

ISRAEL

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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
NEW ZEALAND

Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Pieter van Oordt in the Israel store in Nijkerk, Netherlands, head quarters of Christians for Israel. | Photo: C4I

Dutch Outlaw Judea and Samaria Trade

From 22 September, a ban on the import and trade of Israeli products from Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) will come into force. This was announced by the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Berendsen on 21 July 2026.

The Netherlands considers the Israeli villages in this area to be “illegal settlements”. The government has therefore repeatedly called for a trade ban within the European Union, but has failed to secure sufficient support for this. Consequently, the government has turned its attention to national measures. In May 2026, the government submitted a sanctions decree to the Council of State for an urgent advisory opinion. The Council’s opinion did not lead to any amendments to the decree. Consequently, the ban will come into force at the end of September. Breaching the ban may result

in a prison sentence of up to six years.

Pieter van Oordt, director of the Israel Products Centre (IPC), describes the trade ban as “extremely disappointing. The government set the whole process in motion as a matter of urgency. That does show that they were very keen to do this and wanted to get it implemented as quickly as possible.”

Among other things, IPC sells products from Judea and Samaria. “For many years, we have worked with suppliers from Judea and Samaria, including those with a large number of Palestinian employees. The ban affects not only Jewish business owners in Judea and Samaria, but also thousands of workers who earn their living there every day, including many Palestinians. The irony of this measure is that the government claims it is standing up for the Palestinians, whilst

those actually affected by it are, in fact, Palestinian workers,” said Van Oordt. Van Oordt hopes to sell all the products from Judea and Samaria that he has purchased this year by 22 September. Almost two-thirds of this stock has now been sold.

Painful Message

Roger van Oordt, the former Director of Christians for Israel Netherlands and the Honorary Consul of Israel in the Netherlands recently stated: “What we are seeing is Jew-hatred in its deepest form. The measures are against some 700,000 Jews living where they’ve lived for 2,000 years, despite partial expulsions. Many in Europe think we need to decide where Jews can live. Not there. But also not here, because we don’t protect them here (in Europe) either.”

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“They Will Come
With Weeping”



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

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.

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Anglican Church Buys into Historical and Biblical Revisionism

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The Church of England's Synod (its lay legislative body) voted Monday 13 July to encourage churches across England to engage with a document produced by Palestinian Christians that accuses Israel of genocide despite requests from Jewish organisations and Britain's chief rabbi to reject it.

The document is titled *Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide* and is also known as *Kairos II*, after the Palestinian Christian movement Kairos Palestine that produced it. It describes Israel's military campaign in Gaza as a genocide, states that Israel is a "colonial enterprise built on racism," and says decades of "occupation," "apartheid" and "settler colonialism" are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The *Kairos II* document claims that "the genocidal war on Gaza is the continuation of the Zionist project to seize all of Palestine, emptied of its Palestinian people" and demands a boycott of dialogue with "Zionists"—which in practice means boycotting as pariahs the majority of Jews. As journalist Melanie Phillips has noted, "Every lie that's been thrown at Israel over its war of self-defence in Gaza—starvation, ethnic cleansing, war crimes—is thrown at it here. While it includes the weaselly caveat that it doesn't justify civilian killings, it portrays opposition to Israel's existence and "resistance"—aka the killing of Jews—as an act of religious faith."

It asserts that the Hamas atrocities in Israel on 7 October 2023 were "born out of decades of injustice, oppression and

displacement since the Nakba of 1948" (the war of extermination waged by the Arabs to destroy Israel at its rebirth in the Jews' ancestral homeland, but which today's would-be exterminators falsely describe as a Jewish war of colonial aggression).

Alluding to Israel's war of self-defence in Gaza, it continues:

The claim of "self-defence" cannot stand. How can a coloniser defend itself against those it has colonised and expelled from their land?

Explicitly justifying Palestinian Arab murderous violence against Jews, it states:

At a time when Palestinian resistance and global solidarity movements are criminalised, we reaffirm the right of all colonised peoples to resist their colonisers.

The Anglican vote does not adopt the accusations as church doctrine but says the church should hear the documents as "heartfelt expressions of the lived experience of Palestinian Christians," and to engage with them in order to better understand the conflict.

Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Sir Ephraim Mirvis responded on X as follows:

"It is shameful that the Church of England General Synod has recommended engagement with *Kairos II*."

This is a document full of falsehood, which openly rejects dialogue, uses extreme rhetoric to challenge the very existence of Israel and objects to existing peace agreements in the region.

Though it poses as a route to understanding, *Kairos II* in fact functions

as an egregious barrier to it, reducing one of the world's most complex conflicts to a single, warped narrative, which can only harm the cause of peace.

This is a sad day for Jewish-Christian relations."

This is indeed a very sad day for the Anglican church itself. Newly-elected Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Dame Mary Mullaly has bought fully into the Palestinian liberation theology that has been pushed over recent decades by anti-Israel Palestinian Christian leaders such as Rev Naim Ateek, through the Bethlehem Bible College.

Palestinian liberation theology effectively erases the Jewish people from the Bible and from history. It seeks to identify Jesus as a Palestinian, and places Palestinians at the center of world history. It denies God's covenants with the nation of Israel, and posits that the church has become the elect people of God through whom he is redeeming the world.

This theology affirms the Palestinians in their victimhood, denies them any agency, and encourages them to use violence against the wicked Jewish oppressors.

The fact that the head of the Anglican church affirms this approach is a sign the church has lost its moral and Biblical compass.

Contrary to what the Archbishop proclaims, Jesus and His Apostles taught that God is faithful to His promises, that the Gentile believers have been added to God's covenants with Israel, and that he would redeem the world through the restoration of His people in the last days. Jesus will come again soon, to take His rightful place as Messiah of Israel, head of His church, and king over the nations.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for Israel's protection this summer against rocket attacks, arson, terrorist attacks and other dangers.
- Pray for the recovery and healing of those who are living with deep trauma as a result of the attack on 7 October and the war that followed. Pray that God Himself will heal victims with His love.
- Israel faces constant threats along various borders: on the border with Gaza, on the border with Lebanon and in the south due to the Houthis. Pray for wisdom for all those who have been appointed to organise the defence of these borders. Pray for protection of the soldiers who are stationed in enemy territory.
- "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him'" (*Lamentations* 3:22-24). Give thanks to God for His

unfailing love and faithfulness and pray for Israel in light of this promise.

Jewish Community

- Pray for protection of the Jewish community in your nation and region. Ask Him to surround them with His guardian angels and keep them safe from harm. Pray that they will experience His presence, peace, and protection.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks that there are Christians worldwide who support Israel. Pray that God may give you courage and confidence to stand up for Israel and the Jewish people.
- Pray that churches, pastors, Bible study and youth groups will have open eyes and hearts to recognise God's unfailing faithfulness to Israel and to see His promises being fulfilled in our day as He brings His people home.

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

A No-Nonsense, Strategic Approach to Iran

■ Meir Ben Shabbat

Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, has issued an unmistakable threat. Following his father's funeral, he declared: "We pledge to avenge your pure blood and the blood of all the martyrs... by taking revenge against the criminal, disgraceful murderers. This vengeance is what our nation is demanding, and this must definitely be done."

Khamenei's pledge did not come in a vacuum. It joined a growing chorus of calls in Iran for revenge, alongside intelligence warnings of plans to assassinate US President Donald Trump. The extraordinary security measures surrounding Trump's visit to Ankara for the NATO summit reflected the seriousness of the threats against him.

Trump responded to these threats with a stark warning. He stated, "I've been on their list for a long time. ... The only thing is, I've left instructions, if anything happens, to just literally bomb them at levels that they've never seen before."

This was not the first time Trump issued such a warning. In February 2025, as he signed a presidential directive restoring the maximum-pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, he warned that, in the event of his assassination, "I've left instructions: If they do it, they get obliterated. There won't be anything left."

Whether in Tehran, Gaza, Lebanon or Yemen, the enemy must be confronted according to the way it actually thinks, not the way others would like it to think.

The purpose of these warnings is clear: to deter the Iranian regime.

The assumption is that the regime, in deciding whether to execute such an assassination attempt, would weigh the benefits against the price Iran can expect to pay. Once decision-makers in Tehran have understood the response they can expect from the United States, the thinking goes, they will hesitate before acting.

This assumption applies not only to an assassination attempt against Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or another leader, but also to other forms of Iranian aggression and destabilisation in the nuclear, ballistic missile, drone, naval and terrorist arenas.

Yet this approach rests on a critical assumption: that the decision-makers in Tehran rationally weigh expected benefits against potential costs and that they fundamentally think like Western leaders.



A man holding the Hebrew daily newspaper *Israel Hayom* featuring Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in a joint United States and Israeli military strike in March 2026. | Photo: Flash90

It is far from certain that this is true in light of the Iranian regime's radical Islamist ideology and worldview.

A document seized by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza, apparently written by Hamas senior leader Yahya Sinwar shortly before the terror organisation invaded southern Israel on 7 October 2023, revealed how he assessed the cost of the monstrous massacre he was planning.

According to researchers at the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information

manner similar to Sinwar and Hamas.

Against enemies of this kind, deterrence cannot be relied upon. Only prevention and the denial of capabilities can provide real security.

The same principle applies not just to assassination attempts, but to Iran's broader military and terror infrastructure. As long as Iran remains under its present revolutionary leadership, it cannot be safely permitted to retain or rebuild strategic capabilities: nuclear weapons; ballistic missiles; advanced drones and their production facilities; naval forces capable of threatening international shipping; proxy armies; and bodies used to commit terrorism and assassinations abroad.

In the face of these threats, the objective cannot be deterrence. It must be to deny capabilities.

"They're sick people," Trump said of the leaders in Tehran. "To put it more precisely: They do not think as we do."

Whether in Tehran, Gaza, Lebanon or Yemen, the enemy must be confronted according to the way it actually thinks, not the way others would like it to think.

We must therefore not rely primarily on deterrence, but on the aforementioned denial of capabilities. If direct and sustained denial ultimately proves impossible, the only answer may be to create the conditions under which the Iranian people can transform the regime and build a better future for their nation.

Meir Ben Shabbat is head of the Misgav Institute for Zionist Strategy & National Security, in Jerusalem. He served as Israel's national security advisor and head of the National Security Council (2017–2021). Prior to that, for 25 years he held senior positions in the Israel Security Agency (Shabak). This article was published by JNS on 14 July 2026. Reproduced with permission.

Short News

Connection to Judaism



An Israeli government survey reveals that a record number of Jewish Israelis identify first as Jewish and second as Israeli. Pride in and a sense of connection to Judaism have increased significantly, partly due to war and antisemitism. Reflecting on the survey's findings, President Isaac Herzog said: "This highlights the importance of strengthening and maintaining the deep connection among the Jewish people across the world." | Photo: Flash90

Crime Wave

The wave of crime within the Israeli-Arab community is serious. In May alone, nineteen Israeli Arabs were murdered. One of those murders was reportedly the 35th in a feud lasting several years between two families, and also marked the 100th murder since the start of 2026. The high number of murders among Arabs points to a crisis rooted in internal violence, criminal networks, illegal weapons and long-standing feuds.

Rise in Antisemitism in New York

Antisemitic hate crimes in New York rose in May by 71 percent (41 vs. 24). They accounted for sixty percent of all hate crimes, whilst Jews make up only ten percent of the population. So far this year, 152 antisemitic incidents (a six percent increase) have been recorded. These included acts of vandalism and tensions surrounding protests. Critics link the rise to the policies of the new mayor, but a direct causal link has not been established.

Three Empty Seats

Fans attending FIFA Club World Cup watch parties were met with a powerful tribute honouring three victims of 7 Oct. Large display banners titled *Three Empty Seats* featured the stories of Lior Asulin (43), Omer Neutra (21), and Hersh Goldberg-Polin (23)—all connected by their love of football. The displays, placed at FIFA watch party locations, reminded fans of the lives behind the headlines, the seats left forever empty, and the many families still living with the pain of 7 Oct.

An Insight into Israel's Electoral System

■ Mena-Watch

The Independent Middle East Think Tank

Israel is scheduled to hold parliamentary elections again this fall. But who is actually eligible to vote? How do the various electoral alliances come about? And what hurdles must parties overcome to be elected to the *Knesset*? The following article provides insights into the Israeli electoral system.

The Knesset

At the heart of Israel's democratic system is the *Knesset*, with its 120 members. No single party has ever succeeded in winning an absolute majority. The *Knesset* (Hebrew for 'Assembly') is the unicameral parliament of the State of Israel, and its seat is in Jerusalem. The 120 members are elected for a four-year term under a proportional representation system. Every Israeli citizen who has reached the age of 18 is eligible to vote as well as to stand for election at the age of 21.

However, certain individuals—including, among others, the President of the State, the Chief Rabbis, judges, the President of the Court of Auditors, and the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces—are generally barred from holding office. The legal basis for the *Knesset* is the 'Basic Law: The Knesset,' enacted in 1958 and amended several times since then. It is one of a total of fourteen Basic Laws that together form Israel's constitutional order. Historically, the *Knesset* was the successor to the Constituent Assembly. It convened for the first time on 14 February 1949, after the first election had been held a few weeks earlier, on 25 January.

Elections

Although members are theoretically elected for four-year terms, the full legislative term is generally not served, and elections are held early. Only six elections have been held after a full four-year legislative term. New elections must be held if:

- Parliament dissolves itself by a simple majority vote and sets a new election date,
- if the budget bill is not passed within a specified time limit,
- if the President dissolves Parliament on the recommendation of the Prime Minister,
- or if, in the event of a deadlock, it proves impossible to form a new government.

To date, Israeli voters have been called to the polls twenty-five times to elect their representative parliament, most recently on 1 November 2022. The election for the 26th *Knesset* must take



The Knesset—The parliament building in Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

place no later than 27 October 2026. There is only one electoral district. Party lists must clear the 3.25 percent threshold. For a long time, the threshold was only one percent, which led to numerous small parties being represented in parliament. To counteract this, the threshold was first raised to 1.5 percent in 1988 and then to two percent in 2003. Since 2014, the current threshold of 3.25 percent has been in effect, which corresponds to approximately four seats.

Right, Left, Arab

No party has yet succeeded in winning an absolute majority of 61 seats in an election. As a result, there has never been a single-party government—the formation of coalition governments has always been necessary. Before the current right-wing government took office, Israel experienced a series of elections in quick succession due to a

prolonged political deadlock. The rival political camps were unable to form stable governing coalitions. As a result, Israeli voters were called to the polls five times between April 2019 and November 2022. The stalemate did not simply reflect a right-left divide between the political camps, as right-wing parties—such as Avigdor Lieberman's Israel *Beitenu* ('Our Home Israel') and Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked's *HaYamin HaHadash* ('The New Right')—were also represented in the opposition. Rather, the decisive factor was support for or opposition to long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The ultra-Orthodox parties also fall outside the usual right-left spectrum. Although they are right-wing, they have formed coalitions with both right- and left-wing parties in Israel's political history. For them, the most crucial factor is which coalition partners will guarantee

funding for their own school system as well as the—increasingly controversial—exemption of ultra-Orthodox Jews from general military service. The Arab parties in the *Knesset* primarily represent the interests of the Arab minority in Israel, which makes up about 20 percent of the population. They differ greatly ideologically, ranging from socialist-Jewish-Arab (*Hadash* / 'The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality') to Islamic-conservative (*Ra'am* / 'United Arab List'). In the governing coalition led by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, *Ra'am* was part of the government from June 2021 to December 2022—the first time in Israeli history that an Arab party had been part of a government.

Coalitions

In Israel's political system, electoral coalitions are not uncommon. They allow smaller parties to improve their chances of entering the *Knesset* through strategic cooperation. On one hand, there are joint electoral lists, in which several parties run as a single entity with a shared platform and a common list of candidates. Examples of this include the *Kahol Lavan* ('Blue and White') alliance led by Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid, which was the second-strongest force after Netanyahu's *Likud* in 2019–2020, and the *HaTzionut HaDatit* ('Religious Zionism'), through which Israel's far right has been represented in the governing coalition since 2022 and holds several ministerial posts. The parties submit a joint list of candidates and subsequently divide any seats won among themselves.

On the other hand, there are so-called surplus or residual vote agreements, in which the parties remain separate but pool their residual votes during the allocation of seats. This form of cooperation is purely technical and is intended to potentially win an additional seat. The parties do not advocate a common platform and do not have a joint list of candidates. In the past, for example, the left-wing parties *Avoda* ('Labor Party') and *Meretz* ('Vigor') entered into such surplus agreements. A recent example would be this type of cooperation between *Likud* and Religious Zionism. Electoral alliances are an important means of increasing the chances of success for smaller parties in a highly fragmented party system. However, such alliances are often short-lived and frequently dissolve after the election.

Translated and reprinted with kind permission from Mena Watch. First published on 12 April 2026, at www.mena-watch.com



The election for the 26th *Knesset* must take place no later than 27 October 2026. | Photo: Shutterstock

JNS Summit Addresses Challenges

■ **András Longauer**

Hungary

Israel and Jewish communities around the world are facing a rapidly changing reality. From shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East to rising levels of antisemitism across Europe and North America, new challenges continue to emerge. Against this backdrop, the second International Policy Summit hosted by the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS) in Jerusalem brought together politicians, diplomats, journalists, religious leaders and policy experts to discuss the issues shaping Israel's future.

Held from 21 to 23 June, the conference focused on regional security, US-Israel relations, Christian support for Israel and the growing threat of antisemitism. Alongside panel discussions and speeches, participants explored practical policy solutions and strengthened partnerships across political, religious and national boundaries.

Recent developments surrounding Iran dominated many conversations during the summit. While uncertainty remains over the next steps in the confrontation between Israel and Iran, speakers largely agreed that the outcomes achieved so far should not be underestimated.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the conference in person, outlining what he described as significant military successes against Iran and emphasising the broader strategic objective of weakening the regime's hold on power. "We created the conditions for its future fall," Netanyahu said. "That is what will be the real triumph, when the Iranian people take their own destiny in their hands and they knock out this brutal regime."

Netanyahu also addressed his occasionally tense relationship with US President Donald Trump. While acknowledging differences between the two leaders, he stressed the strength of the partnership between their countries. "We're leaders of independent and proud countries," Netanyahu said. "Often we see eye to eye. Sometimes we don't. But we respect each other's sovereignty and leadership and commitment to our people."

Concerns about the future of US-Israel relations were also addressed by US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, who sought to reassure attendees that support for Israel remains a cornerstone of Trump's foreign policy. According to Huckabee, Trump has consistently maintained that America's bond with Israel is "unbreakable."

American commentator Mark Levin likewise argued that recent developments in the region demonstrate



US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee speaks at the JNS conference. | Photo: Oren Ben Hakoon/Flash90

the effectiveness of the combined efforts of Israel and the United States against Iran and its regional proxies.

Although views differed on future policy options, speakers broadly agreed that recent events have reshaped the strategic balance in the Middle East and created new opportunities as well as new risks. One of the most prominent themes throughout the summit was the growing alliance between Jewish and Christian supporters of Israel. Christian leaders repeatedly emphasised their commitment to standing with Israel at a time when international support often appears uncertain. Many participants described the relationship as one of the most significant developments in modern Jewish-Christian relations.

The conference also highlighted the political influence of Christian advocacy networks. Josh Reinstein, president of the Israel Allies Foundation, argued that Christian communities have become an increasingly important source of international support for Israel. "It is Christians, not countries, that stand with Israel," Reinstein said. "And Christians are bringing their countries to us."

Much of the discussion focused on Judea and Samaria, a subject that has gained renewed attention since the outbreak of the current war. Several speakers argued that supporters of Israel should increasingly use the biblical names Judea and Samaria rather than the term "West Bank."

Troy Miller, president and CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters, pointed to a recent organizational decision encouraging Christian media figures to use the biblical terminology. Others argued that the issue reflects broader debates about Jewish historical ties to the land and the future of Israeli communities there.

Christian speakers also delivered a message aimed directly at Jewish

audiences. Rejecting concerns about missionary activity, several stressed that their support for Israel rests on their belief in the enduring covenant between God and the Jewish people.

The threat of antisemitism emerged as another major focus of the summit. Speakers from Europe and North America described a sharp increase in anti-Jewish incidents since October 2023 and warned that many Jewish communities are facing growing security concerns. Discussions covered developments on university campuses, in political movements and across social media, where anti-Israel rhetoric is frequently spilling over into hostility toward Jewish communities.

One topic repeatedly surfaced during speeches, panel discussions and audience questions: the political rise of New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani. For many speakers, Mamdani's growing prominence represented wider concerns about changing political attitudes toward Israel and the normalisation of rhetoric they view as hostile to Jewish interests.

Beyond analysing problems, the summit sought to develop practical responses. JNS published a policy compendium alongside the event, offering recommendations on issues ranging from security and diplomacy to combating antisemitism.

Yet many participants suggested that the summit's value extended beyond policy proposals. The gathering brought together people from different countries, professions and faith communities who share concerns about Israel and the future of Jewish life worldwide.

South African Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein captured that spirit in his closing remarks. Reflecting on the diverse audience assembled in Jerusalem, he cited a teaching from Jewish tradition: "*Kinus tzaddikim tov lahem v'tov la'olam*," which means when good people gather, it benefits both them and the wider world.

Short News

Hula Valley Treasure



The Hula Valley, north of the Sea of Galilee, is a key stopover for migratory birds travelling between Africa and Europe. Depending on the season, visitors can spot cranes, pelicans, storks, and flamingos, as well as local wildlife including otters, nutrias, water buffalo, frogs, turtles, and many fish species. Beyond its biodiversity, the valley reflects layers of history: its role as Israel's northern frontier in Biblical times, the Zionist effort to drain wetlands and develop the land, and modern conservation projects aimed at restoring parts of the original ecosystem. | Photo: Flash90

Achievable Goal

The outgoing head of Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad, David Barnea, stated during his farewell ceremony that the overthrow of the regime in Iran remains a 'feasible objective' for Israel. He urged the country to keep pursuing it particularly at a time when the Islamic Republic is weaker than ever. Barnea stepped down in June 2026 after concluding his five-year-term as Mossad director. He is succeeded by Roman Gofman.

Roman Marble Statues Discovered



Two rare, intact Roman marble statues have been uncovered in northern Israel. The sculptures, depicting figures from the Greek and Roman worlds, were found face down in the collection pit of a Roman-Byzantine winepress dating back around 1,700 years. The statues are protomes, showing the head and upper torso of human figures. Researchers say their careful placement suggests they were intentionally buried, though the reason remains unknown.

| Photo: Flash90

Areas A, B, and C

Who controls Judea and Samaria since 1993?

AREA
A

Under Palestinian Authority

±18 percent
Largest population concentration (cities like Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem).

Population
1.6 – 1.8 million of which 0 Israelis

AREA
B

Civil control under PA, Israel responsible for its security

±22 percent
Mainly villages and semi-urban areas.

Population
1.0 – 1.2 million of which 0 Israelis

AREA
C

Fully under Israeli control

±60 percent
Rural, undeveloped areas, villages and farmland.

Population
0.8 – 0.85 million of which 0.5 million Israelis

The Oslo Accords do not state that no Israelis are allowed to live in Area A or B, but Israel has prohibited Israelis from entering Area A by law.

Designations

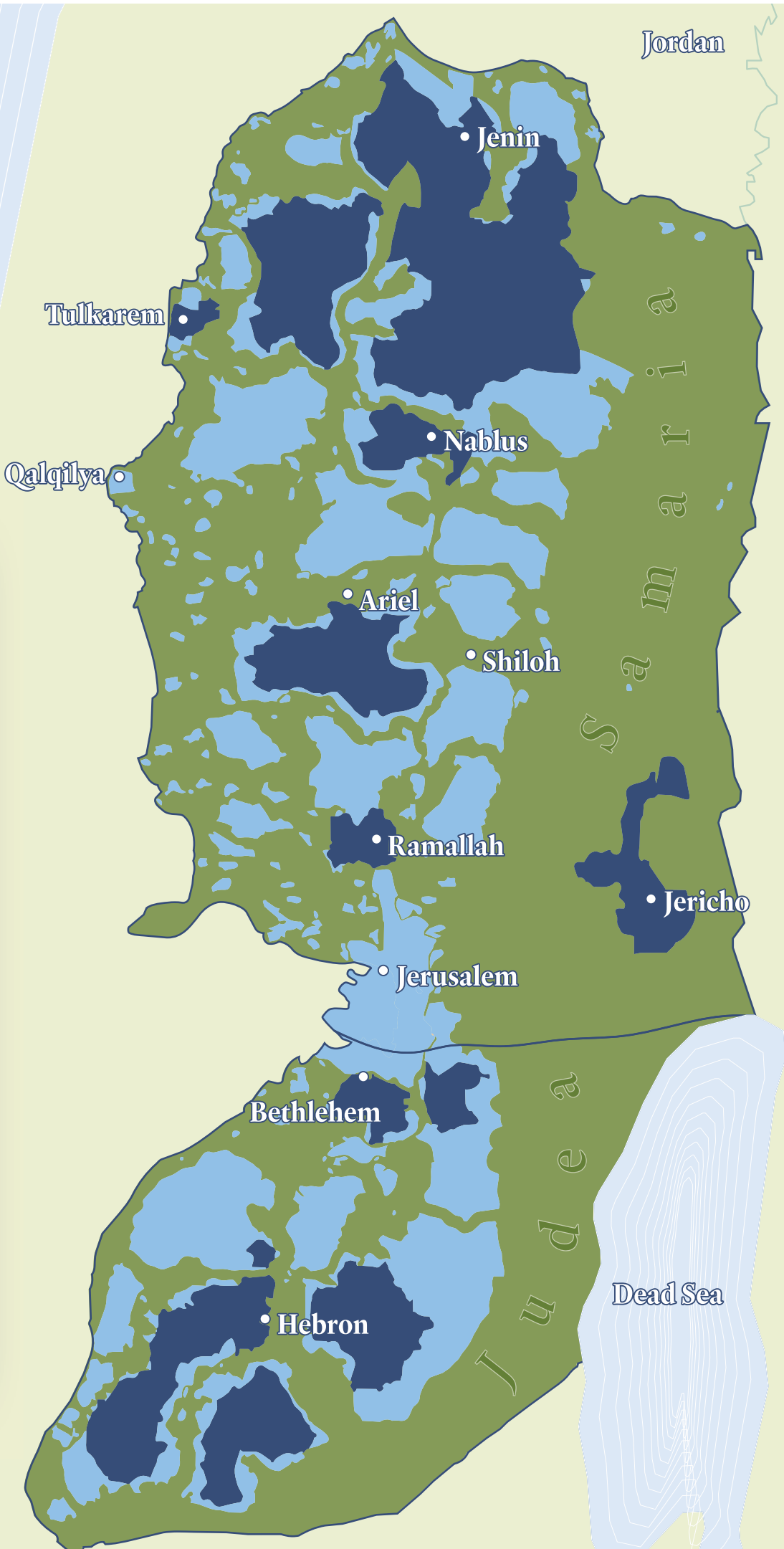
Judea and Samaria

West Bank

Occupied territory

Occupied Palestinian territory

Disputed territory



Facts

- 1 The Oslo Accords are agreements between Israel and the PLO setting out the principles for reaching a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- 2 The aim was to work towards a permanent solution within five years.
- 3 Three zones as a starting point for working towards greater self-governance for the Palestinians.
- 4 The aim was to put an end to decades of Palestinian violence.
- 5 Permanent status negotiations include topics as: settlements, Jerusalem, borders, security.
- 6 The Oslo Accords did not promise the Palestinians a state.

