over our souls.”

“Blessed be the Lord,

Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.

Our souls have escaped like a bird from the trapper’s snare;

The snare is broken and we have escaped.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth.” *Psalm 124 (NASB)*

Suddenly, it happened. Rocket sirens and explosions were heard across Israel early Sunday morning, 14 April, after Iran launched a massive, wide-scale aerial assault that threatened to push the Middle East to the brink of a regional war.

Israel’s military intercepted the ‘vast majority’ of more than 300 Iranian attack drones and cruise missiles alongside the US military and Britain’s Defense Ministry that shot down drones headed for the Jewish state.

The attacks shocked people around the world as it was the first time the Islamic regime of Iran had ever directly attacked Israel. The regime typically chooses to target the Jewish state using its terrorist proxy groups, like Hezbollah and Hamas.

How do we look at this from a Biblical and Prophetic Perspective?

First of all, we saw a modern-day miracle happen. Only one Bedouin girl was wounded, and almost no collateral damage. The seven-year-old girl Amina



The remains of a rocket fired from Iran at the Dead Sea. | Photo: Flash90

remains in pediatric intensive care, and hopefully, she will recover. We saw the reality of the God of Israel protecting His Land, His City of Jerusalem and His people—as stated in *Psalm 124*, quoted above.

Many people in Israel also realised the truth of *Psalm 44:1-8*: “We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what You did in their days, in days long ago. With Your hand, You drove out the nations and planted our ancestors; You crushed these peoples and made our ancestors flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, for You loved them.”

“You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through You, we push back our enemies; through Your Name, we trample our foes. I put no trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory, but You give us victory over our enemies, You put our adversaries to shame. In God, we make our boast all

day long, and we will praise Your name forever.”

Fulfilment of Ezekiel 38-39

There have been many speculations about this attack by Iran being the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies of *Ezekiel 38-39*. Some view the current developments as a prelude to the End of Times.

Yes, one day, the prophecies of *Ezekiel 38-39* will be fulfilled along with many more yet unfulfilled Biblical prophecies about wars coming to the Middle East. What is amazing is that it doesn’t matter how powerful these nations get or how much of a threat they become to Israel, God promised through the prophet Ezekiel that when in time the Islamic world becomes an existential threat to Israel, where Israel’s IDF, as powerful as it is, can’t hold its enemies at bay, then God Himself will step back into history. *Ezekiel 38-39* foretells how God will send down fire upon the Gog-Magog invaders. Iran, Russia, Turkey’s armies, and all the others will all turn on each other and then be swallowed up by devastating earthquakes. God will then send fire back on those nations to destroy them so that only a ninth of their people are left alive. When a nation comes against Israel, expect the wrath of God.

But also yes, one day Jesus will come, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, and He will fulfil the promise given by the angel Gabriel to His mother Mary in *Luke 1:32-33*: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, He will reign over the house of Jacob [= Israel] forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Finally, the prophecy of *Isaiah 2:2-4* will be fulfilled. Then peace all over the world shall be flowing from Jerusalem, and the nations shall train for war no more.

When will that be? Jesus, the risen Lord, says in *Acts 1:6-8*—when asked this question by His disciples: “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Facts Speak