What About the ‘Illegal Settlements’?

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Amnesty International has once again published a report accusing Israel of various violations of international law. The human rights organisation believes the international community is complicit because it fails to intervene or even continues to support the country.

According to Amnesty, Israel is actively pursuing the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the West Bank. Nearly 6,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank had been driven from their homes by the end of April, according to United Nations data. At that time, there were a total of 363 settlements, 212 of which were established after 2023.

The prevailing view at the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, and among most international legal authorities is indeed that “Israeli settlements are illegal.” In 2024, the International Court of Justice published an advisory opinion in which the Court held that Israel’s occupation of the “occupied Palestinian territory” had become illegal and that Israel must end its presence in this territory “as soon as possible.” The Court repeated the UN position that Israel’s settlements policy is a violation of international law.

But what about the status of Israelis living in Judea and Samaria? Does the fact that an Israeli lives in this area constitute a violation of international law?

However, there is a strong case to be made that “Israeli settlements” in the West Bank, and Israel’s policies

concerning them, are not illegal under international law—or at least not necessarily.

First, the West Bank is “disputed” territory. Both Israel and the Palestinians have sovereignty claims to the land, which claims have never been settled by either an agreement or a binding decision of a court. Conventional law regarding military occupation is intended for territory conquered from a recognised sovereign state. Because Jordan’s claim to the West Bank was not generally recognised internationally between 1948 and 1967, the area does not meet the classic legal definition of occupied territory. Therefore, some rules of the law of occupation may not apply in the way critics claim.

Second, Article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention is misinterpreted. The standard argument against settlements is based on Article 49, paragraph 6, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own population into occupied territory. This provision was primarily drafted to prevent the kind of forced population transfers that occurred during World War II. Israeli citizens who move voluntarily, rather than being deported or forcibly transferred by the state, are therefore not subject to the prohibition in Article 49, paragraph 6.

Third, Israel’s claim of sovereign rights over Judea and Samaria cannot simply be swept aside. They are based on historical and legal arrangements from the Mandate era. However, the Mandate for Palestine (1922) stipulated that Jews had the right to



A Jewish family near the Jewish settlement of Psagot in Samaria. | Photo: Dor Pazuelo/Flash90

establish settlements “in Palestine.” When the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, the borders were not defined in the Declaration of Independence. There are very good reasons for asserting that under international law, the State of Israel inherited the borders of the Mandate territory in May 1948. From this perspective, this is not a matter of an occupier establishing itself on another’s sovereign territory, but rather of competing claims to territory whose final status remains unresolved.

Fourth, not all “settlements” are the same. The legality of settlements must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. General assertions that all settlements are illegal must be distinguished from the legal status of specific communities. The legality of a specific settlement may depend on factors such as land

ownership, local circumstances, and applicable agreements, rather than a general rule that every settlement is unlawful.

Finally, the Oslo Accords, concluded between Israel and the PLO in the 1990s, stipulated that “security,” “settlements,” and “borders” are issues to be addressed in future negotiations. The fact is that the Palestinians themselves have agreed that, until a final agreement is reached, Israel has the right to allow Israelis to live in these areas. Declaring all settlements illegal preempts issues that the parties had agreed would be resolved through negotiations.

The claim that “the settlements are illegal” is a dishonest assertion that ignores historical facts and sound legal analysis.

Zion Winery—Pioneers, not Illegal Settlers

Zion Winery, based in East Jerusalem, was founded 180 years ago, at a time when Jews were the largest demographic group in the city.

The winery’s history challenges the International Court of Justice’s position that all Israelis in East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria are illegal settlers who must be removed. This history shows the winery predates 1967 and was never established through Israeli government policy, revealing the UN and ICJ’s ignorance of how many Jewish communities actually came to live in the land.

First we must correct a common misconception: that Baron Edmond de Rothschild founded Israel’s wine industry in 1882, and that winemaking was banned before then under Islamic rule. In fact, Jews and Christians always made wine, just at home. The oldest

recorded modern winery was Ginio, founded in 1840 in Jerusalem’s Old City, which operated until Jordan expelled Jews from the Jewish Quarter in 1948.

Zion Winery itself was founded in 1848 by Rabbi Yitzhak (Galin) Shor in the Muslim Quarter, making it the oldest winery still operating today. The Galin family, *Hasidic* Jews from Ukraine, had settled in Safed and Tiberias before relocating to Jerusalem after the 1837 earthquake. Patriarch Rabbi Mordechai Avraham Galin led the Tiferet Israel Yeshiva and was influenced by Sir Moses Montefiore’s belief that Jews should return to agriculture. His son Yitzhak acted on this by starting a winery, but the family needed a Turkish trading license that was nearly impossible to obtain. They solved this by using a license belonging to Yitzhak’s brother-in-law, Baruch Shor, and adopted his

surname, becoming the Shor family.

The winery bordered the Western Wall, with barrels placed so no one could accidentally touch the site, and grapes were sourced from the same Hebron grower for decades using indigenous varieties like Hamdani, Jandali, and Dabouki, transported to Jerusalem by donkey convoy. The family spoke Arabic and was well integrated into 19th-century Jerusalem life. A notable figure was Rosa Shor, who ran the Old City’s first wine bar, Hamara van Rosa, near the Temple Mount, serving arak and wine while keeping order with a bat she kept close at hand. She later took over the winery after her husband Shmuel’s early death, becoming its first female director—a striking milestone in the ultra-Orthodox world.

After 77 years in the Old City, British restrictions on industry in residential

areas forced a move to Beit Israel in West Jerusalem in 1925, where the family lived above and below the winery itself. By Israel’s founding, brothers Avraham Meir and Moshe Shalom Shor ran the business as “Shor Brothers,” but suffered three family losses during the War of Independence. The brothers later split the business, with Zion Winery continuing under that name until 1982, when it relocated to Mishor Adumim on the edge of the Judean Desert after 134 years in Jerusalem.

Zion Winery was founded by pioneers, not illegal settlers, and has operated continuously across three centuries and three different governing powers—the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, and the State of Israel. Passed down through generations, it is still growing.

This article is based on a piece by Adam Montefiore published in The Jerusalem Post on 30 December 2023.

Unshakable Faith in Asia

■ Dr Leon Meijer

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

From 7 to 9 July, Christians for Israel Philippines hosted a regional C4I conference that brought C4I representatives from across Asia together with delegates and pastors from the Philippines. Together with Rev Oscar Lohuis and Rev Kees van Velzen from the Netherlands I travelled to the Philippines to join the conference.

As we landed in Manila on 6 July, the conference hosts were watching the sky with growing concern. A super typhoon named Inday was churning across the Pacific, heading directly toward the islands and forecast to strike during the very days we were scheduled to meet. Unaware of the approaching storm, we boarded a bus for the six-hour journey to the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, along with delegates from India, Nepal, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. More than 180 Filipino participants, many of them pastors, were making their way to the same location from every corner of the country.

Midweek, Inday changed course and headed north toward Taiwan, sparing us. On 9 July, as Pastor Conrado Lumahan was unfolding God's love for Israel—the very moment he spoke of God's love for Zion—the ground beneath us shook. A magnitude 4.8 earthquake struck Baguio. There were no casualties, but fear rippled through the hall. Pastor Lumahan never broke stride. Afterward he told us he had seen the alarm on our faces, yet God had given him assurance to carry on.

After each teaching session, a Filipino pastor led us in prayer. One confession stayed with me: until that week one of the pastors had never grasped the place of Israel in God's plan for the world. Now, he said, God had opened his eyes to a love expressed in covenants that are truly everlasting.

Ignorance

The Philippines is home to some 117 million people, a great many of them Christians. Even here, though, hostility toward Israel is spreading, fed by one-sided media coverage. More than seventy percent of young Filipinos, we were told, now view Israel critically. The pastors were honest about the cause: much of it is simple ignorance. Believers remain unaware of what Scripture says about Israel, which is exactly why the work of Christians for Israel matters so vital. Several pastors asked us on the spot to bring a conference to their own churches, especially in Mindanao, where congregations are multiplying.

Faith

Signs of faith are everywhere. Jeepneys



Some of the delegates who attended the Philippines for the Christians for Israel conference. | Photos: C4I

The growing churches in the Philippines are an opportunity for Christians for Israel to help them understand God's love for Israel.

—extended Jeeps painted in all kinds of colours and used for public transportation—rattle past with Bible verses written on their sides, and shops display them as well, even though many Filipinos remain nominal in their faith. Still, the churches are growing, and it is the younger generation who are giving their lives to God. We witnessed this one evening when we visited a local congregation where Rev Lohuis was preaching. It was one of sixteen churches planted by a single pastor who was attending our conference. The hall was overflowing with young people worshipping with an energy that was impossible to ignore. In Mindanao, one church has grown so rapidly that it now has to hold multiple services every Sunday simply to accommodate everyone. These growing churches are an opportunity for Christians for Israel, to help them understand God's love for Israel. The words of Jesus came to mind: "The fields are ripe for harvest—ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

PACT

Mrs Dana Kursh, Israel's ambassador to the Philippines, drove more than three hours to meet us in person. It was a moving meeting as she spoke warmly of the bond between Israel and its Christian friends, and, as a daughter of the covenant people, offered us a covenant of our own, summed up in the word PACT. 'P' is for Prayer. She reminded us that the Aaronic blessing closes with *Shalom*—a word richer than peace alone, carrying wholeness and hope, which Israel longs

for and needs us to pray toward. 'A' is for Address: confront the media bias and antisemitism. We may never reach those who hate Israel, she said, but we can still reach the indifferent. 'C' is for Come—come and visit Israel and help us impact the next generation. 'T' is for Teach—especially the young generation, raising up their responsibility to stand with Israel and to influence their own generation. That very week, she noted, synagogues around the world were reading the passage where Moses hands leadership to Joshua—a lesson in preparing the next generation to take a stand. Ambassador Kursh: "A pact is made between two parties. I stand here as a representative of the nation of Israel, and I ask you to sign this pact with me." The applause was heartfelt. The ambassador presented Plaques of Appreciation to individuals and church representatives who had helped Jewish people make *Aliyah*.

Serving Israel

The original plan was for Rev Willem Glashouwer to speak at this conference, but given his health condition earlier this year, two Dutch colleagues, Rev Oscar Lohuis and Rev Kees van Velzen, came instead. We are pleased that Rev Glashouwer has fully recovered, and though absent in person, his message was present in several quotations. One of his lines returned throughout the days: The Church is called to love and serve Israel so that the Jewish people may one day suddenly feel, "We have a younger brother." When someone texted Rev Glashouwer a photo of his own words projected on the screen, he replied simply:

"Grateful. God's work is moving on."

Spiritual War

Rev Kees van Velzen laid the foundations, drawing on Rev Glashouwer's books *Why Israel* and *Why Jerusalem?* Rev Oscar Lohuis showed how central Israel is to God's plan for the world, and in another lecture, he addressed the lies spread through the media. He reminded us that this is not merely a media war, but a spiritual one. During my lectures I traced Israel's history from Roman times to the present day, and demonstrated that Jesus lived as a Jew, pointing to the tradition of tassels (*tzitzit*) and phylacteries (*tefillin*). As indirect evidence that Jesus Himself observed these customs, I cited *Matthew 23:5*, where Jesus rebukes the Pharisees who "make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long"—criticising their ostentatious display rather than the practice itself, which He shared. Pastor Conrado Lumahan led an in-depth study on *Romans 9–11*. Former General Harsanto of Indonesia described the struggle of the Indonesian Church to leave Replacement Theology behind. Ian Worby (C4I Australia) examined the Church's calling toward modern Zionism, noting how often God declares His love for Zion in the Psalms and the books of the Prophets. Supporting the Jewish people's return to their ancestral land, he argued, should be part of the Church's calling.

None of this would have run so smoothly without the nearly fifty volunteers from Pastor Lumahan's church, serving on the worship, coffee, transport and audiovisual teams. Their effort, joined to the natural warmth of the Filipino people, made the conference a blessing to every one of us.



Honouring supporters in the Philippines for helping bring Jews home to Israel.



A Time to Watch and Stand Firm

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

It seems that every time we prepare a new edition of *Israel and Christians Today*, the list of significant events taking place around the world grows larger. Regardless of how sceptical one might be of prophecy being fulfilled, it is becoming almost impossible not to see undeniable similarities between the events foretold in scripture, and the reality we see in the world right now. For many, the discussion is no longer about “if”, but “when” and in what order the next steps will come. It is wise to pause periodically, to remind ourselves that whilst the spiralling decline of Godliness in our world is inevitable, we know how it ends—and who wins! We also know that God’s plan still includes significant involvement of the Jewish people, and the nation of Israel. It is no surprise then, that those who oppose God’s plans, oppose Israel.

ICC Prosecutor Prosecuted

One such opponent, however, seems to have been removed. Following accusations of sexual assault made by a former staff member, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr Karim Khan, has been removed from the ICC. An investigation by his peers concluded that Mr Khan had indeed engaged in serious misconduct, and subsequently he was deposed by a vote of ICC members. Mr Khan became a media focus when he pushed for arrest warrants against Israeli leaders, allegedly to distract from the incoming sexual misconduct allegations.

Amir Tsarfati

In New Zealand, Israeli Christian speaker and theologian Amir Tsarfati recently completed a series of events. Speaking to full auditoriums, Amir addressed crowds of Israel supporters and others genuinely interested in biblical teaching regarding Israel.

Unsurprisingly, Amir was forced to deal with interference and disruption by anti-Israel protesters. At one meeting, Amir was forced to speak over particularly noisy protesters who gathered around the building, determined to interrupt the message. Amir continued regardless.

Palestinian “Theologians”

Whilst Amir was speaking throughout the country, “Christian” opponents were also conducting a speaking tour. Two “theologians from Palestine”—one of whom is an Arab Israeli, who teaches in an Israeli University—delivered what has been described as “a barrage of one-sided propaganda, disguised as theology”. Under the moniker “Aotearoa Christians for Peace in Palestine”, various anti-Zionist figures in the Anglican Church, and others, convened speaking events at various churches, and also Auckland University. There were no reports of disruption or interference with any events.

The Church’s Troubling Direction

The Church of England has been the subject of significant controversy, with its engagement with the “*Kairos II*” declaration. Following some robust, albeit outnumbered, opposition, and having chosen to ignore the pleas of the Chief Rabbi, the Church’s General Synod voted to “hear” (rather than fully “receive” or endorse...) the Palestinian Christian document *Kairos II*, encouraging local churches to engage with its text as “lived experience”. Following the church’s decision, Britain’s Chief Rabbi met with the Archbishop of Canterbury to address the fallout. The Chief Rabbi emphasised that the church needs to “repair the damage that has been caused to Christian-Jewish relations”.

The *Kairos II* document, officially titled “*A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*,” is a 14-page political

manifesto released in November 2025 by a coalition of Palestinian Christian leaders, as an update to their original 2009 text. The manifesto frames Israel’s military campaign in Gaza following the 7 October 2023, attacks not as self-defence, but as a deliberate “genocide”, “ethnic cleansing” and “apartheid”. It defines Israel’s foundation as a “colonial enterprise built on racism” and views Zionism as inherently oppressive. It urges churches worldwide to back the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, lobby for total arms embargoes, seek the international prosecution of Israeli leaders, and strongly condemns Christian Zionism.

As if there were any doubt, it seems that Israel can do no right in Iran, either. At the time of writing the USA has recommenced action against the Iranian regime. Israel has thus far chosen not to. Evidence is becoming public, that appears to confirm the continuing development of the Iranian regime’s nuclear programme. At the same time, Iranians around the globe remain effectively abandoned by world leaders, as they protest for the end of the regime in Iran. We pray for calm in Iran and the Middle East, and eagerly await the moment we can continue taking New Zealanders to see the Promised Land for themselves!

Voting with Israel in Mind

There are two significant elections looming. With Israel’s somewhat unstable recent political position, and the current conflict still present, we pray for our Israeli brothers and sisters as they elect a new government. Similarly, New Zealand soon heads to the polls. As we prayerfully choose who will get our vote, amongst many criteria, relations with Israel must also be a consideration—see the article inside.

These are exciting times! Thank you for your support, as we stand together with Israel.

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ICJ Cases Fuel Ideological Agenda

■ Prof Gregory Rose

Senior Fellow | The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.)

In the coming months, the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) will deliver its judgement in the case *The Gambia v Myanmar* concerning the 1948 Genocide Convention currently before it, launched in 2019.¹ The written and oral phases have closed, and the Court is currently preparing its decision.

This is a show case sponsored by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which has played an instrumental role in enabling The Gambia to pursue its case against Myanmar. The OIC supported (and possibly even assisted) South Africa's case against Israel.

Interestingly, several European states intervened in *The Gambia v. Myanmar* case in support of The Gambia. They are urging the Court to modify its approach to the interpretation and application of the Genocide Convention. They do so in five respects:

- “Holistic” approach to the determination of criminal intent under the Genocide Convention.
- Lowering of threshold for proof of genocide.
- Switch of burden of proof to disprove genocide.
- Preferential reliance on UN Reports as evidence.
- Application of Genocide Convention to IHL in armed conflict.

We understand that this joint “European” intervention was spearheaded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs legal office. The intervening states are Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The joint intervention was lodged with the Court on 15 November 2023.² This intervention was subsequently supported, possibly in view of the Gaza war, by Belgium³, Ireland⁴ and Slovenia⁵, and also by the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶

It is extremely important to be aware that the approach that the Court takes in the Myanmar case will potentially have significant impact on subsequent cases under the Genocide Convention. Most immediately, this concerns the case of *South Africa v. Israel*, which is currently in the merits phase. Twenty-two states have intervened in the latter case, and of these Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands and Iceland are effectively presenting the same arguments as those submitted in the joint “European” intervention in Myanmar.

There are a number of remarkable connections between the Myanmar and Israel cases, which indicate that the former case is being used by the OIC and a number of intervening states to influence the Court to take a novel approach to the Genocide Convention, in such a way as to make it more likely that it will make a finding that Israel has breached its obligations under the Genocide Convention:

- The joint “European” intervention in Myanmar was filed on 15 November 2023, which is shortly after the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and several weeks prior to South Africa's launch of its case against Israel in late December 2023;
- Several members of the legal team of Myanmar are also counsel for South Africa⁷.

The Gambia appointed Ms Navanathem (Navi) Pillay in



The Peace Palace in The Hague. | Photo: Unsplash

2019 as ad hoc judge in the Myanmar case; Ms Pillay was also (until recently) Chair of the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, and Israel, and a strong proponent of the view that Israel is guilty of committing genocide. The reports which have been published by that Commission under her Chairmanship bear some striking similarities to the approach advocated by the European states in Myanmar.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has played an instrumental role in enabling The Gambia to pursue its case against Myanmar, and supported (and possibly even assisted) South Africa's case against Israel.

The proposed reinterpretation of the Genocide Convention raises concerning issues for Western-oriented states. A more lenient and expansive interpretation of the Genocide Convention will potentially endanger future peacekeeping operations and participation by States in legitimate urban warfare or counter-terrorism operations by increasing their vulnerability to genocide charges brought by the opponent's supporting States. Operations against combatants embedded within civilian infrastructure, the use of civilian shields, civilians directly participating in hostilities, civil-military dual use objects and especially combatant strategies employing massively amassed civilian shields will all raise charges of genocide.

The Court's jurisdiction under the Genocide Convention is increasingly being weaponised as a lawfare tool for geopolitical leverage. After decades of neglect, four genocide cases have been lodged in the past four years (with more likely future cases in the pipeline) in the context of armed conflicts.⁸

Increasingly, third states are intervening in such proceedings⁹, advocating approaches to factual and legal matters that advance certain geopolitical, ideological or military agendas.

¹ ICJ, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar: 11 states intervening)*; <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/178>.

² *Id*; <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/178/intervention>.

³ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241212-int-01-00-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241220-int-01-00-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/178/178-20241122-int-01-00-enc.pdf>

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Notable are Prof Philippe Sands and Prof John Dugard—both of whom also played leading roles as members of the Palestinian delegation in the Advisory Opinion proceedings initiated by the Palestinians in the UN concerning the legal consequences of Israeli policies and practices in Occupied Palestinian Territory: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>

⁸ 2022 *Ukraine v Russia*; 2023 *South Africa v Israel*; 2023 *Nicaragua v Germany*; 2025 *Sudan v United Arab Emirates*.

⁹ Eleven states intervened in the Myanmar case, and so far a massive 22 states have intervened in the Israel case, with the possibility of more interventions.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation. www.thinc.info

thinc. exists to strengthen the integrity of international law, counter legal narrative inflation, and promote responsible, evidence based discourse in conflicts where international law is being instrumentalised.

Possibly Israel's Most Important Election Yet

■ Rob Berg

Chair | Jewish National Fund NZ (JNF)

On 27 October 2026, Israelis will be going to the polls to vote on the composition of the *Knesset*. For as long as I can remember, every election in Israel is labelled as “the most important in Israel’s history”. It is no different for this election, but arguably this time the claim may well be true. I’ll come to the reasons why, but first, some information on the *Knesset*.

Israel’s parliament works on 100% proportional representation. There are no constituent MKs (Member of *Knesset*) and so the ability to voice concerns on local issues is directed to local councils. The ability to meet or write to your local MK on local matters does not really exist in Israel.

The system of 100% proportional representation, like any system, has its pros and cons. However, for many, the cons often outweigh the pros due to Israel regularly having relatively weak governments that rarely last their full term. As with New Zealand, and most democracies around the world, anyone can start a political party to run in elections.

When the *Knesset* was first established, the threshold was 1%. Little by little, the threshold increased. In 1992 to 1.5%, then in 2003 to 2%, until the current threshold of 3.25% which come into effect in 2014. The threshold political parties need to get into the *Knesset* has been the topic of much debate. The number of small parties being elected to the *Knesset* were becoming too many to be able to form a government of 61 seats or more. It also meant that many of the small parties were seen as being way too powerful and dictating key decisions such as finance and education in ways that contradicted the votes of most of the population. This may well resonate with many of us here in New Zealand,



The *Knesset* at dawn, home of Israel’s parliament in Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

Whatever the outcome of the next election, there are significant decisions to be made that will shape Israel’s future and depend on who makes up the next coalition government.

except without the ability to vote for your local constituent MP.

In the 1996 elections, Israel tried to allow voters to have two votes—one for Prime Minister, and one for a party to make up the composition of the Parliament. The idea was to give the PM more authority as they would, in theory at least, have a strong mandate given by the population. In reality, this meant more people voted for the smaller parties as they felt they could vote for their preferred Prime Minister without having to vote for their aligned party. This system was never tried again.

The current elections will take place in what is a rarity in Israel—a government completing a full term. This has not

happened since Golda Meir’s government from 1969 to 1974. It is even more remarkable that this has happened in the backdrop of 7 October 2023. Whilst most, if not all, of the top brass in the IDF, the *Mossad* and the *Shin Bet* (Israel’s internal security services) have resigned following the disaster of 7 October, not one individual has resigned in Benjamin Netanyahu’s government over this. This is even more surprising seeing as Netanyahu has often billed himself as ‘Mr Security’. His supporters would argue his “successes” since 7 October with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. His opponents would counter that the successes have not been anywhere near to the extent claimed. Whatever or not this is the reality, there is no doubt this will become a big discussion point in the elections, especially being so close to the third anniversary of 7 October.

The most contentious issue, however, is likely to be the *Haredi* (ultra-orthodox) draft. The response of Israel to 7 October was the longest war Israel has fought, and not just with Hamas in the south, but Hezbollah in the North, the Houthis from Yemen in the south—all three under the direction of Iran—and also directly with Iran itself. The ability to fight on so many fronts and for such an extended period has led to the IDF saying it needs more soldiers. Those in the army have fought long and hard, and those in reserves have spent significantly more time than would be otherwise be expected. This is not just causing financial strain on the economy, but it is

also causing much tension in their families with some parents or partners being absent for long periods of time.

One answer to the above has been drafting in the *Haredim*. Most religious Jewish communities and places of deep religious learning were decimated during Holocaust, so David Ben Gurion agreed to the exemption of a limited number of *Haredim* so they could rebuild. Over the decades, as the *Haredi* community has grown significantly in size, the number of exemptions has increased into the tens of thousands. For *Haredim*, the IDF is seen as a pathway to secularisation, although there have been a small number of bespoke units that adhere to strict religious laws to enable their service. This has for many years been an area of contention between the *Haredim* and the secular and national religious community who all serve. Since 7 October, this has become even more of an issue as soldiers have been killed or returned home permanently injured.

How will this issue play out in the upcoming elections? The current government needs the *Haredi* parties in the coalition for its stability and will undoubtedly need them in any future government. Netanyahu’s main rivals have taken a different stance. Naftali Bennett has stated that the *Haredim* must serve in the IDF, whilst Gadi Eisenkot is saying they must either serve in the IDF or undertake some other form of national service.

Eisenkot, a former IDF Chief of Staff, is a relative newcomer to politics and has formed his own party that according to the current polls is fast becoming Netanyahu’s main political rival. He also has the sympathy of the nation having lost his son and two nephews in the recent war. Bennett, on the other hand, is a former Israeli PM, albeit for less than year, with many years’ experience as a parliamentarian, has joined together with Yair Lapid from the centre left and also a former Prime Minister, to lead the so-called ‘anti-Bibi’ block.

Whatever the outcome of the next election, there are significant decisions to be made that will all depend on who makes up the coalition government. These are the *Haredi* draft issue, whether to open a State Enquiry into the 7 October failings, the ongoing conflict with Hezbollah and Iran, the question of Hamas and Gaza, the response to the extremists in the ‘settler’ movement, and the power and place of the Supreme Court in the democratic system.

To say this election is the most important in Israel’s history may well prove to be right.

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Should Israel Influence Your Vote?

■ C4I Staff Writer

As we head into the 2026 New Zealand election there is a question that most readers of this newspaper will be asking themselves: how much should Israel influence my vote?

For most of us it won't be the primary determinant of where that vote goes. This year we will be weighing up the cost of living, the economy, healthcare, education, crime, housing and the wider direction of the country. These are not side issues. They affect our families, our communities and the kind of nation that we are becoming.

But neither should Israel be treated as irrelevant. A party's approach to Israel can reveal how it thinks about terrorism, democracy, national sovereignty, international law, antisemitism and the moral courage required to resist fashionable pressure.

Christians for Israel New Zealand is not a political party and does not tell people how to vote. Instead, our purpose is to identify the differences between the parties so that voters can decide what weight to give them. So here's an outline of what we know, so far, about the positions of the various Parties toward Israel and the Jewish people:

ACT has been the clearest parliamentary party in its initial response to the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023. David Seymour condemned the attacks as terrorism, said ACT stood with Israel and strongly supported Israel's right to defend itself. That matters because it identified Hamas, rather than speaking vaguely about "violence on both sides" and placed Israel's response within the right of a democratic state to protect its citizens.

ACT's wider position has remained broadly consistent with that starting point. It has not joined calls for sanctions against Israel or immediate recognition of a Palestinian state. Its instinct is to view Israel as a democratically confronting terrorism, while arguing that New Zealand should stand more firmly with traditional partners and democratic nations. For voters who want an unequivocal defence of Israel's existence and security, ACT's record is probably the strongest.

New Zealand First also sits toward the more supportive end of the spectrum, although its position has been expressed through Winston Peters' role as Foreign Minister and is more diplomatic in tone. The coalition Government has maintained support for a two-state solution and Palestinian self-determination, but it declined to recognise Palestine in September 2025. Its stated position was that recognition

is a matter of "when, not if", but that the conditions were not right while Hamas remained a major force and no credible political settlement was in place.

Peters has also resisted demands that New Zealand rush to legal or moral judgments without complete evidence. That approach has frustrated anti-Israel activists, but it reflects a preference for established diplomatic process over protest slogans. New Zealand First has not supported the Green campaign to sanction Israel, and its record suggests that it is less willing than parties on the left to isolate Israel or reward Palestinian statehood before a negotiated settlement.

National's position is more cautious. As the leading party of Government, it has supported the coalition's refusal to recognise Palestine at this stage, while continuing to endorse an eventual two-state solution. National MPs have argued that recognition should occur when it contributes to peace, not while Hamas controls Gaza or while active conflict makes a viable democratic Palestinian state impossible.

At the same time, National has increasingly criticised the scale and humanitarian consequences of Israel's military response. The Government's official language now opposes actions by both Hamas and Israel that undermine a political solution. National is therefore not as unambiguously pro-Israel as ACT, but nor has it adopted Labour or Green demands for recognition and sanctions. Its position is best described as supportive of Israel's existence and security, but increasingly critical of the Netanyahu Government and determined to retain a conventional diplomatic balance.

Labour has moved considerably further toward the Palestinian cause. In May 2024 it formally called for New Zealand to recognise Palestine. In March 2025 it announced support for Chlöe Swarbrick's Israel Sanctions Bill, which would create a framework for sanctions connected with Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. By September 2025 Labour MPs were publicly marching in support of immediate diplomatic and economic sanctions against Israel and describing the war in Gaza as genocide.

That is no longer simply a call for humanitarian restraint or criticism of a particular Israeli government. It represents a substantial policy shift toward recognition, sanctions and international pressure directed at Israel. Labour continues to say it supports a two-state solution and Israel's right to exist, but voters should understand that its practical programme now places



A snapshot of the major New Zealand political parties' current positions on Israel. | Photo: AI generated

much greater emphasis on penalising Israel than on confronting Hamas or ensuring that any Palestinian state is democratic and peaceful.

The Green Party's position is clearer still. Its 2026 manifesto explicitly promises to recognise Palestine as a state and sanction Israel. Green MPs have repeatedly described Israel's conduct as apartheid, illegal occupation and genocide. The party has promoted a dedicated sanctions bill and has worked closely with the wider pro-Palestinian protest movement.

The Greens argue that this is an application of international law and human rights. Supporters of Israel will see something very different: a policy that singles out the region's only Jewish state for sanctions, grants recognition to Palestine without requiring a final peace agreement, and gives insufficient weight to Hamas terrorism, hostage-taking and the continuing refusal of powerful Palestinian movements to accept Israel as a Jewish state.

Te Pāti Māori has occupied similar territory, often using even more uncompromising rhetoric. Its representatives have supported recognition of Palestine and have described Israel's actions in terms such as genocide, apartheid and colonial oppression. In parliamentary debate, its MPs have framed the conflict primarily through Palestinian suffering, occupation and Indigenous solidarity.

That worldview leaves little room for the Jewish people's indigeneity, Israel's security realities or the events of 7 October as more than background to a longer Palestinian grievance. Among the parliamentary parties, Te Pāti Māori is likely to be the least acceptable option for voters who regard support for Israel as an important moral or political test.

The Opportunity Party presents a different problem: it has not published a clear, detailed 2026 policy on Israel, Hamas, Palestinian recognition or sanctions. Its published platform is concentrated on economic, environmental and democratic reform. That absence should not be mistaken for neutrality. A party asking for votes should be able to answer major foreign-policy questions, particularly when the issue has produced intense division in New Zealand.

Opportunity candidates should therefore be asked directly whether they support recognising Palestine before a negotiated peace agreement, whether they would support the calls to sanction Israel, how they view Hamas, and what practical steps they would take against antisemitism. Until the party answers those questions, voters cannot responsibly assume where it stands. So how much should Israel influence your vote? That depends on how highly you rank it alongside domestic concerns. But it should influence your assessment to some degree, because these positions expose real differences in judgment and values.

Ask your local candidates whether Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas. Ask whether Palestinian statehood should be granted without democratic government, secure borders and recognition of Israel. Ask whether they support sanctions against Israel and what they have done to confront antisemitism here in New Zealand. Then listen carefully, not only to what they say, but to what they avoid saying. Israel need not determine your vote. But if Israel, the Jewish people and the moral clarity exposed by 7 October matter to you, they should not be absent from it.

A more detailed guide on the upcoming election will be available soon on our website: www.c4israel.org.nz.

Need for Reform

■ David Zwartz

Jews around the world, including in New Zealand, have been subject to threats, incitement, and physical anti-Jewish incidents since the Hamas invasion of Israel on 7 October 2023.

Across the Tasman, the Australian Jewish community, numbering about 117,000, has suffered from much violence culminating in the Bondi Beach massacre on 14 December 2025, the first day of the festival of *Hanukkah*. This Islamic State-inspired shooting of 15 people was the worst terrorist attack committed in Australia.

On 9 January 2026 the Australian government established a Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, with these terms of reference:

- **The Bondi Attack:** Examine the circumstances and failures surrounding the antisemitic Bondi terrorist attack that occurred on 14 December 2025.
- **Tackling Antisemitism:** Examine the nature, prevalence, and key drivers of antisemitism in Australia, including its links to religious and ideologically-motivated extremism and radicalisation.
- **Agency Recommendations:** Make recommendations to assist border control, immigration, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies in tackling antisemitism and identifying threats.
- **Social Cohesion:** Make recommendations to contribute to strengthening broader social cohesion and countering the spread of religiously and ideologically-motivated extremism in Australia.

The Commissioner will make a final report by 14 December 2026.

A great deal of what the Commission has been set up to examine has strong relevance to the present situation of the New Zealand Jewish community, such as the key drivers of antisemitism here, the need for intelligence agencies to identify threats, and the need to strengthen social cohesion.

The Commission has been functioning in Hearing Blocks of a week at a time. In the first block, submissions from individuals told about their experiences of antisemitism at work, in schools, in public and online, many of them deeply distressing. By the time the public submission window closed on 16 June, the Commission had received more than 21,000—the largest public response to a Royal Commission in

Australian history—including more than 3,000 from people not identifying as Jewish.

The third Hearing Block week examined social media platforms and online antisemitism.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI), whose CEO Dr Andre Oboler has given evidence to the Commission about antisemitism across social media, including Facebook and Instagram, also reported a sharp rise in antisemitic content from November 2023 across the platforms it analysed. OHPI told the inquiry its monitoring found online antisemitism used both old and emerging forms, including blood libels, dehumanising language, conspiracy theories about Jewish control, and posts using “Zionist” as a coded substitute for Jews.

The Commission has heard from other online hate experts that antisemitism surged after the 7 October Hamas attacks and again after violent incidents targeting Jewish communities, like the Bondi massacre.

The Commission strongly criticised Elon Musk’s X, formerly *Twitter*, for refusing to engage with the inquiry and allowing hate speech to run rampant.

“X Corp has demonstrated a complete lack of interest in providing transparency on a topic as important as keeping Australians safe from the proliferation of terrorist and violent extremist material, including extreme antisemitism,” the Counsel assisting the Royal Commission was reported as saying by the *AAP* news service.

Despite several witnesses telling the inquiry that X had fostered antisemitic hate and threats directed at them and their families, the company had not responded to any correspondence from the Commission.

“X’s refusal to engage with a Royal Commission examining how to make social media less of a hotbed for antisemitism showed a ‘shocking disrespect and disregard’ for the Australian community.”



A vigil in Tel Aviv honours the victims of the Sydney *Hanukkah* attack. | Photo: Flash90

Unlike X, representatives of professional networking platform *LinkedIn* engaged with the inquiry.

During Hearing Block 4, at public hearings in Melbourne from 13 to 17 July, the Commission heard from Jewish students, academics, universities and other educational institutions about the prevalence and impact of antisemitism on campuses and how institutions have responded.

On 12 July the Federal Education Minister Jason Clare announced that universities will be required to adopt definitions of antisemitism, racism against First Nation peoples, and Islamophobia under new standards.

Several issues raised in the Commission’s hearings so far are as important to New Zealand Jews as to Australia’s. Online hate, and the reluctance of the companies working online to do as much to prevent it as they can, or to withdraw false and hate material when drawn to their notice, affects Jews worldwide including us.

There have been strong complaints to New Zealand universities about Jewish students being affected by the level of antisemitism on campuses, and about academics misusing the concept of “academic freedom.”

The Commission holds further hearings in Melbourne from 20 to 24 July.

Election 2026: Israel at a Crossroads

■ Yosef Livne

Former Israeli Ambassador to New Zealand

The general elections in Israel should take place this year. As a parliamentary democracy, elections are held every four years, unless the *Knesset* decides to dissolve itself. Only once, in 1973, the elections were delayed for a few months because of the *Yom Kippur* war.

This campaign is unlike previous elections. Israelis are still living with the trauma of 7 October 2023, the ensuing war in Gaza, and the hostilities with Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran. These events will dominate the campaign, particularly calls for an independent State Commission of Inquiry. The opposition supports such a commission to investigate

the failures that led to the 7 October tragedy and determine responsibility across government, the military, and other institutions. The governing coalition opposes it, favouring an alternative more acceptable to the Prime Minister and its partners. Other key issues include the *Haredi* draft, government-sponsored judicial reform and its impact on Israeli democracy, and the role of religion in society.

As I write, the election date has not yet been set, but political parties are already preparing their campaigns. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is almost certain to lead the Likud campaign, while the opposition includes parties spanning the political spectrum. Familiar figures such as former Prime

Minister Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Liberman are joined by newcomers including former IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot, who leads a centrist party, and former general Yair Golan, who heads a centre-left list. Despite their ideological differences, they are expected to seek a coalition to replace the current government. Who will lead that bloc and be tasked with forming a government remains uncertain, but one can assume that once the date for the elections is determined, these parties will try to reach an agreement on this issue. (Editor’s insert—Israel’s Election date is 27 October).

In conclusion, Israel is heading towards a very crucial campaign that will determine the future course for the country.



From the League to the UN

■ **Greg Bouwer**
Israel Institute of New Zealand

Few institutions shape international affairs more profoundly than the United Nations, yet most people know surprisingly little about how it works, how it came to exist, or why its record on Israel has generated sustained controversy. To understand the UN today, you need to begin a century ago.

The League: A First Attempt
The League of Nations was founded in 1920 in the aftermath of the First World War, born of a simple but radical idea: that nations could resolve their disputes through diplomacy rather than war. New Zealand was a founding member and participated actively throughout the League’s history, a reflection of this country’s long-standing engagement in multilateral institutions. The League is also remembered for its Mandate system, under which former territories of the defeated Ottoman and German empires were administered by Allied powers. One of these was the Mandate for Palestine, which incorporated provisions supporting the establishment of a Jewish national home while protecting the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities. The Mandate would later become an important reference point in debates surrounding the creation of Israel and the legal foundations of Jewish national self-determination.

At its peak, the League included most of the world’s independent states, but crucial absences weakened it from the start. The United States never joined, Germany withdrew under Hitler, and the Soviet Union was expelled after invading Finland in 1939. Without the support of major military powers, the League could not enforce its decisions. It failed to stop Japan’s invasion of Manchuria, Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia, or Germany’s expansion. The outbreak of the Second World War sealed its fate, and it was formally dissolved in 1946.

The UN: A Second Attempt
Allied leaders were already planning the League’s replacement before the war ended. In April 1945—while fighting in Europe was still ongoing—representatives from fifty nations gathered in San Francisco to draft the UN Charter. Fifty countries signed the Charter at the conference, while Poland, unable to attend, signed shortly afterwards. Together they became the UN’s original 51 member states, including New Zealand. The founders were determined not to repeat the League’s failures. The most consequential structural decision was the creation of the Security Council, with five permanent members—the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, France,

KEY UN BODIES AT A GLANCE	
BODY	FUNCTION
General Assembly	All 193 member states; one vote each; the UN’s main deliberative forum
Security Council	15 members (5 permanent with veto, 10 rotating); binding authority over peace and security
Human Rights Council	Monitors and debates human rights issues; elected by the General Assembly
International Court of Justice	Settles legal disputes between states
Secretariat	Administrative body headed by the Secretary-General
WHO	World Health Organisation; global public health
UNESCO	Education, science and culture
UNICEF	Children’s rights and welfare
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency; nuclear safeguards and verification

and China—each holding veto power over any binding resolution. The reasoning was frank: an international organisation without the great powers was worthless, and keeping them inside required giving them influence they would not sign away. The veto power was intended to keep the major powers committed to the system, but it also means that the Council can be paralysed whenever those powers disagree. The headquarters was established in New York, reflecting America’s status as the dominant Western power and its central role in funding and sustaining the new body.

Israel was admitted as the UN’s 59th member state in May 1949 after the General Assembly voted to accept its application for membership.

Structure and Key Bodies
The UN consists of several principal organs and specialised agencies, each with distinct responsibilities ranging from peace and security to health, education, development, and international law (see chart above).

Why Membership Mattered
During its early decades, much of the UN’s attention focused on reconstruction after the Second World War, the emergence of the Cold War, and the management of newly independent states. For the first fifteen years of its existence, the organisation largely reflected the balance of power among the victorious Allied powers and their partners. Decolonisation fundamentally changed that balance. Membership grew from 99 states in 1960 to 193 today, as dozens of newly independent nations across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean joined. The effect on the General Assembly was profound. Regional and ideological voting blocs emerged—the Arab Group, the African Group, the Organisation of Islamic

Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement—capable of commanding large, coordinated majorities.

In 1975, the General Assembly passed Resolution 3379, declaring Zionism a form of racism. The resolution reflected Cold War politics, Soviet bloc influence, and the voting power of Arab and developing-world states. Western democracies condemned it almost unanimously. The resolution was eventually repealed in 1991 following the Cold War’s end, but it established a pattern in which UN institutions became arenas for sustained diplomatic and political contestation over Israel. Unlike some Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are generally not legally binding but can carry significant political and diplomatic weight.

That pattern has persisted. The UN Human Rights Council has adopted more country-specific resolutions concerning Israel than any other state. Critics argue that this reflects structural bias within the organisation’s voting blocs, while supporters maintain that Israel’s democratic institutions and openness make its actions unusually visible and therefore subject to greater scrutiny. What is harder to dispute is the composition of the Council itself: states including Iran, China, Russia, Cuba and Venezuela have all served as members, leading many observers to question whether a body with such membership can function as a credible human rights arbiter rather than a political one.

Financially, the UN is sustained primarily by a handful of large contributors. The United States remains the largest single funder, followed by China, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Yet financial contribution and

voting influence are largely disconnected. In the General Assembly, each member state receives a single vote regardless of how much it contributes.

Need for Reform
Proposals to reform the United Nations have circulated for decades: expanding the Security Council, modifying veto rules, strengthening accountability mechanisms. All have stalled, for the straightforward reason that meaningful reform requires the consent of the very powers whose influence would be curtailed by it.

Whether one views the United Nations as an indispensable guardian of international norms or as an institution increasingly shaped by political majorities, understanding its history is essential. Many of the controversies surrounding Israel at the UN cannot be understood simply by examining current events. They are the product of institutional structures, historical decisions, and demographic changes that have unfolded over more than a century. Understanding that history is the first step toward understanding the debates that continue to shape international politics today.

Sidebar: Why Does Every Country Get One Vote?

Many readers are surprised to discover that India, New Zealand, China, and Tuvalu each cast exactly one vote in the UN General Assembly.

This reflects a founding principle known as sovereign equality—the idea that all states, regardless of size, population, or wealth, are equal under international law. The principle was a deliberate design choice in 1945, intended to give newly independent and smaller nations a meaningful voice in international affairs.

In practice, it produces outcomes that can seem counterintuitive. A coalition of small states can outvote the world’s largest democracies. Nations that contribute almost nothing to the UN’s budget can outnumber those that fund the vast majority of its operations. The United States, for instance, contributes roughly 22% of the UN’s regular budget yet holds the same single General Assembly vote as any other member.

This gap between financial contribution and voting power, combined with the influence of coordinated regional blocs, helps explain why General Assembly resolutions on contentious issues—including Israel—often pass by margins that surprise Western observers.



Why the US and Israel Oppose a Nuclear Iran

■ **Tony Kan**

President | NZ Friends of Israel

Few issues in global security generate as much intensity or misunderstanding as the determination of the United States and Israel to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. To some observers, this stance looks like geopolitical muscle flexing or a regional rivalry. In reality, it is rooted in something far more fundamental: the fear that nuclear weapons, once paired with apocalyptic ideology, could break the logic that has prevented their use since 1945.

The Origins of Nuclear Deterrence

To understand today's anxieties, it helps to return to 1945. By mid-war, Japan's military government showed no sign of surrender. American planners expected hundreds of thousands of Allied casualties and millions of Japanese deaths in a full-scale invasion of the home islands. Every credible assessment pointed toward a fight to the last breath.

In that context, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were seen by American leaders as the least catastrophic option. They forced a rapid surrender and avoided an invasion that would have been far bloodier. Under the law as it existed at the time, the bombings were not illegal. There were no treaties banning area bombing, no codified proportionality rules, and no legal framework for weapons of such unprecedented destructive power. The world had never seen anything like them, and the law had not yet caught up.

Why Those Same Attacks Would Be Illegal Today

Modern Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC) take a radically different view. Nuclear weapons are inherently indiscriminate. They cannot be directed solely at military targets, they cause long term radiation effects, and they inflict suffering on a scale that modern humanitarian law rejects.

Today, proportionality is judged strike by strike, not war by war. You cannot justify killing hundreds of thousands of civilians on the grounds that doing so might prevent a larger number of deaths later. Civilian immunity is central, and nuclear weapons violate that principle by design. Under the current legal framework, Hiroshima and Nagasaki would almost certainly be considered unlawful, even if the strategic logic behind them were identical.

How Modern Enemies Exploit the Law

Urban warfare adds another layer of complexity. Armed groups such as Hamas—designated as a terrorist organisation and responsible for severe



Ballistic missiles displayed with the Iranian flag. | Photo: Shutterstock

Deterrence assumes the other side values survival. If that assumption fails, the logic of deterrence begins to fail with it.

harm and human rights violations—fight without uniforms, embed themselves in civilian neighbourhoods, and use human shields. They operate from hospitals, schools, mosques, and apartment blocks precisely because they know modern militaries are bound by rules they themselves ignore.

The attacker still must verify targets, minimise civilian harm, and apply proportionality. The defender's violations do not cancel the attacker's obligations. This creates a moral and tactical asymmetry: the side that follows the law is constrained; the side that violates it is not.

Most modern jurists accept this imbalance. They argue that weakening these protections would lead to catastrophic civilian suffering. The law is designed to restrain the powerful, not the powerless. It is imperfect, but the alternative is a return to total war.

Why Nuclear Weapons Break the Entire Logic

Nuclear weapons sit outside this framework. They are not simply another tool in the arsenal. They are existential. A single detonation can destroy a city, collapse a health system, poison the environment, and destabilise an entire region. Once used, the question is no longer who wins a battle, but whether societies can survive.

Deterrence worked in the Cold War because both sides wanted to live. The United States and the Soviet Union feared mutual destruction. The same basic logic applies today among other

nuclear states: they may be rivals, but they are not suicidal.

The problem arises when nuclear weapons are paired with apocalyptic ideology. Elements within the Iranian regime frame history and conflict in eschatological terms. Martyrdom, redemptive suffering, and the idea of a purifying crisis are not merely rhetorical flourishes; they are part of the worldview. Groups like Hamas also draw on themes of martyrdom and sacrificial struggle.

Deterrence assumes that the other side values survival. But if a leadership believes that destruction can serve a divine purpose, or that martyrdom is victory rather than defeat, the entire logic of deterrence begins to fail. You cannot deter someone who is willing to burn the house down while still inside it.

Why the US and Israel Draw a Red Line at a Nuclear Iran

This is the core reason the United States and Israel fear a nuclear Iran. It is not simply about regional influence or prestige. A nuclear armed Iran would not just shift the balance of power; it would undermine the basic assumptions that have kept nuclear weapons unused since 1945.

Even if Iran never launched a nuclear strike, the mere possession of such weapons would radically change the strategic landscape. It would embolden Iran's network of allied militias and proxies. It would increase the risk of miscalculation. It would make every crisis in the region potentially existential.

The nightmare scenario is not only an Iranian missile. It is also the possibility

that nuclear materials, technology, or even a device could find their way into the hands of a non-state group with apocalyptic theology and nothing to lose. A state can be deterred by the threat of retaliation against its cities and infrastructure. A dispersed movement with no capital, no conventional economy, and a cult of martyrdom is far harder to deter.

The Hard Truth About Law, Power and Survival

The atomic bombings of 1945 were justified in their time because they prevented a far greater catastrophe. Under today's laws of armed conflict, they would be illegal. Modern law intentionally restrains powerful states, even when adversaries exploit those restraints. Jurists accept this because the alternative is unregulated destruction.

But nuclear weapons break the entire system. They are strategic, not tactical. They are existential, not proportional. When combined with apocalyptic ideology, they create a threat that no legal framework can reliably contain.

That is why the United States and Israel fear a nuclear Iran. It is why they use diplomacy, sanctions, covert action, and, at times, force to slow or disrupt its nuclear programme. This is not simply about dominance or prestige. It is about preventing a world in which nuclear weapons sit in the hands of actors who may not be deterred by the prospect of mutual destruction.

In that sense, the red line on a nuclear Iran is not just a strategic preference. It is a civilisational necessity.

And If Prevention Fails...

This is also why appeals to LOAC ring hollow in the real world. LOAC can restrain responsible states, but it has no power to restrain a regime that already commits war crimes as doctrine. If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, nothing in LOAC prevents it from using them. The only actors bound by proportionality, distinction, and necessity would be the very states trying to stop a nuclear attack—not the regime initiating one.

And once a nuclear weapon is used, the conflict leaves the LOAC framework entirely. A nuclear detonation triggers the right of self defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. At that point, the priority is not legal theory but preventing a second strike. The likely consequence is regime-ending retaliation, regional escalation, or nuclear coercion that destabilises the entire Middle East.

This is why the world cannot simply "live with" a nuclear Iran. After the first use, every option becomes catastrophic. Prevention, not reaction, is the only responsible path.



Israel Support Groups Meet in Auckland

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

Between forty and fifty people turned up for another day summit of the Israel Support Group leaders in Auckland on 16 June. The leaders represented a range of ministries supportive of Israel in one way or another. Bryce Turner from Christians for Israel (C4I) led the day's events with Nigel Woodley from Hastings assisting him. The C4I team hosted the day in Greys Avenue at the venue where Perry Trotter was setting up his Holocaust exhibition which will be open to the public in the weeks ahead.