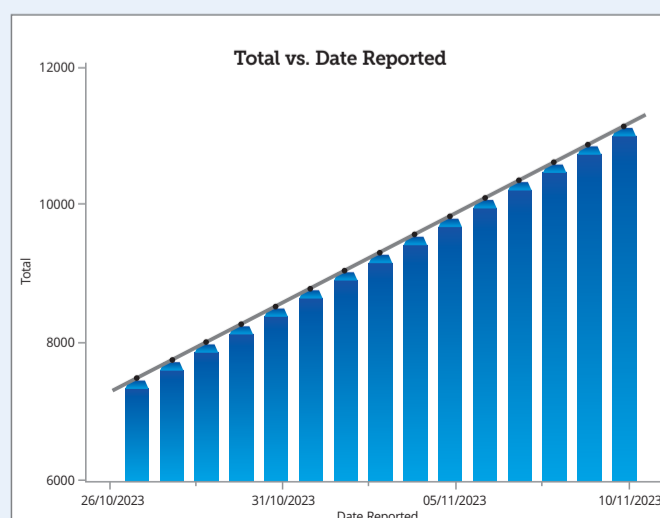
Fake Casualty Numbers

The Ministry of Health in Gaza, run by Hamas, reports that some 30,000 Gazans have now died in the war, the majority of whom are women and children. Yet these are not credible casualty numbers. The poorly fabricated figures show this.

The most obvious: this diagram shows the number of dead by date. Those numbers run in a perfect straight line. This linearity cannot be real. There must be variation by day, even according to the laws of statistics there should be much more variation.

Also, the difference in the number of casualties among women and children should be greater, depending on what was hit that day and how heavily the bombings were. Were tunnels hit or residential buildings? In addition, there should be coherence between the numbers of women and children killed. If there were relatively many women killed in one day, then there should also be many children killed. However, the figures provided by Hamas lack any such logic. And this does sound like Hamas: facts that are convenient you just make up yourself—on paper.

The graph reveals an extremely regular increase in casualties over the period. Data aggregated by Abraham Wyner and provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), based on Gaza MoH figures. Want to learn about the research of Professor Wyner, go to: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-gaza-health-ministry-fakes-casualty-numbers>



The Roots of Pentecost

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not happen at a random time or place. The Spirit came from heaven with a sound like the blowing of the wind, filling “the house where they were sitting”. This house was located in Jerusalem. God-fearing Jews from all nations had come as pilgrims to Jerusalem for the feast of Weeks (Hebrew: *Shavuot*) in accordance with the commandments in the *Torah* (Leviticus 23:15).

Pentecost (Greek: fifty) is the closing day of the period of seven weeks (the Hebrew *Shavuot* means weeks), which are counted starting on *Passover*. In a sense, *Shavuot* is the completion of *Passover* (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). The first fruits of the wheat harvest, which started after *Passover*, are brought to the Temple as an offering of thanksgiving for the harvest. Joy characterises the feast, joy ‘before the Lord your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for his Name’.

Covenant Renewal

In Jewish tradition, at least since the second century BC, *Shavuot* also became the feast of the revelation of the *Torah*. From the exodus of Egypt till the revelation on Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus, is exactly seven weeks, bringing us to the date of *Shavuot*. The celebration of the revelation (or, as it is usually said in Hebrew, the giving) of the *Torah* has become the focus of *Shavuot* in Judaism. So, *Shavuot* is also a celebration of the renewal of the covenant.

A remarkable tradition is the custom of staying awake during the night and studying the *Torah* together, just as the Israelites at Mount Sinai had to prepare themselves for the receiving of the covenant. Still today, everywhere in Jerusalem, lectures and study sessions are organised and widely attended. At dawn, everybody goes up to the Western Wall, singing with ecstatic joy, to say the morning prayers together. It is not entirely clear how old this tradition is, though it is an ancient tradition. Could it be that the disciples of Jesus, too, had all been together, during that night, learning together the teachings of Jesus?

Which House?

This leads to the question: where were they together? Apparently, they were sitting in a house (Acts 2:2). Which house was that? Which house could contain one hundred and twenty people (Acts 1:15)? What place would have the facilities to baptise three thousand people (Acts 2:41)? Could it be the Temple? There was space for such a



Happy young Israeli girl in a wheat field on Shavuot Jewish Holiday. | Photo: Shutterstock

crowd. There were enough *mikvehs* (ritual baths) available. Only there would the signs of the Spirit outpour be immediately noticed by bystanders (2:6).