Each leader gave a short intro into what they were representing which included concerns they voiced around their active support for Israel. One concern raised discussed the issue of Pro-Palestinian groups targeting Christian ministries who are standing with Israel. This can be groups harassing those known to be showing hospitality to travelling Israelis, through to those coming into advertised meetings to deliberately disrupt those meetings. Another concern mentioned focused on what appears to be dying support among Christians who in the past haven't been afraid to voice their support for Israel. While some databases of ministries supporting Israel are slowly decreasing due to natural attrition of an aging but very dedicated generation, those databases are not being replenished by a younger generation, which places a major challenge before support ministries for Israel.

One solution brought forward was that we take the younger generation with us. This could range from adding them to

our conversations about Israel to using parental or grandparental influence to take them to meetings which honour, inspire, and promote support for Israel. There is a Joshua generation of young believers waiting to be led into the truth about the Promised Land.

Perry Trotter who is the founder of the Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation shared his concerns around antisemitism among Christians which is embedded in some churches. Perry is very skilled in Holocaust education, a journey which began for him with a visit to Israel years ago where he met living survivors of the Holocaust and heard their stories. Some of those stories are captured in his exhibition shortly to open in the Auckland CBD.

The problem of Church apathy was also raised at the meeting, and a comparison with the German Church of the 1930s was made to our contemporary society today. One of our Māori brothers mentioned his concern about his people being hijacked by the Palestinian lie about colonisation, which states that Israel is a colonial enterprise undergirded by white European nations. Nothing could be further from the truth. White European nations have largely been undergirded by the Judeo-Christian ethics and principles passed on to them by Israel, and indigenous peoples around the world benefit because of these God-given principles.

After a nice complimentary lunch, the group regathered for the afternoon session. Former National MP and Family First podcaster Simon O'Connor was recognised before the Israeli Ambassador, Alon Roth-Snir, spoke. The



Perry Trotter, Bryce Turner, Michael Thomas and Johan Jansen Van Vuuren. | Photo: Perry Trotter

ambassador voiced his gratitude for those in the room who are showing continued support for Israel even in these tough times, and he encouraged us to continue speaking up against antisemitism. The ambassador is a seasoned diplomat with over forty years' experience, and his knowledgeable and well-defined talk produced a good Q&A time afterwards.

Ashley Church then joined us by Zoom. Ashley is an active and well-known celebrity on social media and often uses his platforms to advocate for Israel and the Jewish People. He was asked to address us around his expertise on how to protect a profile on Facebook, or other mediums, from being blocked or cancelled. This question was raised after pro-Palestinian activists campaigned against the profile of Yifat Goddard, an avid and staunch advocate for the Jewish

people in their fight against antisemitism in New Zealand. The activists deliberately targeted Yifat's account by complaining to Facebook in a deliberate campaign that finally provoked Facebook to shut down her account. The Palestinian activists do not play fairly but use lies and misinformation to reach their own means, as many of us know. After sympathetically hearing from Yifat, Ashley then advised the group to block profiles which deliberately are spreading falsehood and lies on your account by first blocking them from having access to your account and then deleting their comments. This automatically cancels their ability to be able to complain about your posts which they no longer will have access to.

It was a great day for building relationships and strategies for our advocacy for the people of Israel.

Despite Major Health Battles, Roger Ell Still Stands with Israel

■ Heather Moore

The Israeli flag continues to be waved in Palmerston North's Square whenever Palestinian supporters gather.

Despite several major health scares this year retiree Roger Ell is still compelled to show his love and support for Israel in the face of growing opposition to Israel.

"They are a people beloved of my Father and they are suffering," he says. "I feel compelled. I have a love for Israel and if you love someone you want to do whatever you can to support them."

After walking away from a serious car crash last year Roger has miraculously come through three serious health events this year.

The first was an attack of acute kidney pain in February. On the way to the hospital he called out the name of Jesus and experienced instant relief. He went home and got himself checked out by the

doctor and learned that a long-term medication he had been taking had been causing irreparable damage to his kidneys. "If that (attack) hadn't happened it would have killed me," he said

The second instance was a 10-day stint in hospital in March that resulted in the removal of his gallbladder. A gallstone had blocked the entrance to the gall bladder and infection had built up in the liver and right through to the lungs.

And then in April, Roger had a couple of days of chest pain so his wife, Georgina, took him to the doctor who took one look at his swollen ankles and said "Get this man to the hospital straight away". Roger didn't know it but he was suffering from congestive heart failure. After some tests it was decided Roger needed a bypass and valve replacement, but when the surgeons in Wellington saw the scan they said "We can't help this man." So he was sent home with some nitro lingual spray and a diagnosis of a hereditary

heart condition called Wellens Syndrome (abnormal ECG pattern) commonly known as the "widowmaker".

Exhausted and unable to hold a conversation or walk any distance Roger was watching Shine TV's "700 Club" when unexpectedly the presenter said "There's a man who has problems with his heart and needs a valve replacement". Roger took that as a message that God wanted to heal him and said "Thank you Lord. That's me." He immediately began to feel some energy return, and later that day went for a walk around the block. The next day he walked so fast around the block Georgina couldn't keep up with him. He later went back to the doctor and was confirmed fit again.

In a matter of weeks Roger was back in the Square with his Israeli flag.

"As long as God gives me grace and health I will continue to do it", he said.

An Austrian Voice for Israel in New Zealand

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel New Zealand

It is an unfortunate reality that academic institutions—universities – have become the breeding ground of far-left leaning citizens, all around the world. Correspondingly, they are generally the epicentre of antisemitism and generic Israel-hatred. This was demonstrated to the world when hundreds of hostages were still being held in Gaza, and university students began illegally occupying campuses around the globe. Nicknamed the “student intifada”, this was a frightening demonstration of the dramatic rise in antisemitism, albeit disguised as humanitarian concern.

Christians for Israel International operated a pilot youth study programme, *Voices for Israel*, in late 2025, which saw 20 young people, from some 13 countries (including two from New Zealand), engage in an intensive programme of education, exploration, and experience, “on the ground” in Israel. The group was exposed to often-confronting reality, giving them the ability to speak from powerful personal experience, and was led by a team that included the Christians for Israel NZ director—who regularly and unashamedly sang the praises of New Zealand, the ‘other promised land’.

One of the young people, Hannah Linke, was sponsored by Christians for Israel Austria. Having survived the intense *Voices* programme, Hannah has continued with university studies in journalism and corporate communications, albeit now equipped

with an arsenal of answers to address the growing tide of anti-Israel agitation we see around the world. Hannah’s studies in Austria required some exploration, some “real world” experience, and this led to a conversation with the Christians for Israel NZ team. Following this discussion, Hannah chose to spend her university holidays in New Zealand, engaging with the education and advocacy work carried out here.

During her visit, Hannah managed to combine experience of New Zealand—albeit in winter!—with the opportunity to attend events, speak with and interview various people involved in support of Israel, share of her own discoveries and experience, and bringing encouragement and blessing to our friends in the Jewish communities around New Zealand.

Hannah travelled to the very top of the country, Cape Reinga, whilst visiting Whangarei where she was welcomed by our colleagues Todd and Julia from ICEJ. Similarly, she was graciously hosted by our friends from NZFOI in Christchurch, from where she was even able to visit Queenstown. Every visit brought new people and new conversations, opportunities to listen, to hear, to feel, and to understand the “semitic climate” in New Zealand. Her studies proved useful as she wrote articles and presentations, and she even volunteered with the setup of the new Holocaust exhibition in Auckland, where she proved very adept with a paintbrush and power tools.

Countering the blatant misinformation that is continuously being circulated,



Hannah Linke with Sandy and Graham Simpson, who hosted her during her stay in Auckland. | Photo: C4I NZ

and the baseless accusations that are proclaimed as if they were fact, requires strength of character, resourcing, and sometimes considerable bravery. It takes courage even to address those whose anti-Israel sentiments are genuine and admirable compassion that is misguided by tales of “genocide” and “murdering children” that are complete fiction.

Christians for Israel maintains that the most effective and proven method of building strong advocacy amongst our brightest young people, is to take them to Israel to see for themselves. To know that there are passionate, capable, intelligent young people who can think critically, present fact, and challenge fallacy, is deeply encouraging. To those who met with, hosted, or otherwise supported Hannah during her stay, we thank you. We pray Hannah will have great success in her studies, and support of Israel.

Hannah’s Visit to Northland

The ICEJ in Northland recently welcomed Hannah Linke as guest speaker at their Israel Awareness Evening. She shared her personal journey and why she supports Israel.

Hannah has been to Israel several times. But after 7 October, it became crucial for her to be more than just a by-stander. She needed to stand against the rising tide of antisemitism. Hannah remembers working in a bookshop in Austria, where she heard a customer say, “It’s the Jews again.” Aware of Austria’s history, she stressed the importance of her generation speaking up.

Moledet: Protecting Israel’s Farmers

■ Jane Smelt

From the early days of the State of Israel (and before), thousands of farmers and agriculturalists have defended the borders. Often working in harsh and isolated frontiers, they have relied upon the members of the *Kibbutz/Moshav*/village to fend off thieves, or those who come to cause harm, especially as many are located in strategically vital places. This 24/7 defence was their responsibility on top of their demanding agricultural work.

In 2024, *Moledet* was launched; a protection network established for Israel’s farmers, designed with the latest technology. *Moledet* was founded by Tamir Abukasis. He recognised the massive responsibility of those who

were not only feeding the state but also trying to protect it; defending the land as well as working on it. When the non-profit was launched it was described as being a bridge between land and advanced systems, between the plough and operations desk.

So how is this achieved? *Moledet*’s security network provides farmers with field cameras, trained observers and a 24/7 monitoring and control system. For example, a family farm with a herd of sheep, vineyards, an olive grove and 8000 *dunams* grazing land. When the husband of the family is called for reserve duty, his wife and five children are left behind to run the farm and keep everyone safe. With the support of *Moledet*, the wife isn’t left alone but is given an extra sense of security.



A family farm within a moshav. | Photo: AI generated

Two years after its launch, *Moledet* operates a national monitoring centre protecting farms from agricultural crime, land takeover and other threats 24/7. It now safeguards 86 farms

covering more than 148,000 acres, with more joining the network. More information and how to support this venture can be found at <https://moledet.org.il/en/>



Righteous Among the Nations

In a world of total moral collapse a small minority mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values, risking their lives to save Jews. These remarkable people are now known as the *Righteous Among the Nations* an award given by the state of Israel to non-Jews who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust, when doing so was unimaginably dangerous.

On Thursday, 25 June, the Embassy of Israel, in coordination with the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, hosted a ceremony honouring the late Wladimir Riszko, may his memory be a blessing, as *Righteous Among the Nations*. The award was presented to his daughter, Eva Woodbury.

The significance of honouring Wladimir Riszko was made clear to the ceremony by the presence of distinguished speakers, New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Rt Hon Winston Peters, Simon Court MP, HE Alon Roth, HE Ambassador of Poland to New Zealand Patryk Błaszczak, and Chair of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, Deborah Hart. Through their remarks, they reflected on the enduring relevance of Wladimir Riszko's story and the difficult times we live in, marked by increased Holocaust denial and rising antisemitism. The ceremony brought together guests from across New Zealand society, including members of the Jewish community, Christian Friends of Israel, dignitaries, and many others, united in honouring and remembering Wladimir Riszko's story.

Prior to the Holocaust Wladimir Riszko lived in Przemyśl Poland where he ran a tobacconist shop. He was a gentile, but had many Jewish customers; some of whom later became his friends. From 1942 to 1944 Wladimir Riszko saved the lives of 16 Jews by hiding them in his home. He fed and cared for them, in a time where food was scarce, hunger was common, and money was hard to come by. One of those he saved later became his wife, Rennie Riszko née Rivka Schildkraut. In 1942 Rennie Riszko was placed in a prison inside the Przemyśl Ghetto. As a gentile, Wladimir Riszko had access and would often visit the prison. There he fell in love with Rennie, and later broke her out of prison.

HE Alon Roth reflected in his speech, "There are moments in which history is measured not only by the actions of nations and states, but by the quiet decisions of one person to do what is right when what is right is also what is dangerous, such as the act of Wladimir Riszko." Deborah Hart also spoke of Wladimir Riszko's actions, "We highlight the story of Wladimir's,



HE Alon Roth presents the Righteous Among the Nations award to Eva Woodbury, daughter of Wladimir Riszko. | Photos: Embassy of Israel in New Zealand

There are moments in which history is measured not only by the actions of nations and states, but by the quiet decision of one person to do what is right when what is right is also what is dangerous.

because it demonstrates that individual choices matter. Histories can sometimes leave us completely overwhelmed by the scale of evil, the Holocaust confronts us with industrialised hatred with the collapse of morality, with the terrible consequences of antisemitism left unchecked. We honour one man tonight, Wladimir Riszko, because he acted when action was needed."

After the war the 16 Jewish survivors and their families became scattered around the world and had lost contact with each other. Many of their descendants did not know the story of their families' survival growing up. In early 2021, Eva Woodbury, daughter of Wladimir Riszko received a call from the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand to inform her that someone named Sara Bank Wolf in Israel was looking for a Polish man who had saved her father and grandfather during the Holocaust. After a miraculous and emotional phone call between Sara and Eva, they found that Sara was the granddaughter of Mr Feingold, a Jewish policeman from the Przemyśl Ghetto who helped Rennie Riszko escape the prison. Mr Feingold and his family were later hidden by Wladimir Riszko in his home. Over the next few weeks, with the help of a list of names written by Eva's late mother, Sara and Eva found and connected with the remaining families of those saved by Wladimir Riszko. Together they submitted the request to *Yad Vashem* to recognise Wladimir Riszko as *Righteous Among the Nations*.

In Eva Woodbury's words, "As each new revelation has come to light, thanks to the remarkable tenacity and hard work of Sara and Lukasz, another layer of trauma is peeled off me. For the first time ever, I feel I can now lay my father's story to rest as well as celebrate it."

Connecting Wladimir Riszko's story to today, the ceremony touched on the enduring importance of Holocaust remembrance and the responsibility to confront antisemitism amid rising Holocaust denial and hatred.

Recent years have shown concerning gaps in Holocaust knowledge among younger generations, including a lack of awareness of the scale of Jewish persecution and the actions perpetrated by the Nazi regime. These gaps present a

concern for future generations in the continuation of Holocaust preservation and ensuring "Never Again".

As Simon Court MP, said in his speech, "Because to remember is to defend the truth of the Holocaust, to defend the right of the Jewish people to live safely and proudly in their own home and country. Because to defend the right of Israel to exist, to prosper, and to protect its people is more important than ever right now."

The very hatred that Wladimir Riszko risked his life to oppose has once again come to the forefront for Jewish communities around the world and in Israel, with antisemitic attacks increasing globally. In New Zealand antisemitism continues to increase in educational institutions, workplaces, and within civil society. Wladimir's story shows that even in the most extreme environment of antisemitism, each person has a choice to act with bravery in the face of such pernicious hatred.

Rt Hon Winston Peters (*pictured below*) brought this in his remarks, "Events of remembrance have never been so important against the rising threat of antisemitism globally and recent appalling antisemitic attacks, including in the US, Australia, and the UK. As you are all starkly aware we are not immune from this in New Zealand. It's why moments like this, to reflect on the values we hold and how to act on them with courage remain important."

Concluding the ceremony, Eva Woodbury received the medal of *Righteous Among the Nations* on behalf of her father, Wladimir Riszko, bestowed by HE Alon Roth. A standing ovation followed. The preservation of Wladimir Riszko's story, the fight against Holocaust denial and rising antisemitism is now in our hands.

As the saying goes, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire."



An Interview with Israel's Ambassador

■ Heather Moore

"He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata."

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people."

Israeli Ambassador to New Zealand His Excellency Alon Roth-Snir adds a layer to this most well known of *Maori* proverbs and says *"It is conversation, it is conversation, it is conversation."*

He sees his role as promoting dialogue and communication in order to foster co-operation and build stronger societies. He is proud of his nation's innovation in the areas particularly of agriculture, medicine and IT, and has a passion to see Israel share this with the world.

Spend an hour with this veteran diplomat and you come away feeling that not only can he "talk the talk" but he's "walked the walk" in the various postings he has found himself in. He is ready to dialogue with all who cross his path—from doctors and lawyers to church youth groups and Gisborne surfers—on subjects ranging from the history of the Middle East conflict to the latest agricultural innovations being developed in Israel.

The Rudyard Kipling poem *"If"* fits like a glove; "If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch". He is as "at home" meeting with Governor General Cindy Kiro to present his credentials as he is talking with a group of young men from an inner-city Wellington church.

Ambassador Roth-Snir is midway through what will be his last posting in a 40-year diplomatic career, and the current situation in the Middle East has meant some interesting challenges to navigate compared with previous postings.

"We are still under the shadow of October 2023," he said. "Unfortunately, a big part of our work is still linked to this. The ongoing political and public diplomacy is influenced by what happened and what is still happening in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon, and of course the issue of Iran."

While the ambassador presents the public face of Israeli diplomacy, you are also aware that he is very much a man of the people. Born in Haifa in 1961, the family moved several places because of his father's work as a water systems engineer. He attended high school in Tel Aviv, followed by his military service in the infantry. He then studied engineering but followed that with the entrance exams into the foreign ministry in 1986.

His first posting was to Cameroon, followed by the European Union in Brussels and European Parliament in Strasbourg. Then it was to Jordan,



HE Alon Roth. | Photo: Embassy of Israel in New Zealand

I try to hold deep conversations with many people, to hear their views and to be able to discuss the issues. People have very different views, but in the end we are all committed to the safety of Israel.

followed by deputy head of mission in London, and then ambassador to Norway and Iceland. He was between overseas postings in October 2023 so experienced first-hand the horrors of that day and the ensuing aftermath, both as a civil servant and as father and grandfather.

He said the work in innovation and education both in Israel and abroad did not cease after 7 October. He was personally involved in two aid programmes in Ethiopia just ahead of his posting to New Zealand at the beginning of 2025. He is particularly passionate about teaching young people methods and techniques that will enable them to grow their own countries' economic and social base.

"I am a great believer in educating youth to face not just the challenges of tomorrow but to build modern solutions," saying Israel has knowledge to share in this space.

As well as his appointment to New Zealand, Ambassador Roth-Snir is also Israel's representative to the Pacific nations of Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands and Niue. He has been to Samoa and is looking forward to visiting the other island groups during the next 18 months.

Israel already hosts Pacific Island students for short-term educational courses and the ambassador hopes to increase those numbers during his tenure.

While work in New Zealand centres

more around research and economic co-operation, in the Pacific Islands it is in practical programmes in areas of agricultural innovation.

In some ways the ambassador has come full-circle with a posting that includes developing nations. The emphasis of his first overseas post to Cameroon in 1990-1993 was about training their young people in areas of education, agriculture, small industries and women's empowerment.

He has said that posting was most meaningful to him because he could see the work they were doing was making a difference in Cameroon and other nearby nations.

"I can't forget the joy of seeing farmers totally changed—using Israeli knowhow becoming much better off as a society, as people and economically as well."

The ambassador said representing Israel had always been a more difficult task than it was for his counterparts representing their countries, but the last two and a half years had been even more so.

"The issues are the same issues but the gravity of these issues is much heavier." He spoke of the rise of the "ancient beast" of antisemitism saying it has "gone to heights that it has never gone before". He said the perceptions of people and media across the world had been shaped by their willingness to believe the "facts" as presented by organisations led by or sympathetic to Hamas.

As a result, news outlets are happy to present as fact unverified information

that has come from so-called reliable sources whose sympathies lie with the Palestinian cause. "You cannot accept information as being factual just because some UN official took it as coming from a reliable source," he said. In contrast he knows any information that comes out of Israel has been through rigorous scrutiny and verified before it has been released.

"Most of the time Israel's point of view is not shown," he said. "People are getting a very distorted point of view, which is very harmful. The ambassador notes wryly that whereas in other postings he may have been called on for comment by the mainstream media, in New Zealand it has been an infrequent occurrence. Instead he has taken the opportunity when asked by the likes of *"The Platform"*, *Family First* and *"Good Oil"* blogger Cam Slater to discuss the issues from an Israeli perspective.

He said when you talked about the Middle East the picture was very complex and to disregard the Israeli point of view did not allow people to come to their own conclusions.

But rather than focus on the negative he conveys his appreciation and admiration to the members of New Zealand's Christian community that has stood courageously (sometimes literally waving Israeli flags) in support of Israel.

He has travelled mostly in the North Island, and been struck by the beauty of the country and the warmth of the people he has met, speaking with (mainly) Christian-based organisations. For him the discussion and question time is as valuable as delivering an address.

"I would like to say how thankful I am to the many friends we have in this country. Many Christians who are trying to discern what is fact and what is not, are taking and presenting Israel's point of view. This is important not only to Israel but for bringing truth again to the discussion. I try to hold deep conversations with many people, to hear their views and to be able to discuss the issues. People have very different views but in the end we are all committed to the safety of Israel," he said.

He is grateful to Dr Sheree Trotter and Alfred Ngaro for the establishment of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem.

"This tackles one of the most important issues which is to bring again to people the understanding that the Jews are the indigenous people of Israel."

His message to supporters and dissidents alike is "Go to Israel, go and see for yourselves. I think it will be in total contrast to the gloomy picture the media portrays".



Embassy Jubilee History—2018 Onwards

Israel's Most Recent Ambassadors to New Zealand



In the days leading up to the Covid-19 lockdown, Minister Dr Megan Woods signed the bilateral Agreement on Cooperation in Technological Innovation, Research and Development on 5 March 2020. This Agreement has the potential to pave the way for more advancement in the bilateral relationship, but it is up to New Zealand to pursue and was no doubt behind the appointment of Israeli Isaac Bentwich as the new NZ Honorary Consul in Tel Aviv. He previously lived in New Zealand and is prominent in agricultural innovation and start-ups.

and was thus, able to advise with the process.

The next Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) was Yael Holan, from a migrant teaching background and a French-speaking family, the first one without an English language family connection. She was very keen to visit the Pacific Islands, understand new cultures and made many friends and contacts across the diplomatic and Christian worlds. Hardworking and personable, Yael saw out her three-year term, a first for the DCMs. As office manager, she was confronted with the office dilemma

deterioration in traditional media access, now with a semi-brick wall. Maya Simon replaced Yael Holan as DCM only six months after joining the diplomatic service. Her background was in mental health rehabilitation. Like her predecessors, it has been a baptism of fire.

Conclusion

Every Embassy has an ebb and flow. Work can start at 6am or earlier and never finishes at 5pm. Evening functions are common. Developments happen fast and diplomats are on call for the media and both governments. Diplomats have to connect with their headquarters regularly and with other offices abroad factoring in the time difference. Online evening meetings are mandatory.

Often forgotten by supporters is the fact that the Israeli Embassy forms part of the diplomatic community in Wellington. Attendance at events like Waitangi and Anzac Day are reminders of the historic links (e.g. WWI & II) and shared values between our nations. Diplomats attend each other's national days and forge alliances that carry forward. It's another method of developing relations between nations. At times, ambassadors will work together on projects of mutual interest. At other times, diplomatic isolation of the Israeli ambassador reflects the state of global affairs. Security matters are an added dimension.

The Embassy has benefitted from the knowledge gained from the diversity of regions the Ambassadors have served in: UK, Western Europe, Scandinavia, Middle East, Caspian Sea, Latin America and Africa. Some Israeli VIPs have been hosted. But it was not just Jews that were posted to Wellington; the Embassy has a history of including *Druze* amongst the staff. Local staff too, have many different cultural backgrounds. Some have been long-standing and fondly regarded. Everyone worked hard to make Israel's voice heard in New Zealand. But it was not easy. The New Zealand government clung to a two-state

solution framework, and had limited understanding of the complexity of the situation in the Middle East. The media had far less. Few New Zealand diplomats visit the Middle East, let alone Israel. The Labour Party, the Greens and Te Pati Māori became staunchly anti-Israel.

Over the last fifty years, the government of Israel has made an enormous commitment to New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Niue by establishing and maintaining an embassy and developing a special relationship with Māori. This has made it relatively easy for respective governments to communicate directly with Israel and we have benefited greatly. But it was not reciprocated, sadly, even when smaller Pacific nations have chosen to open embassies in Israel. Today, the New Zealand Ambassador to Israel is based in Ankara and makes four small trips of only a few days duration, annually, mostly to events like *Be'er Sheva's* WWI commemoration and to call on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It leaves little time to gain valuable information from meeting ordinary people, touring and gaining a perspective of the complexities of the Middle East. When the Embassy opened, the New Zealand government was in favour of supporting the fledgling nation. There have been highs and lows, but over time governmental support has generally waned.

Finally, the Israeli Embassy is like other major embassies in that it has a group of nationals from their home country resident in the host country; that form the backbone and for whom it provides important consular services. Where it differs, is that it has three added dimensions. First, it has the Jewish community. Then it has the Christians who make up the largest part of the New Zealand support group. They don't just give, they get involved, stand up for Israel and pray. Then there's God watching over the Embassy remembering His promises, and that they are the Apple of His eye (*Zech. 2:8*).

| Photos: Embassy of Israel, Wellington

Diplomatic setbacks, cultural connections, and determined ambassadors all played a role in shaping Israel's modern relationship with New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Covid marked the changeover of Ambassadors and Ran Yaakoby's arrival meant a stay in a covid-hotel with a young family in January 2021. By now Israel was employing a new appointment method with potential ambassadors pitching for the role. Ambassador Yaakoby was middle-aged and determined to improve trade with New Zealand. It was his first ambassadorial posting, unlike the final posting status for the others, and he threw himself into the role.

War

The virus restrictions curtailed his activities, but that was only the beginning. Everything changed on 7 October 2023. Israel was plunged into war and the Embassy on to a war-footing. Budgets and activities were cut. Protests outside the Embassy became frequent. New Zealand media was peddling a narrative and increasingly freezing out dissenting voices and all Israel-favourable comments. A major advance at this time was New Zealand's action in joining the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) as an observer member. Ambassador Yaakoby had been Israel's representative on this body previously,

when Robert Jones Holdings Limited (RJH), the building owner of the Embassy's premises, decided not to renew the lease and commenced building refurbishment. It was a bitter blow as the premises were spacious and well appointed. Worse yet, the story made the media. Later RJH provided an extension, but the message was clear—it was time to move.

The current Ambassador, Alon Roth-Snir asked to be given New Zealand as his final posting. His is the first fixed-term position as he will not serve the full, four year term due to his retirement. Having spent time in Norway and Africa, he is used to faraway postings. In temperament, he is the most like Ambassador Tzur. His goal has been to branch out into new communities and open conversations as well as connect entities in New Zealand with Israel in the fields of commerce, education and innovation. A successful delegation of Māori leaders to Israel was held in early 2026 and on the Pacific front; Samoa is building an Embassy in Jerusalem following years of work by diplomats *et al.* So far Ambassador Roth Snir's term has been marked by a further



Twisting Canada's Indigenous Story

■ Dan Donovan

Ottawa Life Magazine

Dr Sheree Trotter undertook a speaking tour in the USA and Canada where she visited Jewish communities and attended events in Los Angeles, Washington DC, Toronto, Ottawa, Victoria (Vancouver Island) and Hawai'i. She spoke in various meetings in universities, synagogues, homes and conferences. The following article was written by Dan Donovan for *Ottawa Life Magazine*, about the event that was held in Ottawa.

How Canada's Indigenous Story Is Being Twisted To Spread Antisemitism

The conversation about Israel in Canada has taken a strange and troubling turn. Over the past few years, anti-Israel and antisemitic activists have increasingly wrapped themselves in the language of Indigenous struggle, borrowing the symbols, vocabulary, and moral authority of Indigenous peoples to advance a political agenda that has little to do with Indigenous rights and even less to do with historical truth.

Last week at the University of Ottawa, two respected Indigenous leaders—Dr Sheree Trotter and the Hon Harry S. LaForme—finally said what many have been thinking: Canada's Indigenous story is being twisted, manipulated, and weaponised to spread antisemitism and Jewish hatred in Canada.

Their event, titled *Antizionist Colonization of Indigenous Movements—and our Response*, was not another campus shouting match. It was a sober, fact-driven intervention from two people who understand exactly what indigeneity means and what it does not. They came to Ottawa as representatives of the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, an initiative dedicated to restoring accuracy and integrity to a debate that has been hijacked by activists who treat Indigenous identity as a political prop.

The event was co-sponsored by the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA), a national organisation of more than 400 faculty members across 54 campuses committed to combating antisemitism in Canadian higher education and restoring the core mission of the academy: open inquiry, academic freedom, and the pursuit of knowledge. NECA's involvement was not incidental—it was essential. At a time when many universities have struggled, or in some cases refused, to confront rising antisemitism, NECA has stepped into the vacuum with a clarity and courage that institutional leadership has too often lacked. Dr Cary Kogan, a professor in the School of Psychology who served as the event host, embodied that commitment, guiding the discussion with a steady hand and capturing the urgency of this moment for both the Jewish community and Canadian academia. His remarks underscored why NECA's work matters: without faculty willing to stand up for objective truth, scholarship, and intellectual integrity, conversations like this simply would not happen. Their support ensured that the event unfolded in an environment where facts, not intimidation, set the terms of debate.

Dr Trotter, a Māori scholar and co-founder of the Embassy, began by grounding the discussion in the fundamentals of Indigenous identity. Indigeneity, she explained, is not a metaphor or a slogan. It is defined by ancestral connection, cultural continuity, and the lived experience of a people rooted in a specific land over millennia. "Indigenous identity is not something you can borrow when it suits your politics," she told the audience. "It is something you inherit, preserve,



Hon Harry LaForme and Dr Sheree Trotter at Ottawa University.

and fight to protect." By that standard, she argued, the Jewish people are one of the world's oldest Indigenous nations, with continuous presence in the land of Israel long before the rise of modern states or the political movements that now claim to speak for the region.

Justice LaForme, a former judge of the Ontario Court of Appeal and one of Canada's most respected voices on Indigenous law, brought a Canadian legal and historical lens to the conversation. He warned that anti-Israel activists have been attempting to graft the language of Indigenous struggle onto a conflict with entirely different origins. "Our history is not a tool for someone else's agenda," he said. "When people misuse Indigenous identity to attack another people's legitimacy, they are not standing with us. They are exploiting us." He argued that this appropriation does more than distort the Middle East; it undermines the integrity of Indigenous movements in Canada by turning their history into a rhetorical weapon for unrelated political goals.

Both speakers challenged the popular claim that Israel is a colonial project. They noted that the region's borders shifted repeatedly under Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Egyptian control, and that the Jewish state emerged not as a foreign implant but as the national revival of an Indigenous people who maintained continuous presence in the land for thousands of years. They reminded the audience that the wars of 1948 and 1967 were initiated by surrounding states seeking to prevent or reverse Jewish independence, and that the refugee crises on both sides were the tragic result of those wars, not the product of a single narrative of victimhood.

Their presentation also confronted a second distortion that has taken root in Western activism: the idea that the conflict is fundamentally about people rather than land. Historically, the opposite is true. Early political movements in the region focused on preventing Jewish sovereignty, not on advancing the rights of a distinct national population. Even the refugee definitions created in the late 1940s were based on residency during a narrow two-year window, not on ethnicity or national identity. The modern Palestinian national identity is real and meaningful today, but it was not the driving force behind the early conflicts. Understanding this history is essential, they argued, because the Canadian debate often treats history as optional.

What lingered after the event was not the politics but the clarity. Dr Trotter closed her remarks with a line that cut through the noise: "Indigenous identity is not a weapon. It is not a slogan. It is a story of survival—and no one has the right to twist it to attack another people." She reminded the audience that the Jewish story in the land of Israel is not a modern invention but "a continuous Indigenous narrative that has endured exile, empire, and erasure."

Justice LaForme echoed that sentiment with the bluntness of someone who has spent a lifetime defending Indigenous rights in Canadian courts. "When activists try to use our history to delegitimise the Jewish people," he said, "they are not standing with Indigenous peoples. They are standing on us. They are using our trauma to fuel their politics." He warned that this trend is not solidarity but exploitation—and that it ultimately harms Indigenous communities by diluting the meaning of their own struggle.

Both leaders stressed that acknowledging Jewish indigeneity does not negate Palestinian identity or aspirations. What it does negate is the false narrative—now common in parts of the activist left—that Jews are foreign to their own homeland. "Truth is not a threat to peace," Dr Trotter said. "But lies always are."

The Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem is not trying to win a culture war. It is trying to restore honesty to a conversation that has been warped by years of propaganda, miseducation, and the casual misuse of Indigenous language by people who have never lived an Indigenous experience. Their visit to Ottawa was a reminder that facts still matter. History still matters. And identity—real identity—cannot be borrowed, twisted, or weaponised without doing violence to the people it belongs to.

Justice LaForme left the audience with a final warning that felt aimed not just at activists but at Canadian institutions themselves. "If you care about Indigenous rights," he said, "then you must also care about Indigenous truth. And that means respecting the truth of other Indigenous peoples—including the Jewish people."

Whether Canada is ready to hear that truth is another question. But after last week's event at the University of Ottawa, it is clear that many Canadians are more than ready to listen.



The Challenges and Tensions that Face Israel

■ Sondra Oster Baras

International President | CFOIC
Heartland

Are we still at war? I have been writing this column “War Diaries” for over two years now and for the most part have documented the feelings, motivations and realities that we are facing in Israel since that terrible day on 7 October 2023. For most of that time, Israel was engaged in active war. Not only were our soldiers out there, fighting terrible enemies, but the entire nation was living a war-time existence. Whether we were running to bomb shelters to dodge missiles and armed drones coming from Iran, Lebanon or Yemen; whether we were managing the home front while our fathers, sons or brothers were off fighting; or whether we were engaged in ongoing mourning over the many wonderful people who fell in this bloody war, we felt we were living through an interminable war.

My son just recently got drafted once again for a 3-month stint, this time in Lebanon. Another son had been drafted on 28 February, the day the war with Iran began, and was only released at the end of May. They are both high-school teachers and have missed months of school. There are so many teachers in the IDF reserves which has seriously compromised the education Israeli students have been receiving for nearly three years. And then there are my daughters-in-law who are constantly dealing with their children and daily life without the help of their husbands. And this is going on amongst young families all over Israel.

Grateful for Every Calm Day

And yet, on the other hand, life goes on in a very normal way. We go to work, the children go to school. We are back to planning holidays, both in the country and abroad. We will be taking our children and grandchildren for a wonderful few days up north, renting holiday cottages with a pool and looking forward to the wonderful activities we love to do as a family—rafting down the Jordan River, hiking in the Galilee and the Golan Heights, enjoying a BBQ, getting lots of pizza pies, and just enjoying our time together as a family.

When we booked this holiday, we were much more limited than usual—we could not go anywhere close to the Lebanese border for fear of bombs and missiles. During these past few weeks, those attacks have been suspended, but we expect them to be renewed at any time. After all, my son is in Lebanon uncovering Hezbollah command centres and weapons caches daily, engaging in battle with terrorists. Hezbollah is still



Sarah, her friend and her goats—protecting the Land of Israel. | Photo: Sondra Oster Baras

The political tensions do not truly represent the real feelings in the country. We are strong and we stand together, always.

out there, amassing weapons wherever possible. So all-out war can resume at any time. But if we can, we will raft down the Jordan and thank God for whatever quiet we can enjoy.

My husband and I are also planning a week's holiday in Europe. Of course, we booked our flights on El Al because it is likely that something will happen and whatever foreign airlines are currently flying to Israel will cancel with no notice and with no sense of responsibility to provide us with alternative arrangements. For most of the past three years, we did not travel abroad. We were hesitant to leave the country when our children are serving or when missiles could start flying at any minute. But after all this time, war has become part of our routine and we are moving forward.

Israeli Elections

Part of our current routine is the upcoming elections for the *Knesset*. For the first time in Israeli history, the *Knesset* and government will be serving its full term. No one believed it was possible, especially given the fact that this government served during the worst tragedy in the history of the country. On the one hand, there seems to be more hostility between the coalition and the opposition and their respective supporters than ever before. Accusations flying from one side of the aisle to the other in the *Knesset*, journalists aligning themselves in support of either the opposition or the government, flinging accusations at one another—these are regular occurrences

for years now.

On the other hand, there is more agreement between the various sectors of Israeli society on basic ideologies and principles than ever before. Support for a Palestinian State is practically unheard of, support for decisive measures against our enemies is at an all-time high, and most of the country identifies more strongly with traditional values and are finding comfort in faith and Jewish heritage more than ever before.

Politics is a hugely divisive arena. There are arguments over priorities, the economy, the military, education and judicial reform. The current government is very right-wing and as a result, have pushed forward amazing developments in Judea and Samaria. But unfortunately, some of those accomplishments have been achieved by appeasing coalition partners with policies that are antithetical to classic Zionism. It makes you wonder—why can't politicians reflect the values of the people?

But the most explosive issue in the current political culture is our prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. While he is an extremely capable man, he has been in power far too long. Too many, politicians and ordinary citizens alike, carry such terrible resentment against him, for real and not so real reasons, that he is totally incapable of creating consensus on any issue—even issues that are in consensus. And the politicians are always so angry—always on the defensive, arguing against a politician rather than for a good policy.

So as we approach elections, as tensions rise, the challenge will be to see past the politics and remember the values and sentiments that connect us all. But the good news is that most Israelis realise this and are seeking new ways to create a political culture, to elect political leaders, who will represent the values that truly unite us and create consensus, cooperation and enable the amazing solidarity that we all feel towards one another and towards our country to be expressed in the *Knesset* as well as on the streets. It is possible—only time will tell if we succeed!

So yes, we are still at war but we have learned to live with war. And our political arena is a mess, not much different from what is happening in so many countries. But the political tensions do not truly represent the real feelings in the country. We are strong and we stand together, always. We have faced the worst enemies ever and we have prevailed.

A Visit to the Heartland

A few days ago, I visited one of the new farms that have sprouted up all over Judea and Samaria. The owners of the farm, a young family with four children, have been developing farms for years, dedicated to protecting the land from Palestinian encroachment. Now in their newest location, on a strategic mountain range between the highest mountains in Samaria and the Jordan Valley, the view is amazing. Located between hostile Arab villages and the nearby community of Migdalim, their sheep and goats graze on vast stretches of empty land, protecting the land and ensuring the continued safety of the people of Judea and Samaria.

Sarah hosted us in her home and showed us the exercise studio she had built and which now boasts 120 members. And we visited the goat pen. She is an extraordinary woman, mother, exercise coach and shepherd. And she is building up the land. Sarah represents the best of Israel, a woman who cares nothing for politics but is acting on her beliefs, with kindness and dedication. This is what Israel is really about. And when you support the people of Israel, these are the people you are helping. Thanks to your continued support and prayers, and with God's help, we will continue to prevail.

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



Jewish Life—Canada

■ Joanna Moss

We began looking at Australian Jewry, then French and British Jewry. We now turn to the New World, beginning with Canadian Jewry; which is small relatively and historically divided into French and Anglo components. Today Canada is described as the Europe of North America with Montreal akin to Ireland. It's the third largest diaspora community sitting around 400,000+, but Jews represent less than 1% of the population. This diverse community's story is most closely aligned with Australian Jewry for Zionism and the importance of a land of refuge. It is also facing an uncertain future with Bondi-like plots being uncovered just in time.

Overview

British conquest began in 1759, but by 1867 Canada was officially bi-national, divided by culture, religion and language. Franco Canada was French in origin, culture and language and Roman Catholic. Anglo Canada was British in origin and culture and predominantly Protestant, except the Irish Catholics. Jews didn't fit neatly into either of these two categories and thus were outsiders. Sadly antisemitism has always been a feature of Canada, noticeably amongst Quebecois and the elites. Newcomers in Anglo Canada were expected to become British in culture and temperament.

Early on, it was clear that if Canada was to prosper, it would need to grow and spread out across the vast areas to the west. That meant widening the source of immigrants. Mining resources were key to attaining this strategic goal. Multiculturalism became an official policy of the Pierre Trudeau government in 1971. In the 1980s, 70% of immigrants were from minorities. By the late 1990s Canada was an open society.

In the 20th century, immigrants established communities in Canada's major cities, encouraged to preserve their languages and cultures. This made Canada a cultural mosaic rather than a melting pot like the USA. As multiculturalism grew, the bilingual framework became less workable, and people with other mother tongues became known as allophones.

Montreal was both the dominant city in Canada and the most vibrant culturally. But over time Quebec's share of the population declined as western provinces opened up. Quebec's separatist movement of the late 1960s/70s sounded the death knell for Montreal's dominance as English-speaking Quebecois fled, including many Jews, relocating, primarily to Toronto. Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg were traditional Jewish centres. Later Vancouver, Ottawa and Alberta became smaller hubs.

Waves

The first Jews came as solo Jews amongst the fur traders and as merchants peddling their wares across the new frontiers and in the cities. They were described as living, "on the margins and in the cracks". By 1900 there were 18,000 Jews. Another wave came with the exodus of Jews from the Russian and Austrian Empires. They established vibrant Yiddish-speaking communities in Montreal with Yiddish theatre, newspapers and food. These immigrants became the backbone of the textile industry. In the 1920s Canada was seen as a land of opportunity and by 1930s, a Golden Medina. Then the door closed with the "none is too many" Jewish policy. Post WWII, Canada atones for her Nazi-era sins and takes in large numbers of Holocaust survivors adopting a refuge nation ethos for the MENA Jews many of whom were French-speaking and those from the Farhud (Iraq) massacre. By the end of 1960s the population had swelled to 200,000. Later, Soviet Jewry arrived and by 1991 the community numbered 360,000+. Then Argentine and other Latin American Jews moved north. More recently French and Belgium Jews arrived in Montreal fleeing antisemitism and latterly Ukrainian Jews. By 2011 the core population numbered 329,500 (Judaism) with 432,000 overall. By 2021 the numbers were 335,000 and 445,000 respectively. Today, the maximum is 450,000. Along the way about 30,000 Israelis found Canada agreeable. Since inception, many Canadian Jews moved south for a bigger community and better opportunities.

Ethos

Defeated British forces fled the United States to Canada after colonial wars losses. They sought to build a new country based on three values: Peace, Order and Good Government.

Being neither French nor British and small in number, the Jewish community looked inward for support, building strong institutions and a conservative, but diverse Jewish identity. Intermarriage was thus, not desirable and low by diaspora standards. It has increased markedly recently. Restricted land covenants and limited access to courses such as medicine and teaching reminded Jews of their place in society. Historically, Canadian Jews were locked out of jobs in government, major companies and institutions, clubs and community groups by antisemitism and thus self-employment and the professions have been major career choices. In the 1970s around 40% of Toronto dentists were Jews.

Each wave of new arrivals has augmented the community, strengthening an open, immigrant mentality and community focus that highlighted the importance of Israel as a refuge nation.



Historically a refuge nation, Canada is now increasingly hostile to Jews. | Photo: AI generated

Make-up Today

Around 200,000 Jews live in Greater Toronto and 90,000-plus in Montreal with smaller communities in Vancouver, Ottawa, Alberta and Winnipeg. It is predominately *Ashkenazi* in culture with *Sephardic* communities in Montreal. Canadian Jews are very highly educated.

Religiously, Jews are 40% Orthodox, 40% Conservative and 20% Reform. A small group is anti-Zionist and increasingly Jews are marrying/ partnering out and having less community affiliation. Canada has the third largest *Haredim* in the diaspora at 30,000 (9%) and growing.

Governing Bodies

Founded in 1919, the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) represented Canadian Jewry, overseeing immigration, settlement and government relations. It is now the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), focusing on antisemitism and advocacy. The Jewish Federations of Canada—UIA support social services, education and community infrastructure, while *B'nai B'rith* Canada leads community outreach, sport and human rights advocacy.

Key Personalities

Unsurprisingly, Canadian Jews have distinguished themselves in fields including academia, the law/judiciary, medicine, banking and business. In 1955 David Croll became a Senator, Herbert Gray the first Cabinet minister and Deputy PM in 1997. Global experts include Dr Gabor Maté, trauma and Gad Saad, sociologist and Irwin Cotler, Human Rights. Cultural icons Leonard Cohen, Seth Rogen and architect Frank Gehry. In commerce, the Bronfman family is prominent.

Education

Pre WWI and post WWII education was divided along religious/linguistic lines. Historically, Jews attended Protestant and state schools. Now 60% attend

Jewish schools. There are 74 Jewish day schools and *yeshivas*. All the major universities offer Jewish studies. 80% of Jews have a degree. Jewish students and academics are finding it increasingly hostile on university campuses.

Culture

There are twenty Jewish newspapers/journals, Jewish book fairs and film festivals and Jewish radio stations in English and French. Montreal's Jewish public library established in 1914 has an impressive collection. There are other libraries in Winnipeg and Vancouver. The Museum of Jewish Montreal traces the community's lengthy history whilst provincial and city JCCs offer cultural activities and host community events. Montreal's Holocaust museum and Vancouver's Holocaust Education centre strengthen Holocaust awareness.

Antisemitism & Aliyah

Jews have been accepted as one of many, minority communities in the Mosaic that is Canada. But remain under pressure. Increasingly, many Canadian Jews question a future for their children or their community. A highly educated group will be looking at education options closely. Heavily subsidised, Jewish days schools are very expensive, upwards of C\$25,000 pa per student. But students learn to read, write and speak in Hebrew; a valuable skill if *Aliyah* is being considered.

The Canadian government and workplaces seem unwilling to address the problems Jews face, especially the root issue (the polite pogrom). Jewish institutions are heavily fortified. Yet sadly, attacks have been frequent and serious, such as the after-hours synagogue spray shooting. In 2017, 63% Canadians favoured BDS. Even then nationwide support for Israel was 40%.

Since 7 October, many Canadian Jews are asking, when is it time to leave?



The Jewish Identity of Jesus

■ **Julia & Todd Vincent**
ICEJ Northland

For nearly two thousand years there's been an attempt, by some, to strip Jesus of his Jewish identity.

Jesus (*Yeshua*) was a Jewish Rabbi; He lived and ministered in Israel. He was born and crucified, King of the Jews.

After His resurrection however, through Gentile theologians, *Yeshua* transformed from the *Messiah* of Israel who welcomed Gentiles (*Ephesians 2:11-19*) to the Universal Christ. When I studied at theological college, it was inherent that post resurrection, Jesus' Jewish identity was not of central importance.

Jesus' mission was to offer salvation to the Jew first and the Gentile, that is everyone. In this sense, His salvation is universal. But He does this as Israel's *Messiah*, as the Son of David, from the tribe of Judah.

It's through a Jewish *Messiah* that God offers salvation to all. And as such we will better understand *Yeshua* in His Hebraic context.

Consider the book of Revelation. It can be a difficult book to understand; partly because we look at it through a Western Gentile lens.

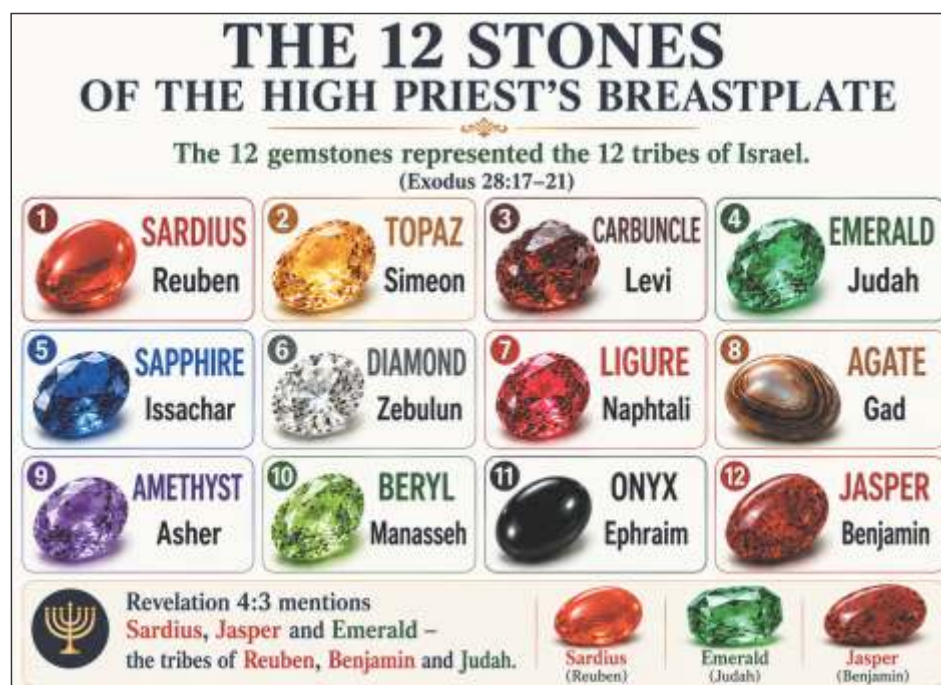
However, according to Richard Bauckham, a Cambridge Professor, and New Testament scholar.

"All first-century Christianity was Jewish, even when believed and practised by Gentiles."

Scholar NT Wright says,

"The early Church was Jewish first of all, and the intellectual and religious assumptions of its first members were (at least in the beginning) the same as those of other Jews."

Also, Biblical scholars estimate that up



The gemstones on the High Priest's breastplate represented the twelve tribes of Israel. In *Revelation 4:3*, the stones Sardius, Emerald and Jasper point to the Messiah's enduring identity as Israel's King. | Photo: AI

It is through a Jewish Messiah that God offers salvation to all. As such, we will better understand *Yeshua*, His mission and His message in their Hebraic context.

to 70% of Revelation derives from references to the *Tanakh*/Old Testament.

Because Revelation is *Tanakh* rich, it would have made sense to the early Jewish Church who were Biblically literate.

In *Revelation 4:3* we read,

"At once I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne. And He who sat there appeared like a Jasper stone and a Sardius stone (also known as Carnelian in some translations), and encircling the throne there was a rainbow that looked like Emerald."

A powerful statement is being made about the person sitting on the throne just by using three colours. And it's regarding His identity.

What would a Jewish mind of the first century understand by these three colours; Jasper, Sardius and Emerald?

First, note that the passage says, "And He who sat there appeared like a Jasper stone and a Sardius stone" (AMP). The significance would be apparent to the early Jewish church because these three colours are the same as some of the gemstones on the High Priests ephod or breast plate (*Exodus 28:17-19*).

The 12 gemstones on the High Priest's breastplate represented the 12 tribes of Israel.

So, what did Jasper and Sardius represent? Jasper was from the tribe of Benjamin and Sardius the tribe of Reuben. Reuben was the first-born son of Israel, Benjamin was the last-born son of Israel. Reuben in Hebrew means "behold a son" or "see a son". Benjamin in Hebrew means "son of my right hand".

These colours, Sardius and Jasper are radiating from the person sitting on the throne of God and giving us His identity. They speak of the first and last son. First and last, alpha and omega. They also speak of a son of Israel sitting on the throne. Behold a son—a son of my right hand.

As Christians we know *Yeshua* as the Son of God. And *Yeshua* often referred to God as "my Father".

To a Jewish hearer of the early Church, *Psalm 2* would likely come to mind.

Psalm 2 speaks of *Messiah* as King, verses 6–8 read, "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession".

Psalm 2 highlights a son being installed as king on God's holy mountain. That's the reference to Jasper, Benjamin, son of my right hand.

We can also think of *Exodus 15:6*, and *Psalm 110:1* which reads, "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"

What about the colour Sardius, the tribe of Reuben, the first born? In *Exodus 13:2* we see that the first born was consecrated to God. We read, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me..."

The first-born also inherited his father's estate (*Deuteronomy 21:17*).

So, with these two colours emanating from the one on the throne, they highlight a firstborn son and son sitting at the right hand of God. Everything about this points to *Yeshua*.

The last colour mentioned is Emerald "encircling the throne there was a rainbow that looked like emerald" *Revelation 4:3*.

Emerald was the colour of the tribe of Judah. Again, to a Jewish mind in John's day, Judah was known as the tribe from which *Messiah* would come. *Genesis 49:10* tells us,

"The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his".