In Hebrew, the temple is often referred to as the ‘House of the sanctuary’. God calls the temple ‘My house’. The Temple Mount is called in Hebrew ‘Mount of the House’. Finally, it is said of the early believers, that ‘they continued to meet together in the temple court’ (Acts 2:46). The first believers were and remained pious, *Torah* observant, orthodox Jews!

Law and Spirit

Even in Christian tradition, the connection has been made between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the *Torah*. None other than Augustine (354-430 AD, North Africa) demonstrates that Moses, on the *Feast of Weeks*, received the Law ‘that was written by the finger of God’ (Exodus 31:18). Augustine explains that the finger of God is none other than the Holy Spirit. After all, according to Luke (11:20), Jesus says that He drives out demons by the finger of God, but according to Matthew (12:28), He says that He does so by the Spirit of God. So, the finger of God refers to the Spirit of God. Moreover, Paul writes: “We know that the Law is spiritual” (Romans 7:14). It is the Spirit of God by which God moves the Israelites to follow His decrees and be careful to keep His laws (Ezekiel 36:27). Jewish tradition, expounding Exodus 20:15, links the Law of God to fire. The *Torah* is hewn out of the fire and given out of the fire: “The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning” (Psalm 29:7). The intense study of the *Torah* sets a man on fire, as it is told by rabbi Ben Azzai (2nd Century). When he was expounding Scripture, fire was blazing around him. He said: “I compare the words of the *Torah* with the Prophets, and the words of the Prophets with the Writings, and the words of the *Torah* are as delighted as they were on the day they were given on Mount Sinai. Essentially, they were given in fire, as it is written (Deuteronomy 4:11): ‘The mountain blazed with fire.’”

Birth of the Church

Is *Pentecost* the birthday of the Church? First of all, we should note that Peter, in his speech to the people, addresses the crowd as ‘fellow Jews and all who are staying (verse 5) in Jerusalem’. Moreover, the first believers were orthodox Jews, ‘zealous for the Law’ (Acts 21:20). From the Scriptures of Israel, Peter is explaining to his fellow Jews, gathered on this feast of Israel, what had happened to him and his friends, no less than the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. It is the affirmation of the risen Christ. Peter’s *Pentecost* sermon is, in fact, an Easter sermon. It is the risen Christ who has now poured out the Spirit He had received from the Father. “Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (verse 36). All Israel is present in those who are addressed by Peter.

The typical response of the hearers is a question: “What shall we do?” echoing Israel’s response to the covenant: “We shall do and hear” (Exodus 24:7). Peter’s answer is: “Repent and be baptised...” Repentance in Hebrew is *teshuvah*, turning around, returning to the covenant of God in the *Torah*. *Pentecost* is the feast of the renewal of the covenant, the renewed covenant with Israel.

The renewal of the covenant, however, confirmed in the death and resurrection of Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, bears fruit for all the nations: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). It will last until Acts chapter 10 for this to take effect. There, to the astonishment of Peter and the other Jewish believers, the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Roman officer Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was a God-fearing gentile. He came close to Israel without becoming Jewish. Even the gentile nations may share in the promise of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3). Now, the nations are joining Israel in the praise of God (Acts 10:46; Romans 15:9). The kingdom of God is coming.

Short News

Good News for Chocolate



Agricultural expert Ellen Graber has possibly discovered unusual cocoa seeds that could solve the problem of global shortages of chocolate and cocoa. During the 7 Oct. Hamas invasion, the various cocoa plants in southern Israel were still in small pots. After the invasion, the area turned into a closed military zone, and the seedlings had to do without water and fertiliser for at least a few months. Over twenty plants of a particular species survived and were then exposed to below-zero temperatures, unusual for the region. They survived that, too, leading Graber to label the seedlings ‘superheroes’. | Photo: Shutterstock

Hamas Destroyed Gaza

Research shows that Hamas has destroyed Gaza’s economy in recent years. Under Hamas rule, the gross domestic product per capita has fallen to just 30 per cent compared to that in the West Bank. Unemployment has skyrocketed. In short, the report by Kohelet Policy Forum, an Israeli think-tank, draws a bleak picture of the effects of Hamas rule and the enormous effort needed to rebuild Gaza after the war.