The colour Emerald points to Judah, which in turn points to the prophecy found in *Genesis 49:10* of one holding the royal sceptre. The sceptre represented royal authority, divine sovereignty, and the right to rule.

With just three colours, the identity of the person sitting on the throne in *Revelation 4* is clear. But easily missed if you strip *Yeshua* of His Jewish identity.

Coming back to where we started, Revelation is the last book in the Christian Bible, it's post resurrection. And here we see the *Messiah* of Israel, born and crucified King of the Jews, sitting on the throne radiating His Jewish identity.

Could we get a clearer reference to His Jewishness? And if this context is important to Him, shouldn't it be important to us?



A Jewish man praying. | Photo: Shutterstock



The Afterlife According to Scripture—Part 4

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Director | Beth Melekh International

Heaven/the Heavens, are not Paradise. Believers do not ascend into heaven when they die. How do we know this?

“It’s appointed to a human being to die once (a final time in the case of the temporarily resurrected) and then the Judgement!” (Hebrews 9:27)

Not, “Once to die, then float up to heaven, then come back down to get judged, all so we can then reside down on the new earth where we started from...” But, “Once to die and then the Judgement!”

We’re held in *Sheol* until the resurrection, at which time all are judged, the righteous unto eternal life and the wicked unto perpetual fire.

Nor does the Bible teach a so-called “Rapture,” when we are taken away in the clouds of the presence in the open air (the Greek word describes low altitude air breathed at ground level) to the New Jerusalem, and not up to the heavens as some misinterpret.

Some say, “But Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire.”

Yes, into the first heaven, the earth’s atmosphere, but not into the third heaven (which is what Christians are alluding to when they speak of “Heaven” as a destination for departed souls).

We know this because Elijah lived and was taken away in a chariot of fire approximately 850 BCE and *Yeshua*, speaking in approximately 30 CE some 880 years later says, “No one has ascended into heaven (the third heaven) except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13).

Some say, “But our names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

Yes, our names are written in heaven in the Lamb’s book of living which will descend with Him.

Some say, “But we are told to store up treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Yes, we store up treasures in heaven that will descend with *Yeshua* at His return.

Some say, “But the deceased saints praise God from beneath the throne in heaven” (Revelation 6:9-11).

Yes, “beneath” the throne in heaven; however, according to Scripture, the martyred saints are beneath it in Paradise (*Sheol*), not in heaven itself, for “it is appointed for man to die once... and after that comes judgement” (Hebrews 9:27). You and I are also beneath God’s throne, yet we are not in heaven.

Some say, “But our citizenship is in heaven”.

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who, by the



The New Jerusalem descends from heaven to the new earth (Revelation 21). | Photo: AI generated.

power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21).

Yes, our names and subsequently our citizenship, are presently recorded in the heavens (as members of the Heavenly Kingdom which will descend). However, the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven and our residence will be on the new earth in the presence of God the Father and the King Messiah *Yeshua*. In fact the Scripture itself says, “We eagerly await a Saviour from there” and not “We eagerly await our floating up into the clouds to sit up there with the Saviour.”

Some say, “But the Kingdom of God is called the Kingdom of heaven” (Mark 5:10).

Yes, and is also within us (Luke 17:21), and is now come upon us (Luke 11:20), and is yet fully manifest (2 Peter 3:13), and the Kingdom will come down. After all, a king is king over all that belongs to him. Therefore, God is King of all.

Some say, “But when Jesus (*Yeshua*) ascended on high He led captives with Him” (Ephesians 4:8).

Ephesians 4 concerns Messiah’s redemptive work and the fruit of it. The text reads:

“Therefore He says (Psalm 68:18), ‘When He ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto humanity’ (Ephesians 4:8).

It is captivity—not “captives”—that is taken captive. *Ephesians 4:9-10* explains that Messiah’s ascent follows His descent and culminates in His filling all things, not in taking captives with Him into heaven.

Some say, “But when we die we will be with Jesus, and Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father” (Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 3:22; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12; Colossians 3:1; Romans 8:34).

Yes, He stands at the right hand of God

(Acts 7:55-56) and is present wherever two or three gather in His name (Matthew 18:20). As the eternal Word (Logos) through whom all things were created and in whom all things hold together (John 1; Colossians 1:16-17), *Yeshua* is not bound by time, space, or location. One with the Father (John 10:30-33), He is simultaneously at the Father’s right hand (1 Peter 3:22), among gathered believers (Matthew 18:20), with the repentant thief in Paradise (Luke 23:43), with Israel in the pillar of cloud (Exodus 23:21), wrestling with Jacob (Genesis 32:24-30), and inspiring Moses (Hebrews 11:24-28).

All these and many more queries are easily refuted by the same texts that inspire them, simply by reading them in context and in conjunction with the meta-narrative of the whole of Scripture. Scripture teaches not that we ascend to God, but that God comes down to us. It speaks of a new heaven and a new earth where we will dwell forever in God’s presence (Revelation 21). *Yeshua* will return from heaven to establish His throne on earth (Revelation 11:15), and the New Jerusalem will descend to the new earth (Revelation 21). Nowhere does Scripture say we will go to heaven to dwell there.

Lake of Fire

The Greek text αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων literally “in worlds everlasting,” reflects the Hebrew עַד עַד *ady ad* or לְעֵלָם *le’olam vayid*. This is a multiplication of forever and takes place contextually post-Judgement and therefore after the dissolution of the sin-affected world (limited time and space). Meaning, it can only refer to something that continues forever and ever. This refutes outright the satanic lies of both Universalism and Annihilationism.

“And death and Hades/Sheol were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whoever was not found written in the book of living was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15).

We cannot say, as some do, that because it is a second death it is a ceasing or annihilation. We cannot place this physical implication on the text because were we to do so, we would also have to place the same limitation on the life that the righteous receive. It would therefore not be everlasting life but temporal life. Thank God, Scripture clearly says otherwise!

Concerning the wicked and their eternal punishment *Yeshua* says:

“And these (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into living eternal” (Matthew 25:46).

The Greek αἰώνιος *aiōnios* translated here as “everlasting,” is the same word used in John 3:16 to describe the life a believer receives by trusting in the Son of God.

The phrases “everlasting life” and “everlasting punishment” share the same qualifying word “αἰώνιος *aiōnios*, everlasting.”

If, as some foolishly suggest, the word αἰώνιος *aiōnios* simply means “an extended length of time,” then they must concede that there is neither eternal punishment nor eternal life. A curse on that nonsense! In fact, as previously alluded to, given that eternal punishment, the Lake of Fire follows the Judgement and exists outside of the limited time and space of the sin affected created order, it’s redundant to claim that αἰώνιος *aiōnios* simply means “an extended length of time,” because in the context of eternity an extended length of time is impossible to measure to a point of ending. After all, if there is time in eternity there is no end to it (Revelation 14:9-11).

In the context of eternity, “forever and ever... day and night” means, forever and ever. The nouns day and night are simply used to convey to the limited time trapped reader, an everlasting reality.

The Lake of Fire will exist in God for eternity, because nothing can exist outside of God. It will exist distinct from the *Olam Haba* (world to come) but nonetheless, God will endure the suffering of the tormented by nature of His holiness and insurmountable love, forever grieved at the torment of those who have wilfully and perpetually resisted His sacrificial offer of loving reconciliation.

The existence of the Lake of Fire within God will not affect the righteous in the *Olam Haba* (world to come) because like the distinction in *Sheol*, the Lake of Fire will be divided by an uncrossable chasm.



The Resurrection of Israel—Part 4

The Sinews of Strength—Security

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up
New Zealand

“And I will lay sinews upon you... And when I beheld, lo, the sinews... came up upon them”. Sinews are fibrous tissue that attach muscle to the bone. It is a symbol of strength. AI puts it this way: “Sinews (tough, fibrous tissues like tendons that connect muscle to bone) primarily symbolise strength, resilience, and vital connections”. Ezekiel 37:6, 8

As soon as the bones were coming together in Ezekiel’s prophecy, the sinews needed to attach muscles to the bones. One of the biggest words in the vocabulary of Israel is “security”. One of the biggest catch phrases in their vocabulary is “Never Again!” They learnt a lesson from the Holocaust—“we will defend ourselves by ourselves”. With this in the psyche of the State of Israel, it is easy to understand why the Israel Defense Forces are among the most revered on the planet. And now after 7 October 2023, the catchphrase has morphed into “Never Again is Now!”

The fact is that since 1947 from the first announcement of the UN approval for the establishment of a Jewish state, Israel has been on a war footing. Even before the declaration of independence the Jewish people were having to fight their Arab neighbours who vehemently opposed the idea of a Jewish state. Israel was born with its defensive guns blazing. She had no other choice. Satan, the archenemy of God and everything that is God-ordained, did everything he could to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel—he failed. Now he does everything he can to destroy the reality of the State of Israel.

What many do not appreciate is that Israel’s strong defense force is not by choice but of necessity. She lives in a sea of sharks. She is hated by nations around her and treated unfairly by many more. I once saw a cartoon of a tug of war. On one side were world leaders who were belligerent toward Israel and on the other side was a lonely Israeli Prime Minister—Benjamin Netanyahu. No matter how much the world leaders tugged, with their superior numbers and powerful influence, they could not move the Israeli PM. Unbeknown to them was a huge index finger protruding from above anchoring Netanyahu to his stand. The Israeli Prime Minister was not alone. Those perceptive understand that the hand of God backs Israel.

The Bible predicted a strong Israel in the last days: “In that day,” declares the Lord,



2009 cartoon by Israeli artist Oleg Schwartzburg.

What many do not appreciate is that Israel’s strong defence force is not by choice, but of necessity. She lives in a sea of sharks, yet the hand of God continues to uphold and defend her.

“I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation...” (Micah 4:6-7). The Lord says to Israel, “Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed” (Micah 5:9). The Lord their Protector declares, “Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid” (Jeremiah 30:10). He states in Jeremiah 30:20, “I will punish all who oppress them”.

The lessons of warfare we have witnessed in the Middle East since the birth of Israel are clear: Though Israel has had to pay a high price in its own blood for the defense of the nation, it has extracted a much higher price from those seeking to destroy her and has come out on top every time. This is the outworking of the prophetic word of God. We have seen this from the War of Independence in 1948-49, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, right down to the present conflict from Hezbollah paggers and walkie talkies to Hamas terror tunnels and rockets. Israel has always gained the upper hand. As the Psalmist declared, “They have greatly oppressed me from my youth”, let Israel say, “they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me” (Psalm 129:1-2). He summed it up in verse 5—“May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame”.

When you understand Israel’s modern history, you must acknowledge that a greater power than Israel has been at work defending the nation, giving her justified victories over her enemies. In the War of Independence 6,000 Israelis lost their lives, representing 1% of the population at the time. Five Arab nations with regular armies, trained and well-equipped, attacked Israel on every side, yet by the time armistice agreements were signed in 1949, Israel held more ground than had been granted her by the UN partition plan of 1947. The words of King Hezekiah, when he encouraged the people of Judah because of the threat from the king of Assyria, are very applicable to the Israelis today, “for there is a greater power with us than with him” (2 Chronicles 32:7).

Israel has had to contend with many wars since 1948. In addition, there have been many terrorist attacks against her people, including the Munich Olympic Massacre where Palestinian terrorists murdered Israeli athletes in 1972. The Israeli raid on Uganda’s Entebbe airport in 1976 freed a hundred Jews from terrorists who had hijacked their plane. The Israeli Prime Minister’s brother, Yoni Netanyahu, was killed on this raid. He was the commanding officer and the only Israeli commando to be killed. Over 23,000 Israelis have lost their lives defending the Modern State. Compulsory military training and

service for all Israeli men and women from 18 years of age is still in place.

Amos declared, “And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God” (Amos 9:15). Attempts have been made to “pull” them up from the land. Every attempt has been crushed and will continue to be crushed in the future. The role of an unseen God and Protector keeping watch over Israel’s defence can be best explained by a lesson from the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

At 2pm on 6 October 1973, huge barrages of artillery, tank and airpower were simultaneously hurled at the Israelis: by Syrian forces on their northern front on the Golan Heights, and by Egyptian forces in the south along the Suez Canal. Initially Israel was stunned. Casualties were high. In the first three days Israel lost 50 of her state-of-the-art jet fighter-bombers. Coupled with that were major intrusions of enemy forces into their territory. Thousands of Egyptian tanks and tens of thousands of their troops had managed to cross the Canal and entrench themselves well inside Israel’s front. In the north the Syrians almost managed to push the Israelis off the Golan Heights. They came within minutes of crossing the vital Bnot Yaakov bridge just north of the Sea of Galilee. This was the door into Israel proper and would have meant a disaster for civilians living in the Galilee.

Lance Lambert shared a most interesting story in his book *Battle for Israel*. Lambert was a Messianic Jew living in Israel throughout the war. He was a great intercessor and no doubt would have put his skills to good use at this crucial time. He writes regarding the delicate situation on the Golan Heights: “Another Israeli captain without any religious beliefs said that at the height of the fighting on the Golan, he looked up into the sky and saw a great, grey hand pressing downwards as if it were holding something back. In my opinion that describes exactly what happened; without the intervention of God Israel would have been doomed”.

Israel’s secret weapon which her enemies cannot match is the Holy Book which contains the covenant promises made to Israel. We get God’s perspective in that Book—“Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal” (Zechariah 1:14), and “Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4).

Small Nation—Big Impact

■ Hannah Linke

Christians for Israel Austria

If one would think of Israel's diplomatic relationships with other countries, the focus would probably be on Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Yet in recent years, a new chapter has quietly begun to unfold thousands of kilometres away in the South Pacific. The opening of Fiji's embassy in Jerusalem in 2024, followed by Israel's decision to establish an embassy in Suva serving the wider Pacific region, marks far more than an exchange of diplomatic missions. It signals a strengthening relationship that could shape Israel's engagement with the Pacific Islands for years to come.

Although Fiji is home to fewer than one million people, its voice carries weight in regional organisations and at the United Nations, making its foreign policy decisions significant well beyond its size. For supporters of Israel, Fiji's decision to recognise Jerusalem and establish an embassy there represented one of the most important diplomatic developments in the Pacific in recent years. According to Ana Rokomokoti of Christians for Israel (C4I) Fiji, the decision did not emerge overnight. She believes it reflects decades of Christian support for Israel within indigenous Fijian communities.

"The relationship is at its peak today," she explains. "For many indigenous Fijians, Jerusalem is not simply a political issue. It is part of our biblical understanding." The opening of Fiji's embassy in Jerusalem therefore represents, in her view, the political expression of convictions that have existed within churches and Christian communities for generations. While previous support for Israel was often expressed through prayer, recent years have seen that support increasingly reflected in government policy. Ana herself witnessed this transition firsthand. As a lawyer involved in the drafting of her political party's election manifesto, she contributed to the section affirming Jerusalem as

Israel's capital and committing to the establishment of a Fijian embassy there. Following the election, the issue became part of coalition negotiations and was ultimately implemented by the government.

"I believe the Lord can use anybody. He can use a donkey. My appreciation of things is, I was placed in the right place at the right time for the right purpose."

The relationship has continued to deepen with Israel's decision to establish its own embassy in Suva. Unlike many embassies, the mission is designed not only to serve Fiji but also to strengthen Israel's engagement across the wider Pacific region. For Fiji, this places the country at the center of Israel's diplomatic presence in Oceania. Ana believes the new embassy creates fresh opportunities for cooperation that extend well beyond politics. Israel's expertise in agriculture, water management, healthcare, security, and innovation could provide valuable partnerships for Pacific Island nations facing unique geographic and environmental challenges.

"It raises the stakes," she says. "There is now an opportunity—and a responsibility—to help strengthen Israel's relationship with other Pacific Island nations."

For many observers, the Pacific has often been overlooked in international diplomacy. Yet each Pacific nation holds an equal vote in the United Nations General Assembly. Fiji's leadership therefore has the potential to influence conversations far beyond its own borders. Ana believes that shared Christian faith provides a unique foundation for these relationships. While political interests certainly play a role, she argues that many Pacific Islanders identify with the biblical story of Israel and see support for the Jewish state as consistent with their own beliefs. Although there have been isolated protests against the opening of the Israeli embassy, Ana does not regard these voices as representative of the wider population. In her experience, public support for Israel remains strong,

particularly among indigenous Fijians.

Looking ahead, she hopes the strengthening relationship between Fiji and Israel will encourage other Pacific nations to deepen their own engagement. At the same time, she emphasises that diplomacy alone is not enough. Prayer, she believes, remains essential—not only for Fiji but for the entire Pacific region. Her prayer is that new leaders will emerge who are willing to continue building bridges between Israel and the Pacific Islands, ensuring that the relationship continues to grow politically, practically, and spiritually. For Israel, the opening of two embassies may appear to be a modest diplomatic development on the world stage. Yet in the Pacific, it represents something much larger: the beginning of a new partnership between Israel and a region whose voice is increasingly significant in international affairs. For Fiji, it marks a historic moment—one that demonstrates how even a small island nation can help shape global diplomacy.



The Prime Minister of Fiji, the Hon Sitiveni Rabuka with staff and members of Christians for Israel Fiji. | Photo: C4I Fiji

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

■ Hannah Linke

Christians for Israel Austria

Christians for Israel is active around the world, including on the Pacific Islands of Fiji. What began in 2016 as a small group of committed believers has grown into a movement that has raised awareness of Israel in churches and even within Fiji's political landscape. Yet for Ana Rokomokoti of Christians for Israel Fiji, the true measure of their work has never been the size of the movement, but the strength of their faith.

"We are very small. But God doesn't depend on numbers."

For generations, many indigenous Fijian Christians have held a deep affection for Israel, rooted in their understanding of the Bible. Therefore, the organisation did not create that support but simply gave it a stronger public voice. One of C4I Fiji's most significant contributions has been encouraging Christians to recognise that support for Israel is not only a matter of personal faith but can also have a place in public life. Ana herself experienced this firsthand when she became involved in drafting parts of her political party's election manifesto, including its commitment

to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and establish a Fijian embassy there.

"I always say that we are standing on the shoulders of giants," she explains, referring to the previous generation of believers—including her own mother—who prayed faithfully for Israel long before these political developments became reality.

This attitude of humility characterises much of C4I Fiji's work. Rather than seeking recognition, the organisation sees itself as one part of God's larger plan. For C4I Fiji, the diplomatic milestones—the opening of Fiji's embassy in Jerusalem and, more recently, Israel's embassy in Suva—are seen as evidence that years of prayer and faithful advocacy have borne fruit. Ana believes that one of the greatest responsibilities nowadays is investing in the next generation. When asked about specific prayer requests, Ana asks to pray that God would raise up a new generation of young men and women who are willing to remain faithful and continue supporting Israel for years to come.

"Fiji Islanders and the Pacific Islanders need prayers, for the Lord to help maintain that deep connection

that we have with the Bible and with Israel."

As Israel strengthens its diplomatic presence in the region, Christians have an opportunity to encourage friendship, cooperation, and mutual understanding across the Pacific. Ana believes the new embassy creates fresh opportunities for cooperation that extend well beyond politics. Israel's expertise in agriculture, water management, healthcare, security, and innovation could provide valuable partnerships for Pacific Island nations facing unique geographic and environmental challenges.

God often begins with small things. From a few families meeting together in 2016 to, only a few years later, Fiji opening an embassy in Jerusalem and welcoming an Israeli embassy to Suva. These milestones, however, are not the end of the journey. They are simply another reminder that faithfulness can have an impact far beyond what anyone initially expects. As Christians for Israel Fiji continues to grow, its vision remains unchanged: to encourage Christians to stand with Israel and to pray that the friendship between Fiji, the wider Pacific, and Israel will continue to deepen in the years ahead.



Three Survivors, Three Stories

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

If you ask elderly people from the former Soviet Union about 22 June, their expressions will immediately darken. It is the day in the summer of 1941 when, for them, “the war began”—with the invasion by German troops. That was 85 years ago. In Vinnytsia, too, there are still survivors who can tell us about that time.

Jewish life in Vinnytsia dates back to the early 16th century. Although pogroms increased before the First World War and the Soviets later suppressed religious life, a vibrant Jewish culture endured into the 1930s, with *Yiddish* schools, a theatre, a choir and newspapers. The city’s Yerusalimka district still recalls a once-thriving community that numbered more than 33,000 people—about one-third of Vinnytsia’s population.

Vinnytsia epitomises blood-soaked Ukrainian soil like almost no other city. As early as 1938, the Stalinist secret service carried out a massacre in which it murdered nearly 10,000 political prisoners in Vinnytsia. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the subsequent arrival of German troops, the medieval city of Vinnytsia became an administrative centre for death and destruction. The “*Werwolf*” headquarters was set up just 8 kilometres to the north in the forest. The city’s Jewish population was initially crammed into a ghetto.

Death by Shooting and Suffocation

In April 1942, those fit for labour were selected, forced to work on railway construction and shot once their work was done. 5,000 women, children and the elderly, including new mothers from the hospital’s maternity ward, were shot and thrown into a mass grave; the newborns were buried alive. According to conservative estimates, some 22,000 Jewish citizens were murdered by the German-fascist occupation in Vinnytsia. The mass graves remain easily accessible to this day in the center of the city, just as they were when they were first dug.

Most Holocaust survivors in Vinnytsia grew up in nearby Jewish *shtetls* before later moving to the city. For the team at Christians for Israel, visiting these survivors is just as important as providing food and medicine to elderly Jews in need.

Alexander—Betrayed by Police Officers From the Village

Whilst Koen Carlier, head of C4I’s work in Ukraine, is travelling with some colleagues to the heavily embattled north to deliver 600 food parcels to the Jewish community, visits are on the agenda for me and my colleague Alina. It is astonishing that we are still finding new survivors to whom we can bring a healing touch of God’s love. It is also astonishing what magnificent flower arrangements can be bought for \$10 or \$15 dollars in a country that is in a state of active war. Perhaps this is precisely why people have such a great need to create and share beauty.

We had to earn our visit to Alexander. His wife had long shielded him from visitors, but today he is alert. Despite two heart attacks, his mind is clear. He recalls how his grandparents were betrayed to the Nazis and murdered, and how he and his mother were sent to the Shornishtshe ghetto. “We lived there like dogs,” he says. “After the war, only three mass graves remained.” Though much of the Holocaust is a blur, the hardships of the post-war years remain vivid.



(Left): Alexander with a heart-shaped waffle from Germany / a C4I gift bag. (Right): As Raissa is blind, she feels and smells the flowers that the C4I have brought her. Most of her family perished in the Pechora extermination camp.



“Dad came back from the war crippled. He was blind and could no longer work. Mum and I always got up at midnight. Then we took turns queuing for food until morning, all night long. There were four shops in our village of Kalinovka, and there was a queue like that at each one. We were given 35 grams of bread per person.”

“He didn’t speak until he was 10,” says Shelya of her husband. “Now he’s making up for lost time.”

Then Alexander also tells us about the Germans who came to him a few years ago and begged him for forgiveness on their knees.

Flowers to Touch for Raissa

Raissa is another survivor I’m meeting for the first time. Here, it’s her husband who looks after her every step.

“I’ve been blessed with a good husband, Grigory,” Raissa tells us. “He’s Ukrainian. He looks after me very well. We’ve been married for 64 years!”

When I realise that Raissa can apparently no longer see a thing, I almost feel sorry for the lavish flower arrangement we’ve brought her. Then it occurs to me to let Raissa smell the flowers. The next few moments are straight out of a film.

“Oh, what a bouquet! I love flowers!” Then Raissa very gently strokes every single flower—the lilies, the rose and carnations, the orchids and the asters. “What a bouquet! What wonderful flowers! What a special day you’ve made for me!”

Raissa’s maiden name is Noikhovna, after her father Noikh, or Noah. Her mother’s name was Pessya. Here, too, there is no need to ask who in the family was Jewish. Both her grandfathers fell victim to the Holodomor, the man-made famine under Stalin.

Grandmother Khowa had nine children. Most of the family perished in the Pechora extermination camp. “I still remember the gunshots and how we hid under the bed,” says Raissa. Little Raissa arrived with her mother and sister in the Mogilov ghetto on the Moldovan border. Eventually, they managed to escape. Raissa has an incredible memory. She has memorised every name and every date.

“I remember the day of liberation, when the Germans had to retreat and our army arrived. The whole village wept with relief.”

Mikhail—Copper Pans for a Loaf of Bread

Mikhail has laid the table perfectly and lovingly arranged salad and cold cuts on each plate. He speaks a heart-warming form of *Yiddish*-tinted Russian with a German-

style ‘R’. We are probably his first guests since he buried his wife, to whom he had been married for 54 years.

His parents were called Matvey and Sura, both from the Vinnytsia area.

“Dad went straight to the front,” Mikhail tells us as he serves us. “He never came back. I never got to know him. He was reported missing. That was terrible, because the widows received no compensation for that. I never met a single member of his family. It was as if they’d never existed.”

Right at the start of the war, Mikhail, just one year old, came to the Bershad ghetto with his mother. Their barrack was hit during a bombing raid. “I’ve no idea how we survived. Everything burnt down. I don’t have a single photo of Dad,” says Mikhail.

Hunger was so severe that Mikhail’s mother traded her copper pans for a loaf of bread. She sent him to stay with his aunt in the countryside, hoping he would be fed. But the Germans soon arrived, taking Mikhail, his aunt and cousin Boris to the Shargorod ghetto and later the Pechora extermination camp. There, his aunt recognised a policeman through the fence and bribed him with a gold locket. Using a horse-drawn cart, he rescued all three—along with six other children.

Five Kopecks for New Papers

After the liberation came the years of famine. “Mum worked hard to keep us alive,” recalls Mikhail. “She got hold of salt and then sold it at the market. We helped her, wearing our galoshes. We didn’t have any shoes.

“Mum had to get us re-registered after the war. All our papers had been burnt, after all. But that cost money—five kopecks per birth certificate. Five kopecks was all Mum had. So she could only get one child registered at a time.