Grant for Terrorists



The Palestinian Authority (PA) is eager to gain control of Gaza after the war. In to accomplish this, the old government has been dissolved and a new one formed. The PA is also looking for other ways to continue paying terrorist compensation because they realise that direct compensation will no be longer accepted. The options being considered include a points-based system for additional government allowances, a one-time allowance for business setup, and channelling payments through a charity rather than the government. | Photo: Flash 90

Heroes of the Heartland

■ Shmuel Junger

Executive Director | CFOIC

On 7 October, all of Israel woke up to a reality in which thousands of terrorists infiltrated Israeli communities, mercilessly slaughtering hundreds of civilians in their homes and on the roads. Following this unprecedented attack, the whole country united. Much attention has been directed at the bravery exhibited by many across the state of Israel at large. The bravery and determination demonstrated by the inhabitants of the Biblical heartland (Judea and Samaria) have yet to receive enough acclaim. For decades, they have faced all kinds of terror attacks, ranging from arson, car-rammings, stabbings, shootings and even bombings. Yet, they have remained at the forefront with steadfast devotion, protecting our presence in the heart of our historic homeland.

Vulnerable

About 70% of family homes in Judea and Samaria are currently deprived of a father and husband because they have been drafted to fight in the war against Hamas, leaving their families behind. All of these reserve soldiers have left their wives and children with the sobering awareness that their communities,

surrounded by much weaker fences than the one that was breached on Gaza's border, are significantly more vulnerable with the departure of so many men.

Strongly Motivated

The residents of Judea and Samaria are more than just citizens who are significantly contributing to the country on a daily basis. They are, in fact, very altruistic and strongly motivated. Isolated and surrounded by hostile villages, they always face security threats. With the IDF stretched on several fronts, individuals have volunteered to fill holes with local security teams. People of all ages have willingly stepped up to provide assistance to other communities throughout Israel. The support from within has been overwhelming and displays a general sense of warmth and generosity of spirit.

Attacks

The determination of the people of Judea and Samaria persist in confronting an evil enemy. This enemy knows no bounds in its viciousness and its desire to break the spirit of our people. We are waking up to the reality that the majority of our Palestinian neighbours were not only in favour of the massacre perpetrated on 7 October



Support for the families in one of the communities.

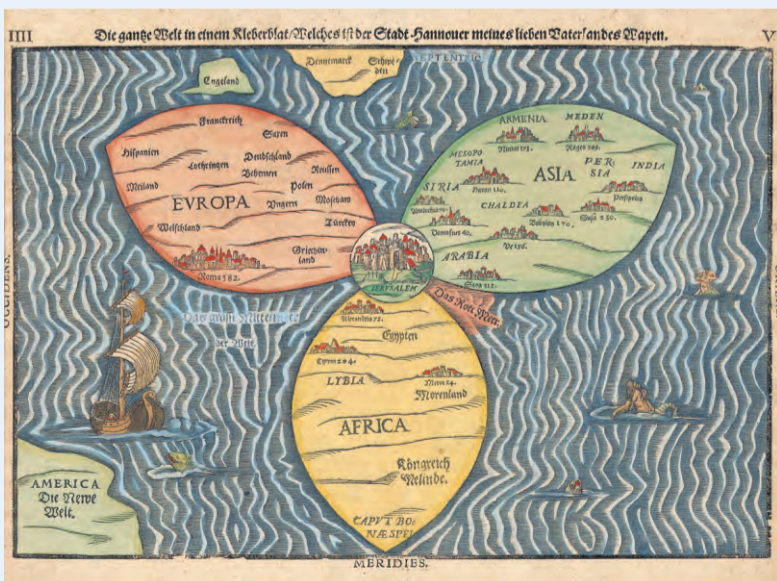


Shmuel Junger on watch duty. | Photos: CFOIC

The Bible Speaks

Ezekiel 38:10-12 (NASB)

This is what the Lord God says: "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, who live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoils and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the ruins that are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who live at the center of the world.'"



Ezekiel's prophecy mentions the names 'Gog and Magog' here. A Jewish explanation points to their numerical value of 70 and then tells us that the attack on Israel involves the whole world. It is remarkable that the Hebrew literally says that God's people live on the "navel of the earth". This is more than just a geographical location. The navel is the connection to life. This is the tragedy: In turning away from the Jewish people, the world turns against God Himself. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

but truly view all of Israel as 'settlers'. Tragically, this view among Palestinians in Judea and Samaria has clearly grown over the last several months. In fact, terrorists in Judea and Samaria show no signs of halting their attacks.

Media Offensive

In addition, residents of Judea and Samaria also face a second front: an ugly PR campaign that condemns purported violence by Jewish 'settlers'. In particular, I am referring to the travel and financial sanctions imposed on a handful of 'settlers' by the White House, the United Kingdom, France, and others. It is very apparent that the current administration in the White House is responding to political pressures associated with the upcoming presidential election. In the most recent Democratic primary in Michigan on 27 February, President Joe Biden suffered an embarrassing show of 100,000 voters who voted 'non-committed' instead of casting their ballots for the incumbent. A large portion of these 'non-committed' Democrats consisted of Arab/Muslims and other anti-Israel activists who intended to demonstrate not only their disapproval of Biden's ongoing military support for Israel but also their willingness to abstain from voting in the upcoming presidential election. Now, it

continues to snowball with more and more rhetorical condemnations of Israel's ongoing campaign against Hamas. Just recently, while speaking in Selma, Alabama, Vice President Kamala Harris claimed Israel was not doing enough to prevent a 'humanitarian catastrophe' in Gaza. Collectively, these decisions by the Biden administration constitute an ugly, vile attempt at achieving political gain.

Support

As Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, we seek to do our part to continue strengthening the residents of Judea and Samaria who have put themselves on the line to rebuild our ancient civilisation in our historic homeland. Many of the communities we work with have lost loved ones serving in the current war against Hamas. Facing mounting pressures from multiple sources, the people of Judea and Samaria need our help. In the brutal videos of Hamas from 7 October, the world learned the sad reality—you don't need to live in Judea and Samaria to be a 'settler'; in the eyes of Hamas, all Jews in Israel are settlers.

Shmuel Junger is executive director of Christians Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC) and lives in the Biblical heartland.

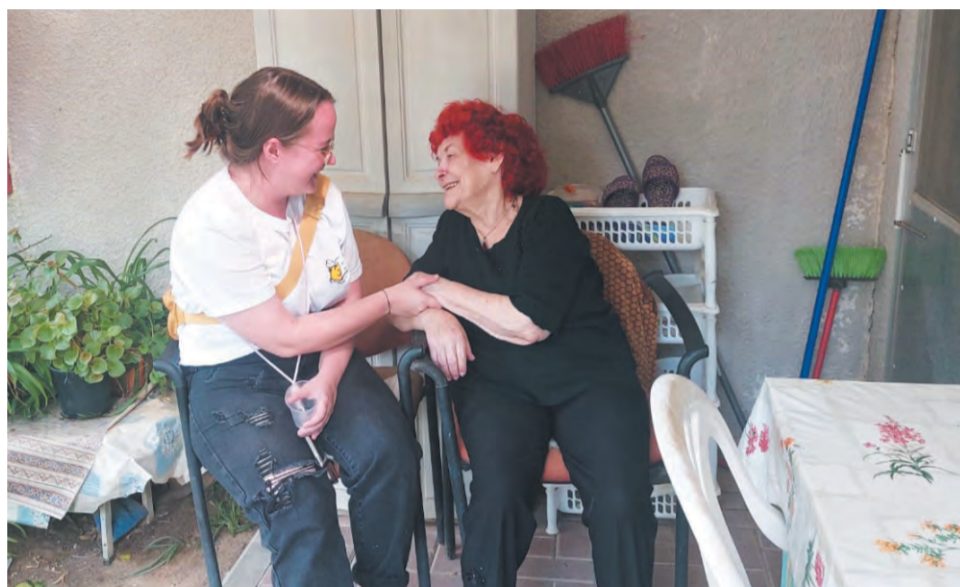
You can support CFOIC by completing the coupon on the back page.