“Once, relief supplies were being handed out. Mum managed to get hold of a pair of shorts for me. They were men’s trousers. They were far too big for me; it looked as if I was wearing a skirt. But there was nothing else. I had to wear them right up to 6th grade.”

Unable to afford university, Mikhail went to work after school. Antisemitic taunts were so common he mentions them only when asked.

Mikhail knows a little German, learnt from volunteers of the Catholic Max Kolbe Society, who regularly visited Ukraine and arranged recuperative stays for survivors at the Khmelnik sanatorium. It is a privilege to build on their work and bring comfort to these lonely survivors.

A Permanent Major Holocaust Exhibition in Central Auckland?



Rusty columns representing the Jewish death toll from the respective European nations. | Photos: Perry Trotter

At the time of going to press, a new Holocaust exhibition installation is about to open in Auckland central. Situated just 200 metres from Auckland Town Hall, in a spacious modern venue, the exhibition includes new works by New Zealand's own *Holocaust Foundation* (more formally, *Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation, Aotearoa New Zealand*).

The goal is to make this a permanent exhibition. The *Holocaust Foundation* has a relatively small window during which to convince authorities and donors that this is a work worthy of full support.

Holocaust Foundation co-founder Dr Sheree Trotter is a Fellow of the *London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism* and alumna of the *ISGAP-*

Oxford Institute (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy). According to Sheree, "There has never been a better time and greater need for Auckland to establish a major permanent Holocaust exhibition. Antisemitism has reached levels not seen since the 1930s and 40s. Across the western world, Jewish communities are reporting unprecedented increases in harassment, intimidation and violence."

"The massacre at Sydney's Bondi Junction in 2025 demonstrates that societies like our own, once regarded as safe for the Jewish people, are certainly not immune from targeted violence. Bondi shocked Australians and New Zealanders alike. It shattered the assumption that such acts belong only to distant locations—or to a past historical era. *Never again* has become *ever again*."

"The remaining Holocaust survivors are in their 80s and 90s. Sadly, their in-person testimony will eventually become unavailable. The marked increase in Holocaust denial—on the left and now even on the conservative right—along with the emergence of artificial intelligence, creates a particularly challenging scenario. Historian Niall Ferguson speaks of 'anti-history'—evidence-based historical inquiry being displaced by narratives 'almost entirely divorced from historical evidence.' Recently, Ferguson co-authored a piece arguing that 'the tools that once exposed and debunked Holocaust denial are powerless against AI and the algorithm...' He concluded that 'in the face of an avalanche of AI-powered anti-history, the real historians are powerless.'"



Some of the images of Auschwitz-Birkenau featured in the exhibition.



“These warnings underscore the importance of Holocaust institutions committed to preservation and communication of properly authenticated historical evidence - and equally committed to upholding the uniqueness of Jew hatred and resisting the creeping universalisation of the Holocaust. Our goal is that our exhibition—if we can establish it as a permanent fixture within the Auckland scene—will contribute greatly to the fight against antisemitism and Holocaust denial, and will become a major asset for educators throughout the city and beyond.”

The exhibition itself is the *Holocaust Foundation's* most ambitious project to date. It brings together various elements, including the *Auschwitz.Now.* photographic work which includes six large-format photographic prints—each approximately 1800mm by 1120mm—of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz-Birkenau II, shot on location in September 2019. These appear alongside fourteen framed black and white portraits of Holocaust survivors, each 1200mm wide. Brief explanatory plaques accompany the Auschwitz images.

Thirty three-minute survivor stories form a central feature of the exhibition, projected on an oversized screen in 4K. These combine testimony, portraiture and original music. Quite deliberately, the exhibition contains no graphic historical imagery.

There has never been a better time and greater need for Auckland to establish a major permanent Holocaust exhibition. Antisemitism has reached levels not seen since the 1930s and 40s, making this exhibition more important than ever.

The Foundation's first exhibition, *Shadows of Shoah*, was launched in 2013 by then Prime Minister John Key and was staged in nineteen galleries, museums and public spaces throughout New Zealand between 2013 and 2016.

Notably, new in the latest iteration is the *Circle of Names*, a dramatic and creative presentation of the nations of Europe and the respective death tolls of their Jewish citizens. This is housed in the repurposed structure of the earlier exhibition. Rust covered columns of various sizes represent the nations, with the size of a column corresponding directly to the number of their resident Jews murdered during the



The Circles of Names.

Holocaust. The columns are mostly housed and spotlight in a dark circular enclosure lined with rusted metallic panels. Upon these panels are projected the names of thousands of victims, along with their ages at time of

Jews in the 1930s and 40s.

The sagas of survival could not be more varied: whether sheltering in relative comfort, hiding with Partisans, constantly on the run, hunted like wild animals, posing as a Nazi, or enduring unspeakable cruelty and medical experimentation.

Visitors and public figures alike have struggled to describe the *Holocaust Foundation's* past exhibitions in conventional terms. Well known photographer, the late Marti Friedlander CNZM praised Perry's "curation of the images as well as his photography", calling it simply "a very profound exhibition." Dr Michael Shnukal observed that the work has "changed the face of the 'usual' depiction of Holocaust survivors from one of often-horrific scenes, to one of profound reverence and humility." Writing for *The Big Idea*, one journalist described the first exhibition as "a beautifully realised immersive cyclorama experience... a living memorial."

Entries in the exhibitions' visitor books echo the same general sentiments: "deeply moving", "technically awesome", "this will haunt me for some time to come," "wonderful body of work, so incredibly important," "deeply moving, superbly done, conveying what must never be forgotten".

Perry was recently asked by a Jewish friend, "Do we speak too much about the Holocaust?" He responded, "Clearly we do not speak of it enough. Why? Developments in today's society—surging Jew hatred and its infiltration or influence in so many of our once-trusted institutions—convince me that the Gentile world never learned the lessons of the Holocaust. We have sought to create a work of respectful remembrance but also an urgent call to confront the lessons we failed to learn".

Should New Zealand decision-makers and philanthropists grant the *Holocaust Foundation's* exhibition the permanent home its founders are seeking, in the centre of New Zealand's largest city, it will become a monument and a bulwark against rising Jew hatred—a strong stand against Holocaust denial and distortion.

There could be no better time.

If not now, when?

For more information, including opening date and visiting hours, visit www.holocaustfoundation.com and sign up for updates.



Holocaust survivor Benjamin Steiner, whose story is one of many featured in the exhibition. Benjamin lived in NZ and was interviewed and photographed in 2014

March of the Living, Auschwitz-Birkenau

■ Andy Fawcett

For many years my mother and I have volunteered with the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. But what with Covid, then the war, it was difficult to get insurance. However, as they say, one door closes, but another opens. Years ago, my mother volunteered at a *Sar-El* Army base in Israel. As a result, my mother and I get regular updates from *Sar-El* (volunteer programme). That is how I found out about joining a tour to participate in the *March of the Living* and visit WWII Polish camps. I think I am the first non-Jewish Kiwi to take part.

The *March of the Living* is a multi-nation annual event held on *Yom Ha'Shoah* in spring time. It's not small, this year about 7,000 people took part including 50 Holocaust survivors. It is called *March of the Living* because it is a living commemoration of what happened to many European Jews in the Nazi concentration camps during WWII. It also signifies that in a place symbolic of death, Jewish life lives on. This year the theme was '*Marching against Antisemitism*'.

I joined an 8-day tour with *Sar-El* Israel. The tour started in Krakow, Poland, an important Jewish cultural city, where we gained perspective by looking at life before, during and after the Holocaust. There was a mixture of nationalities, some families, singles, oldies and young people.

The March was mostly attended by Israelis and diaspora Jews, but also by some Christians and non-Christians who have a love for the Chosen people.

We marched the three kilometre path from Auschwitz

main camp to the Birkenau extermination site over a few hours. It was a blessing to walk with the *Sar El* team to support them.

At Birkenau, I listened to stories from a number of Holocaust survivors. I was amazed to think that Jews actually survived the atrocities here and at many other death camps. Those who shared their stories were sad as they remembered friends who were with them in the camps and are now no longer here.

There were times when I felt so angry that human beings could treat another group of people the way they did because of Nazi ideology. I felt happiness too in that some miraculously came through the experience alive.

Walking around I was shocked by the cramped living conditions in the barracks with three beds on top of each other. I also viewed the remains of the crematorium. When the Germans knew the end was nigh they bombed these facilities and the gas chambers in an attempt to erase evidence. Now I am part of the witness.

It is essential that we remember. Recent events, especially 7 October 2023, reveal that the world has not learnt from history. We must fight against antisemitism and defend the Israeli people from lies that are told against them.

My advice is—don't believe most of what you see on TV. Do your research and look behind the stories. There are sadly Holocaust deniers out there. What happened to the Jews at Auschwitz and Birkenau is true.

I would highly recommend the *March of the Living* tour for Christians that are interested in WWII history and



Andy Fawcett at Birkenau.

the Holocaust. It's a way to show solidarity. Sadly, a lot of Jewish people think that they are alone.

We need to support them through prayer, giving and visiting their nation. Remember that Christians and others called *Righteous Among the Nations* comforted the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Think of Oscar Schindler and Corrie Ten Boom.

The prophet Isaiah gives great encouragement to me when I read, "*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God*" *Isaiah 40:1*. For more details see *International March of the Living* <https://motl.org>.

Antisemitism—Taking Action

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

Police figures for 2024 show Jews are 18 times more likely than Māori and 30 times more likely than Muslims to be hate crime victims. Forty percent of reported antisemitic assaults occurred in schools.

The website of NZ's Human Rights Commission has only a single, one liner dated 17 June 2026 remarking "the growing issue of antisemitism in New Zealand." This leads on to their sole article (dated January 2021) specifically addressing antisemitism, with subsequent corrections playing that down.

By contrast, the HRC Chief Commissioner found it necessary to enter the fray on Gaza following 7 October 2023. In media articles, he noted "the profound power imbalance that exists between these two peoples" and that "Israel/Palestine was the homeland of Palestinians for innumerable generations before the arrival of Islam."

The Ministry of Education web site mentions teachings on Islam and meetings with Islamic groups, but nothing whatsoever on Jews, Judaism or anti-semitism. Clearly at very best we can expect only the most perfunctory attention from our government agencies to antisemitism.

Mainstream media and most of academia and the arts firmly support anti-Israel narratives. Former Prime Minister Helen Clark endorses the vilest accusations against Israel on her blog, while current Labour Party leadership refuse to even meet the Israeli ambassador.

The presumption—indeed the verdict—is of guilt, with Jews guilty by association. Contrary voices are barely tolerated at best. Unchallenged, extremist views become mainstream. Thus, the ground in New Zealand is rich soil for the growth of extreme anti-Israel and anti-Zionist views, readily morphing into anti-Jewish prejudice and action. Christians, concerned to be "righteous," are all the more vulnerable to moral entrepreneurs stirring up moral panic.

Against these forces stands a thin blue line, challenging such narratives and supporting Jews and the Jewish community. Juliet Moses, President of the New Zealand Jewish Council, is a leading voice against antisemitism, while the Holocaust Centre in Wellington bears witness through education. I've watched schoolchildren listen respectfully to Holocaust survivors' stories. In 2008, the Centre's Children's Holocaust Memorial—1.5 million buttons representing the children murdered in the Holocaust, collected by local schoolchildren—received national attention before touring the country.

The Jewish community urgently needs support. Sean Plunkett, independent journalist and broadcaster on *The Platform*, has been forthright in exposing the bias of the mainstream narrative. His understanding of Israel as less than the incarnation of evil comes from a visit there in March 2025 at the invitation of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

Among believers, Sheree Trotter, a Māori, helped establish the Indigenous Embassy in Jerusalem and, with husband Perry Trotter, the Holocaust and

Antisemitism Foundation in New Zealand, which is preparing a permanent exhibition in Auckland. Yifat Goddard, an Israeli New Zealander with the Israel-New Zealand Network, speaks widely on antisemitism and Israel, and helped organise a visit to Israel for Māori leaders that changed their views. Shulamit Ataya, also an Israeli New Zealander, has addressed a UN gathering for Indigenous peoples and represents Israel at the ASK HIM First Nations group.

In addition to Christian bodies that provide support for Israel and Israelis, several seek to counter antisemitism here and advance a Biblical perspective. Of course, there is Christians for Israel, led by Bryce Turner, and this publication. Others include Nigel Woodley's For the Protection of Zion Trust which gathers public support for the Jewish people's right to their homeland and has lobbied MPs and run counter-demonstrations to pro-Palestinian ones. Celebrate Messiah NZ provides materials and speakers such as Michael Thomas, Nigel Christensen and Zohar Gonen to equip church members in understanding Israel's role in God's plan.

Perry Trotter has written and produced podcasts on replacement theology. Similarly, this writer has authored a book to demonstrate the Jewish people's historic place in the Land and in God's plan.

Such endeavours bring comfort to the Jewish community and help inform believers in taking a stand against powerful anti-Zionist forces. We need new avenues and fresh ideas to reach out beyond supporters to those who yet may be open.



The Nakba: Catastrophe or Calculation?

■ Ilse Strauss

International Education Director |
Bridges for Peace

The Arabic word is *Nakba*. Catastrophe. It's the term the Arab world uses to describe the displacement of Arabs during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. And it's become one of the most potent weapons in the arsenal of those who seek to delegitimise the Jewish state.

But here's a question worth asking: Is the *Nakba* the tragedy its architects claim? Or is it a manufactured grievance, preserved and weaponised to serve a political agenda?

Who Were the Palestinians?

The Arabs—the forebearers of the Palestinians—arrived in the Promised Land as... wait for it... colonisers. In 638 AD, six years after Mohammed's death, Arab armies invaded and absorbed the land into the Arab-Muslim Empire. What followed was a centuries-long game of musical empires, ending with the Ottoman defeat in World War I. Throughout this, "Palestine" was a loose geographical description, not a political identity.

This lack of national identity wasn't unique to the local population but an overarching characteristic of the Arab world where the modern concept of a "nation-state" wasn't popular at the time. Instead, people identified first by religion, then locally as members of a family, clan or tribe.

When the British inherited the territory after the Ottoman collapse, they resurrected the name Palestine, bestowing it for the first time in history on a defined administrative entity. Ironically, the name had Roman roots, not Arab ones.

Following a Jewish revolt against the Romans in 135 AD, Caesar Hadrian set out to de-Judaise the Promised Land, stripping it of its biblical name and erasing its Jewish identity. Judea became Syria Palaestina in a humiliating throwback to Israel's biblical archenemies: the Philistines.

Palestine was thus not an ancient Arab homeland but rather a Roman insult, which the British exhumed 17 centuries later. A prominent Arab leader of the time, Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, inadvertently confirmed this before the 1937 British Peel Commission: "There's no such country as Palestine! 'Palestine' is a term the Zionists invented!"

From Wasteland to Wonder

While various empires fought over the territory for centuries, none developed it. Centuries of Ottoman misrule had



Crowd of people cheering and waving Israeli flags on Independence Day, Tel Aviv, 14 May 1948. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The Arabs rejected partition not to create a Palestinian state, but to prevent the establishment of a Jewish one. The war that followed changed the course of Middle Eastern history.

left the landscape barren and the population remarkably sparse. Before the Jewish homecoming, the land was thus not a flourishing Palestinian civilisation quietly passing ancestral farms from father to son.

Mark Twain visited in 1867 and famously described it as "a hopeless, repulsive, dreary, heart-broken land" of "unpeopled deserts" and "rusty mounds of barrenness." He bemoaned that there was "hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere."

This desolation didn't imply a complete absence of indigenous people. Rather than a total Roman purge followed by a sudden post-WWI return, a continuous Jewish presence remained in the land throughout the centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century—long before modern political Zionism—Jews already formed the majority population of Jerusalem. Ottoman census records, Western consuls and Christian missionaries stationed in the city confirm this.

Then the Jewish people began to come home in earnest. They purchased land legally, established farming communities, revived the Hebrew language and built cities. The land God had promised would "*blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit*" (*Isaiah 27:6*) began to do exactly that. The prosperity attracted people. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs from neighbouring regions came flocking as economic migrants, drawn by the opportunities

the Jewish pioneers were creating.

British Mandate records show that in coastal areas where Jewish development was most concentrated, Arab population growth between 1922 and 1944 reached 216% in the Haifa District. In inland Arab areas untouched by Jewish investment, growth was entirely flat. This means the population that would later claim the *Nakba* was, to a degree, a recently arrived one that had followed Jewish prosperity to the coast.

What Actually Happened in 1948

When the UN Partition Plan was adopted in 1947, the Jewish leadership accepted it. The Arab League rejected it and launched "a war of extermination and momentous massacre."

But here's a crucial detail. The Arab League never intended to create a Palestinian state. The land they planned to purge of the Jews would simply be divided among Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and Lebanon. A Palestinian nation did not feature in the plan because, at that point, there was no Palestinian nation.

When the fighting began, Arab civilians fled. Some left voluntarily, but the historical record is clear that many more fled because their own leadership told them to. The Economist reported that "the most potent" factor driving Arabs from Haifa was "the announcements made over the air by

the Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit." And then Syrian Prime Minister Haled al-Azm later admitted in his post-war memoirs: "Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave."

Israel's Declaration of Independence called on Arab residents to stay and build the country together as full and equal citizens. Around 160,000 heeded that call. Their descendants are the more than two million Arab full and equal citizens of Israel today.

The Refugees Nobody Mentions

During that same period, roughly 850,000 Jews were expelled from Arab countries across the Middle East and North Africa, stripped of their citizenship and property. This hostility was not a sudden reaction to Israel's rebirth. The narrative that Jews and Arabs lived in perfect, peaceful harmony prior to 1948 is another convenient fiction. Jews had faced systemic discrimination, second-class status and periodic violent pogroms across the Muslim world for centuries.

Israel absorbed these refugees while fighting for its survival under severe economic austerity, receiving zero compensation from the Arab states that seized their property. The Arab world, by contrast, chose to use the Palestinian refugees as permanent political pawns, shunning them in camps rather than integrating them, preserving their grievance as a weapon. Today, Palestinians are the only refugee population in the world with a dedicated UN agency and a hereditary refugee status that passes from generation to generation.

Catastrophe or Calculation?

Is it tragic that hundreds of thousands of Arabs were displaced in 1948? Yes. Is Israel a perfect nation without fault? Of course not. No country or people is. In the fog of a war for survival, mistakes were made. But displacement is also the universal consequence of war, a war, in this case, that the Arabs started, with the stated goal of annihilating the Jews.

The *Nakba* is real in the sense that lives were shattered. But as deployed today—as evidence of Jewish aggression against an ancient, rooted Palestinian nation—it's a myth. The Arab leadership ordered the flight, then spent seven decades blocking recovery. This catastrophe was not Israel's creation; it was the Arab world's gift to its own people.

Hugh Kitson—A Man After God’s Heart

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Hugh Kitson was a gifted Christian writer, producer, and director, who was passionate about helping his fellow Christians (and others) understand God’s love for Israel and the Jewish people.

Above all, he was a beautiful person, a loving father and husband, and a dear friend to many.

I first met Hugh in around 2005, and we immediately became good friends. Over the years we regularly corresponded and would meet up regularly at conferences and events. I have fond memories of my visits to Hugh and Noreen in their quaint home in the south of England.

Although he was British, Hugh had a close connection with Australia. He spent many years early in his career in Perth. Towards the end of his life he returned to Australia, together with his wife Noreen, settling in Melbourne where Hugh’s son and family live. He died in June in Melbourne after a long fight with cancer.

Hugh was best known for his many documentaries and articles.

I particularly love Hugh’s book *Jerusalem, the Covenant City* in which he tells the story of the city’s past, present, and prophetic future. He wrote the roughly 335-page book as a companion to his feature-length documentary of the same name, presented by Bible teacher Lance Lambert. The book expands on the film with additional historical background, weaving together the biblical record, archaeology, and current Middle East events to argue that Jerusalem’s history was “written in advance” by its prophets.

Kitson’s main thesis is that Jerusalem holds a unique, divinely ordained status: the city God declared as His eternal

dwelling place, whose fate the ancient prophets, especially Zechariah, foretold would become a source of international obsession and conflict “in the last days.” Like Lambert, Kitson reads the twentieth and twenty-first century struggles over the city, from its restoration to Jewish sovereignty to ongoing geopolitical disputes, as the unfolding of that covenant promise made to Abraham and reaffirmed throughout Scripture.

Written from an evangelical, pro-Israel Christian Zionist perspective, the book is intended to challenge Jewish, Christian, and secular readers alike to recognise God’s active hand in Jerusalem’s turbulent history and to consider its ultimate, eternal destiny.

In another collaboration with Lance Lambert, the documentary *Blessing, Curse or Coincidence?* (presented by Lambert, with the first volume subtitled *Israel, the Womb of the Kingdom of God on Earth*), makes the case that God’s covenant with Israel is the central thread running through biblical and world history. Its message centers on *Genesis 12:3*, where God tells Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.” Kitson unpacks everything he sees bound up in that promise: divine protection for the Jewish people, the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession, and Israel’s role as the vehicle through which God carries out His purposes for mankind, culminating in the New Covenant.

The film then tests that promise against the historical record, tracing what happened to nations and empires that opposed God’s covenant people, from Pharaoh’s Egypt at the Exodus through the biblical era to the fall of Rome. The argument is that this pattern of blessing and judgment is not coincidental but a demonstrable, recurring law of history, and it sets up the trilogy’s broader thesis



Hugh Kitson.

(developed further in later installments, including one applied to America) that a nation’s treatment of Israel and the Jewish people has real, traceable consequences.

Hugh’s last project was *Whose Land?*—a multi-part documentary (narrated by Hugh’s good friend Colonel Richard Kemp) that explores the question: to whom do Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria belong, from the perspective of international law? Through a series of interviews with historians and international lawyers, the documentary argues that the land truly belongs to the Jewish people, and that this truth has been deliberately distorted and manipulated by the enemies of the Jewish people.

Part one, *Foundations*, centres on the 1920 San Remo Resolution and the League of Nations’ Mandate for Palestine, which recognised the Jewish people’s historic connection to the land and their right to reconstitute their national home there. The film argues

this Mandate remains binding under international law, that Britain repeatedly violated it, and that the ‘Palestinian’ claim to the territory has no comparable historical basis, a cover-up Kitson says has distorted understanding of Israel’s legal rights, especially over Jerusalem.

Part two, *Two State Solution?*, picks up at Israel’s 1948 independence, examines the wars it has fought and subsequent peace efforts, and questions whether a two-state solution would actually bring peace.

The documentary takes explicit aim at media terminology like “occupied Palestinian territory,” which it argues has normalised a false narrative. It’s aimed at politicians, journalists, academics, and the general public, arguing from a strongly pro-Israel, international-law-based perspective.

Hugh is resting in peace, awaiting the resurrection.

Mourning for Zion

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

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” *Matthew 5:4*

Like the first, the second Beatitude is likely an allusion to *Isaiah 61*. In verse 2 of that prophecy, the prophet says that he has been sent “to comfort all who mourn”. Jesus applied that prophecy to Himself (*Luke 4:18–21*).

Who does the prophecy mean by ‘those who mourn’? We read this in the following verse. It speaks of those who mourn in (or: for) Zion: “and

provide for those who mourn in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...”

Why are they mourning? The rest of *Isaiah 61* speaks of the rebuilding of desolate places and the restoration of ruined cities. It is obvious that they are mourning the destruction of the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the royal house of David.

Throughout the centuries, there have been such mourners. A Jewish text dating from around 200 BC (*Tobit 13:16*) sings of the hope of Israel for which they long:

“Jerusalem shall be rebuilt. God’s temple will rise again in the city and endure for ever and ever. How happy I shall be when what remains of my people beholds your

splendour and praises the King of Heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be rebuilt with lapis lazuli and emeralds, every wall with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be rebuilt with gold, every parapet with pure gold.”

They were there in Jesus’ time too. The temple had been rebuilt, it is true. But it was still not quite as God had intended. Moreover, there was no king from the house of David on the throne in Jerusalem. They mourned and prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem. Simeon was one such person. He was awaiting the consolation of Israel (*Luke 2:25*) and was able to sing of Jesus coming to fulfil that promise.

They are still there in Israel. Every day it is said in the prayers: “Build Jerusalem, your city, speedily and in our days.” How many people, even now, look forward to the consolation of Israel?

Recommended Reading

A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

by Craig A. Evans and David Mishkin (eds.)

Book review by Kees de Vreugd

For centuries, church and theology read the Bible with little awareness that Jesus was a Jew. Instead, traditional theology often portrayed Him as opposed to Israel and Jewish tradition. In the 19th century, Jewish historians began reclaiming Jesus' Jewish identity—a perspective aptly described by the German term *Heimholung Jesu* ("bringing Jesus home").

Since the mid-20th century, much research has been carried out exploring the Jewishness of Jesus. This book attempts to make that perspective accessible to a broader public. A special feature of the book is that about half of the contributors are Jews and Israeli citizens who believe in Jesus as the *Messiah*. This is part of the "homecoming of Jesus".

The book is structured according to the image of a (olive)tree. Connecting to the roots is not just going back to the beginning, but drawing food from the source. The Jewish roots of Jesus are first and foremost in the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Old Testament). The first part of the book is devoted to an outline of central themes in the Old Testament, relevant for understanding the New Testament: God's plan for Israel and for the nations; the *Sabbath* and the Biblical feasts, and the function of the tabernacle and the temple. This is the soil in which Jesus is rooted.

Part II explores the Roots: the Jewish world of Jesus, and how His life, identity and teachings are fully Jewish. Part III goes on with the trunk: the Jewish disciples and the Jewish apostle Paul, as well as the Jewishness of the message of the resurrection. The reclamation of Paul as a Jew is still under much debate. Personally, I would advocate for a stronger ongoing devotion of Paul to the *Torah* and the Jewish tradition than the author of this particular paragraph does. In my view, and in light of other remarks by Paul, *Ephesians 2:15* cannot mean that Christ abolished the Law. Rather, He abolished the hostility with regard to the Law.