Israel Under Fire



Aid is critical for victims' immediate well-being, but also aid for their long-term recovery.



Volunteer visit at Amigour. | Photos: The Jewish Agency for Israel

Almost eight months have passed since the brutal attack on Israel and the kidnapping of family members, children and friends. During *Passover* in the last week of April, families released photos of their holiday table with empty chairs for the hostages still held captive in Gaza. In Tel Aviv and other cities, installations featured 133 empty chairs, each accompanied by a photo of one of the hostages. These chairs served as poignant reminders of those still separated from their families.

Despite countless negotiations, Hamas has consistently refused to provide any information about the hostages to their families, causing the hope of a reunion to increasingly fade.

Since 7 October, time has seemed to stand still in Israel. In addition to the fear and despair over the hostages' dire situation, many businesses are going bankrupt. Their employees are deployed as reservists on the northern and southern borders or guarding endangered areas within the country.

Help for Terror Victims

Christians for Israel has supported direct relief efforts, as well as long-term rehabilitation programmes and help for rebuilding communities through our partners in Israel among others the Jewish Agency for Israel.



A Kfar Aza couple who were evacuated to Kibbutz Shefayim. They have moved from the hotel into a temporary pre-fab home. C4I sponsored appliances like refrigerators, ovens and washing machines. | Photo: C4I

The 'Swords of Iron' war has been going on for more than six months. In this period:

- 13,500+ rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza and Lebanon.
- 1,574 civilians and soldiers were murdered.
- Over 15,000 civilians and soldiers wounded.
- 118,000 evacuees are still unable to return to their homes.
- 300,000 reservists are mobilised.
- 13,945 new immigrants (*Olim*), Holocaust survivors and elderly people from the Amigour retirement homes live in emergency accommodation provided by the Jewish Agency.
- 1,003 new immigrants (*Olim*) and senior citizens continue to live in risk areas (in the north and south of Israel).

Psychological Help

Children from the destroyed kibbutzim are receiving therapeutic help to cope with the horrors and losses they've experienced. Summer camps for teenagers offer support, build resilience and help them process their experiences. Additionally, there are also specialised programs for senior citizens aimed at combating PTSD, depression and isolation.

Family Assistance for Evacuees

Residents of kibbutzim, such as Kfar Aza and Beeri, are being relocated from hotels to caravans. These communities receive psychological support and practical help. They are in need of household appliances, clothing and food.

Safety

Bomb shelters across northern and southern Israel are being renovated, and new shelters are being constructed. Ensuring people feel safe and can reach a shelter quickly

during emergencies is of utmost importance. Consider, for instance, elderly individuals with mobility issues: it is crucial that they have a shelter nearby.

Food Programmes

Since the outbreak of the war, many Israelis have been struggling with food insecurity. Israeli farmers are fighting for their livelihoods. Food prices have risen. The western part of the Negev desert and other areas on the border have reduced their agricultural land by around 30 per cent. To support those in need, food parcels for families, cooked meals for the elderly and snack packs for schoolchildren are distributed daily.

Equine therapy to deal with stress and trauma. | Photo: Red Mountain Therapeutic Riding Center



Will You Help?

Israel needs your help. Assist us in addressing the areas of greatest need.

All help and every prayer is a blessing.

Complete the coupon at the back of this newspaper. Any amount is welcome!