Part IV, the Branches, describes the "parting of the Ways" of early Judaism and early Christianity, and the mending of the Ways in our own time with the rise of Jewish and Arab believers in Jesus in Israel. I would like to see a more open attitude towards, and positive affirmation of, orthodox Judaism in this regard. But that might require a handbook of its own.

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

"... all Israel will be saved, ..." *Romans 11:26*

Israel has a future! When the measure appointed by God for the non-Jewish world is full, all of Israel will be saved. But what does this mean?

The "all of Israel" is related to the "part of Israel" in the previous verse. Therefore, it cannot be understood in any other way than by the totality of the people of Israel. This refers to those people, some of whom have previously experienced hardening. Furthermore, the overall context of *Romans 9-11* uses the terms "Israel" or "Israelite" to refer to the Jewish people, which is why it must be ruled out that this is referring to a "spiritual" Israel that is to be saved.

"All Israel will be saved" means that the entire Jewish people has a future as a Jewish people, as "Israel." Adolf Schlatter concludes from this text that "Israel will also have its special position as a united whole in the transfigured form of the divine kingdom." Martin Schacke even comes to the conclusion that "every descendant of Abraham, of all times, belongs to it" (compare *Isaiah 45:25*).

The *Mishnah* (*Tractate Sanhedrin 10:1*), like Paul, sees that "all Israel has a share in the world to come." The rabbinic teachers base this claim on *Isaiah 60:21*, where the Old Testament prophet may also have had the image of the olive tree in mind: "Your people are all righteous. They will inherit the land forever, the offspring of my planting, the work of my hands for glory."

According to Jewish teaching, however, this does not mean that everyone who can prove their descent from Abraham automatically has a guarantee of salvation. The *Mishnah* text continues immediately: "The following have no part in the world to come", naming three groups of Abraham's descendants who will not belong to "all of Israel":

- first, "whoever says that the resurrection of the dead cannot be deduced from the *Torah*";
- secondly, "whoever says that the *Torah* is not from heaven"; and
- third, "the Epicurean".

As is so often the case in Jewish biblical interpretation, it is about admonition, which is intended to protect against erroneous paths and encourage the reversal of undesirable developments.

It is interesting to see how far the

Israel Has a Future



Beautiful sunset view of Bethlehem from the olive grove in Shepherds Field. | Photo: Shutterstock

rabbinic teachings correspond to the statements of the *Messiah* Jesus in this case too.

First, "whoever says that the resurrection of the dead cannot be derived from the *Torah*": In his debate with the Sadducees, who categorically denied the resurrection of the dead, Jesus did not base his arguments on the prophet Daniel, who is generally considered the first witness to a doctrine of resurrection in the Old Testament (*Daniel 12:13*). He argues in a very "Pharisaic" way from the *Torah*, the five books of Moses, and proves his doctrine of the resurrection: "Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said of God when he declared: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'" (*Exodus 3:6*)? "The one true God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (*Matthew 22:31*).

Secondly, "whoever says the *Torah* is not from heaven": Jesus also attributes eternal value to the way we deal with Holy Scripture. He admonishes his disciples: "Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, neither a iota, not a dot will pass from the *Torah* until all is accomplished. Whoever therefore breaks one of the smallest of these rules and teaches men so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (*Matthew 5:18*).

Thirdly, "the Epicurean": The "Epicurean" is first and foremost a follower of Epicurean philosophy and thus an atheist. The *Gemara*, the rabbinic interpretation of the *Mishnah* in the *Talmud*, then explains the Epicurean even more precisely as someone who "speaks contemptuously of the Bible and its students."

In *Matthew 12*, we meet Jesus in a situation where the Pharisees are speaking contemptuously about the Holy Spirit, who works through the Scriptures and its disciples. Jesus explains to his disciples: "All sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. If anyone speaks against the Son of Man, he will be forgiven. But if anyone speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come" (*Matthew 12:31*).

"All Israel will be saved!" is the mystery that Paul reveals to his Roman readers. For Paul, the assurance of the salvation of 'all Israel' does not arise from any speculations he makes, but quite simply from reading his Bible.

Paul does not say anything here about when this will happen—apart from the fact that first the "fullness of the Gentiles" must have been reached. We can only speculate about the exact number of this full number of Gentiles, as well as about whether the salvation of all Israel will occur immediately after the full number of Gentiles has been reached, or whether there will be a period of time in between. For Paul, it is crucial that his Gentile Christian readers understand a salvation-historical connection between cause and effect. Within this context, they should recognise their position towards Israel and fulfill their duty to the Jewish people.

This is also evident from the way verse 26 is connected to verse 25. The apostle does not write: "And then all Israel will be saved." He adds verse 26 not temporally, but causally to the previous sentence: "And so—in this way!—all Israel will be saved."

Rosh Hashanah: The Call of the Shofar



Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu blowing the Shofar in northern Israel, 29 October 2025. | Photo: Michael Giladi/Flash90

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

The Jewish New Year falls in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. How does that work?

The seventh day has a special significance in the Bible. It is the *Sabbath*, set apart by God as the day on which He Himself rested from His work of creation, and the day He gave to Israel as a sign of His covenant.

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

Just as the seventh day has a special meaning, so too has the seventh month. On the calendar of festivals that God gave to Israel, two feasts fall in the spring: *Passover* in the first month (the beginning—literally: head—of the months, *Exodus 12*) and *Shavuot* seven weeks later. The third major feast, *Sukkot*, falls in the autumn, in the seventh month. Five days before *Sukkot* comes *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. But the seventh month itself begins with a special day. The first day of the seventh month is to be a complete day of rest. Moreover, it is announced in a distinctive way—by the sounding of the *shofar* (*Leviticus 23:24*). Therefore it is also called the ‘day of blowing’ [*the shofar*, *Numbers 29:1*].

Over the course of time, this day came to be known as *Rosh Hashanah*. The

term itself literally means ‘Head/beginning of the year’ and is derived from the Bible (*Ezekiel 40:1*), although there it does not refer to this particular day. The seventh month is, however, the month in which important years such as the sabbatical year and the jubilee year begin. During the Temple period it was also the new year for determining the tithes of vegetables. The *Mishnah*—the corpus of Jewish oral tradition—moreover mentions three other New Years within the Jewish calendar: the New Year of kings and festivals on 1

Nisan (the month of *Passover*, in the spring); the New Year for the tithe of livestock (August); and the New Year of the trees (January/February). These various New Years may be compared to our fiscal year, civil year, and ecclesiastical year, each with its own cycle.

So much for the technical aspect. What, then, is the significance of sounding the *shofar*? Maimonides, one of the great Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, says that the *shofar* is intended to awaken those who are asleep. It may be a call to repentance and self-examination, an alarm warning of approaching danger, or a cry of grateful relief after danger has passed. The *shofar* also proclaims the kingship of God.

The ram’s horn recalls the binding of Isaac (*Genesis 22*). Isaac was bound upon

the altar, but God provided a ram in his place. An ancient Jewish tradition says that nothing of this ram was lost: its ashes lay beneath the altar of the Temple. The strings of David’s harp were made from its sinews. Its left horn was sounded on Mount Sinai, and its right horn will be sounded in the last days, as it is written: “*And in that day a great trumpet will be blown*” (*Isaiah 27:13*), and “*The Lord will be King over all the earth*” (*Zechariah 14:9*). In other words, the ram symbolises the life of Israel, from its origin to the consummation of its history. Today, this includes both the destruction of the Jewish people in the *Shoah* and their rebirth in the State of Israel—a *shofar* blast in our own time, not only for Israel, but especially for the Church and for the whole world.

Jesus said that when the Son of Man comes in glory, He “*will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds*” (*Matthew 24:31*). This is how *Isaiah 27:13* continues: “*And those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were dispersed in the land of Egypt shall come.*”

The *shofar* sounds today to gather Israel. But it also sounds to awaken the Church and the nations. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar speaks of the future. *Rosh Hashanah* is a day of judgment, but also a day that proclaims God’s kingship. Zechariah prophesies how God will reign as King in Jerusalem, and how the nations will then come to bow before the God of Israel together with Israel at the Feast of Tabernacles. May the Church and the nations hear the blast of the *shofar* and take its message to heart.

Biblical Roots By David Nekrutman

Weapons of Perception

Some of the greatest spiritual battles are not fought with dramatic acts of rebellion—they begin with a simple conversation. Long before Eve reached for the forbidden fruit, the serpent first sought to reshape her perception of reality. *Genesis 3* reminds us that the enemy’s greatest weapon is often not force, but distortion.

Most English translations present the serpent’s opening words in *Genesis 3:1* as a complete question: “*Did God really say...?*” Yet the Hebrew text paints a far more vivid scene. Rather than polished dialogue, we encounter an interrupted conversation filled with unfinished thoughts and rapid exchanges.

The serpent begins with a fragment: “*Even if God said not to eat from all the trees...*” Before he can finish, the woman interrupts him to correct the obvious falsehood. She explains that every tree is available except one in the middle of the garden, though she adds an extra safeguard by saying they must not even touch it. Then, before she completes her thought, the serpent interrupts her with his boldest lie: “*You certainly will not die... You will become like God, knowing good and evil.*”

This conversational pattern is intentional. The Hebrew word *aph* (“even”) would never begin a sentence. Scripture allows us to step into a discussion already in progress, preserving its raw, unfinished nature instead of smoothing it into polished dialogue. Remarkably, the biblical narrator steps back and lets us listen. Rather than merely telling us what happened, God invites us to witness how deception unfolds.

Cognizant of God’s command, the serpent used his exaggerated statement as bait. By provoking Eve to respond, he successfully redirected her attention. Instead of reflecting on God’s overwhelming generosity—the countless trees freely given—her focus narrowed to the one restriction. Once her attention shifted, the serpent introduced an entirely false narrative that questioned God’s character and promises.

This remains one of Satan’s oldest strategies. He rarely begins by inviting us into outright rebellion. Instead, he distorts reality, plants doubt and reframes God’s goodness until we begin viewing His commands as limitations rather than loving protection.

Genesis 3 is therefore more than the story of humanity’s first temptation. It is a mirror exposing the conversations that still take place within our own hearts. Every day we are invited to decide whose voice will shape our perception of reality. Wisdom begins by recognising the serpent’s distortions and intentionally returning to the trustworthy voice of God.

Iran, the Bible, and Shia Islam

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

When it comes to global conflicts, the Middle East is in a class of its own. Where other regions battle over history, ideology, geography and politics, the Mideast has the added dimensions of spiritual and theological causation. To gain more insight into the latter, we need look no further than the Bible itself. We will also briefly explore Shia Islam.

The Bible

The name 'Iran,' which means 'land of the Aryans,' is not found in the Bible, since the name was only adopted in 1935. Before then it was known in the Bible as 'Persia' (29 x), 'Persians' (5 x), 'Persian' (2x), 'Elam' (28 x), 'Elamites' (2 x), 'Parthians' (1 x), 'Media' (6 x), and 'Medes' (14 x).

The first mention of the Iran region was in *Genesis 14* when the king of Elam, Chedorlaomer, encountered Abraham at the battle of the kings. Persia's imperial past (539-333 BC) meant that it had a prominent place in the Bible. Cyrus the Great, prophesied by name in the Book of Isaiah 150 years before his birth, would be the man who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This demonstrated the kindly, tolerant, liberal and magnanimous nature of the Persian monarchy towards the Jewish people.

It would not always be that way. Decades after Cyrus, in the fifth century BC, a hateful, genocidal Persian prime minister named Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to sign the death warrant for all Jews in the empire. The irony is that the Jewish people faced their first existential threat from the cultured, educated and sophisticated Persians.

The Bible books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel all have a Persian backdrop, while Nehemiah, Esther and Mordechai held prominent positions in the empire. The curtain of the Old Testament came down with the Book of Malachi, with the Persians ruling in the land.

The Romans ruled during the New Testament period, but the Persians did not completely disappear. The Magi who visited the Christ child were probably Zoroastrians from Persia. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:9, Persia was represented by Jews from Parthia, Media and Elam.'

Shia Ascendancy

The Iranian Revolution's most significant accomplishment was to spearhead a Shia Muslim ascendancy. This is crucial to understand. The Shia came in being during the seventh century AD, shortly after the birth of Islam. They split with the majority of Sunnis over the issue of who is the rightful successor of Muhammad. The Sunnis say their Prophet's successor should be elected; the Shia say he should be a blood relative. The battle of Karbala in 680 AD, where such a blood relative, Hussein, son of Ali, and grandson of Muhammad, was defeated and massacred, became the official split between the Sunnis and Shias. To this day, Shia Islam commemorates that event on the tenth day of Muharram (*Ashura*) as a holy day of mourning, where they cut themselves until blood flows.

The Shias, as only 15% of the global Muslim community of over 1.7 billion, have always been treated as second-class citizens. For instance, the oil-rich areas of the Persian Gulf region are mostly inhabited by Shia Muslims; yet it is the Sunnis, in places such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, who control the oil and hold the wealth. The resentment, even the hatred, between these two branches of Islam is very great.

Some *Shiite* theologians say that they would continue to



Traditional Iranian mosque dome. | Photo: Adobe Stock

be the underdogs until the end of time, when Allah would reverse their fortunes and put them on top. Iran's Islamic Revolution is viewed by the Shias as their long-awaited turning point to power. The US embassy hostage crisis of 1979-1981 and Hezbollah's 'victories' over Israel in 2000 and 2006 are offered as proof that Shia are on the rise.

The Islamic Republic has been actively pursuing its goals since 1979. What, then, do they really want?

For one thing, Iran carries leadership ambitions. It wants to be the leader in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Muslim world. Iran once had an empire and, given the chance, would like to have it again.

Iran wants to control the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. These are under the administration of Saudi Arabia. From the Iranian point of view, the Saudis and Sunnis have been running the holy cities for the last 1,400 years. It is now the Shias' turn.

Justice and hegemony are also on the wish list. Iran feels a great injustice has been done to the people of Palestine and cannot understand why the world is 'dragging its feet' to give them their own state. Also, it says it is unjust to punish Iran, a signatory of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, for seeking peaceful nuclear technology, when Israel, which did not sign the same treaty, is allowed to hold on to its proven nuclear arsenal. Shia ascendancy is high on the Iranian agenda. As explained earlier, the Shias are destined to rule the Muslim world and the entire world in the last days. The arrival of the Shia-dominated Islamic Republic of Iran, the perceived humbling of America and Israel, and the building of a Shiite Crescent from Iran to Lebanon, are interpreted by Iran as a fulfilment of this long-held Shiite destiny.

'Parts of this article come from the book 'At the Door: Key Nations, Last Days, and the Coming King' by Kameel Majdali, Melbourne, 2015.

The Bible Speaks

The God of Israel

God has placed His Name upon Israel and reveals Himself to the world through Israel. Throughout Scripture, Israel is called to be a light to the nations. As the Lord declares: "The people I formed for Myself that they may proclaim My praise" (Isaiah 43:21). In His faithfulness, God sustains Israel and entrusts them with a unique calling: "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10).

Israel's calling is not just about Israel; on the contrary, it is about God and about the world. For why does God choose Israel? "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God" (Isaiah 43:12). Through Israel, the nations are invited to know Him.

Priestly blessing during Passover. | Photo: Flashgo



Short News

Arab Girl's Heart
Saves Jewish Boy
in Jerusalem

For nine months Rafael, a three-year-old Jewish boy, never left Schneider Children's Medical Center. His hospital room was his home. A small device on wheels was his heartbeat. His family's suitcases were already packed for New York—where the wait times for a donor heart are shorter—when the phone rang. Six-and-a-half-year-old Saba Badir from Kafr Qasim, an Arab Israeli city east of Tel Aviv, had collapsed during a family vacation in Eilat. She never woke up again. In their darkest hour, her family agreed to organ donation—without hesitation. Today, inside Rafael's chest beats the heart of a little girl whose family, in their darkest moment, chose hope.

| Photo: Heart transplant recipient Rafael (Clalit Health Services/Schneider Children's Spokesperson's Office)

7 Oct. Survivors
Exchange Vows

Two former hostages who were abducted together into the Gaza Strip on 7 Oct. 2023, were married at the beginning of July in a ceremony attended by captivity survivors and Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "We prayed for your return, we were moved to tears when you came back home, and this evening we were privileged to rejoice together with you and to bless you under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) on your joyous day," tweeted Herzog, congratulating Sapir Cohen and Alexander ("Sasha") Troufanov. The couple were kidnapped by terrorists from Gaza who infiltrated the Troufanov's family home in Kibbutz Nir Oz in the northwestern Negev. Cohen was released in November 2023. Troufanov was freed in February 2025, after spending 498 days in captivity.

Ancient Acre
Fortress Comes
Alive at Night

After a \$4.5 million investment, Old Acre's Knights' Halls are launching a 35-minute video-mapping show tracing the city's history from the Hellenistic period to modern Israel, in a bid to bring visitors back north and help struggling local businesses.

European Jews:
The Zionist Movement—Part 4

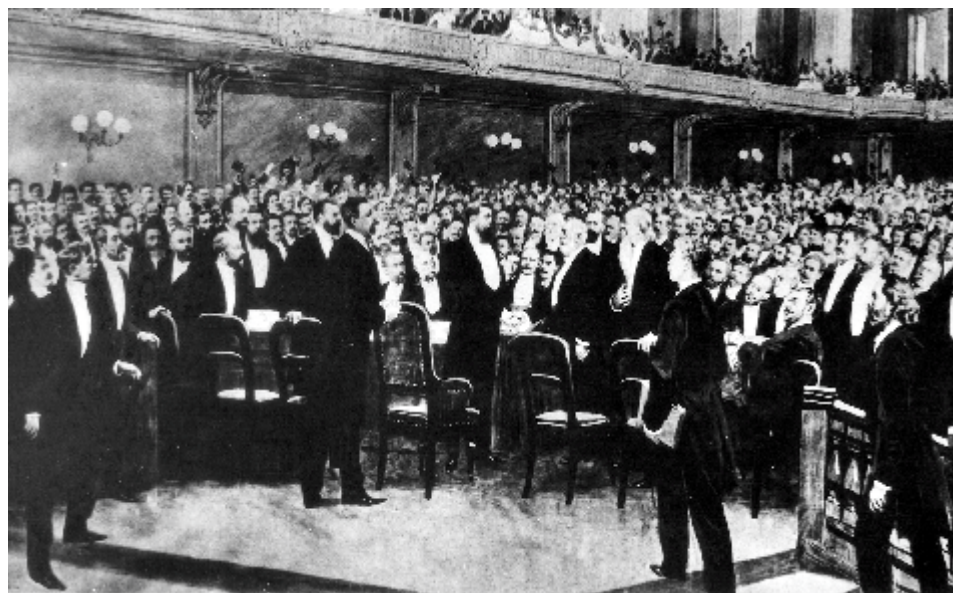
■ Edda Fogarollo

Historian | President | Christians for Israel Italy

Despite the aloof reception among Zionist circles in Vienna, Berlin and Cologne of his ideas for the Jewish State and even the indifference of the aristocrats, Theodor Herzl was not discouraged and remained faithful to his original project.

His book, *Der Judenstaat*, was mostly acclaimed in Eastern Europe where the Jews offered him talented, organised and experienced manpower for the realisation of his dream, even though all major Jewish newspapers in Russia were unfavourably disposed towards his plan. Herzl also received support from his Austrian friend Max Nordau, who compared his determination and tenacity to that of Luther, and Rev William Hechler, the Christian chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna who saw the realisation of the Jewish homeland as fulfilment of the biblical prophecies. Herzl looked everywhere for supporters of his Jewish cause: he travelled to all European capitals, asked various heads of government for audiences and even went to visit the Sultan of Constantinople, Abdul Hamid, to explore his project of land purchase in Palestine. The Sultan, however, as an expression of the already decadent Ottoman Empire, tacitly denied the request of relinquishing control over some parts of Palestine. From this encounter, therefore, Herzl did not gain any advantage for his people. He rarely received anything more than formal interest from governors on all his trips, and the only support that kept him going came from his self-confidence along with the approval and hope of the oppressed Jews, for whom he fought with such determination.

At the end of 1896 he had not yet achieved any concrete progress on his project; often suffered from melancholy and in desperate moments his words were filled with sadness: "My name will grow after my death. I am conscious today, as I have always been, that I have used my pen like a man of honour. I have never sold my pen, never used it to mean ends, never even made it an instrument for the promotion of friendships. This last testament may be published." As a good actor playing his role on the stage of a half-empty theatre, Herzl had to proceed, and on the first days of January 1897 he decided to announce a general assembly among Zionists in Switzerland for the summer of that year. His motto was, "If you want it, it is not a fairy tale,"



Theodor Herzl at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in August 1897. | Photo: GPO Israel

as he valiantly strived to transform potential into reality. Together with his supporters and his experience as a journalist, he started working on organising the Zionist Congress.

first President of the State of Israel. During the Congress which ended on 31 August, the bases for the Colonial Jewish Trust were laid, later established as the Anglo-Palestine Bank, to support the

"'At Basel, I founded the Jewish State.' If I were to say this today, I would be greeted with universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it."

On Sunday morning, 29 August 1897, the first Zionist Congress opened in the concert hall of Basel Municipal Casino. Together with his reliable contributors, Herzl managed to organise the first world conference of Jews, who joined from all Europe almost 1,900 years since the diaspora. Some 250 journalists from all over the world attended the event. All participants wore an official recognition badge with the emblem of the Lion of Judah framed by the Star of David with the following inscription: "The establishment of a Jewish state is the only possible solution to the Jewish question." Once back in Vienna on 3 September, Herzl wrote in his diary: "If I had to sum up the Congress of Basel in one word—which I shall not do openly—it would be this: 'At Basel, I founded the Jewish State.' If I were to say this today, I would be greeted with universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it."

Theodor Herzl's Last Years

The return to Palestine was no longer an abstract idea or dream for the Jews, but a reality that was finally taking shape. The second Zionist Congress, which took place the following year, welcomed the young Russian Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), a student of chemistry at university in Berlin, who only later became well known in Jewish history as

purchase of land in Palestine.

Herzl spent his last years trying to give the Zionist movement official recognition among the most powerful European nations in order to raise funds for the purchase of land for those who until then were forced to emigrate from Eastern European countries given the spread of pogroms that by then had also reached Poland. Herzl's conviction of being called by destiny to help form the State of Israel was very strong. According to him, Zionism embodied the characteristics of a philanthropic work: he believed that rich Jews should help the poor ones by purchasing Palestinian land that belonged to the Turkish Sultan who, claimed Herzl, would gladly sell land given the serious economic crisis that affected his empire. Major European nations such as Germany and England should guarantee the transaction deals between Jews and the Sultan. Herzl travelled extensively in order to establish new diplomatic ties that would guarantee the necessary conditions for his people to immigrate to Palestine. However, his success rate was much lower than he expected. On his birthday, 2 March 1901, he wrote in his diary: "Today I am forty-one years old... almost six years since I started this movement that has made me old, tired and poor."

Myth: ‘Hatred of the Jews is the Result of the Establishment of the State of Israel’

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

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

Myth: ‘Hatred of the Jews is the Result of the Establishment of the State of Israel’

The hatred of Arabs or Muslims against the Jews did not begin with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This is evident from the fact that Arab-led pogroms against Jewish communities occurred well before 1948.

The Nabi Musa Riots of 1920

On the morning of Sunday, 20 April 1920, approximately 60,000 Arabs gathered in Jerusalem for the Nabi Musa Festival. At the time, the city was also filled with Jewish and Christian pilgrims. The younger brother of the Grand Mufti incited the crowd, who began chanting slogans such as “Palestine is our land, the Jews are our dogs!” What began as a festival quickly

descended into chaos. Many in the crowd drew daggers and clubs, shouting: “The religion of Muhammad was established with the sword!” The city became a battlefield. The crowd chanted: “Slaughter the Jews!” and: “Cut their throats!” In the Old City, violent Arab mobs committed horrific acts, including the gang rape of several Jewish girls. Five Jews were killed and 216 wounded. This violence bears a chilling resemblance to the atrocities carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, though on a much larger scale.

The Pogroms in Hebron and Jerusalem of 1929

The ‘Hebron Massacre’ was a mass killing carried out by Arab residents of Hebron against the city’s Jewish population in the British Mandate of Palestine on 23 and 24 August 1929. A total of 67 Jews were murdered—55 Ashkenazi and 12 Sephardic—and more than 50 others were injured. It was one of the bloodiest pogroms during the British Mandate period and brought an abrupt end to the centuries-old Jewish community in Hebron.

Following Friday prayers on 23 August 1929, thousands of worshippers poured out of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and attacked Jews. In the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, the Montefiore neighbourhood and surrounding suburbs, 31 Jews were murdered. In one home in Jerusalem, five members of a

single family were slaughtered. Over the course of those days, a total of 131 Jews were killed by Arabs. In response, British forces intervened, resulting in the deaths of 116 Arabs.

Long before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and well before the wars of 1967 and 1973, there had already been massacres committed by Muslim Arabs against Jews in Palestine. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al Husseini, was instrumental in spreading the antisemitic propaganda that fuelled these attacks. The Grand Mufti would align himself with Adolf Hitler, whom he met in 1941. During World War II, he actively supported the creation of an Islamic SS division that was responsible for the mass murder of Jews in the Balkans.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is a radical Islamic movement founded in 1928. Its leaders were—and in many cases still are—sympathetic to Nazi ideas and directly inspired by Hitler. The group’s founder, Hassan al-Banna, translated Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* into Arabic, calling it *My Jihad*. In the 1930s, the Muslim Brotherhood sent representatives to Hitler’s rallies in Nuremberg and spread antisemitic propaganda such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. During World War II, they supported Nazi Germany and organised mass protests and pogroms against Jews in Palestine.

Their goal was to wipe out the Jewish population in the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood later gave rise to groups such as the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and Hamas, as well as many other radical Islamic organisations across the Middle East and beyond, including as ISIS, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Boko Haram, the Taliban, the Houthis, and others. These terror groups have caused death and destruction in countless places, and in recent years, their influence and violence have increasingly spread to the Western world as well.

Again, the World Upside Down

Knowing this, it becomes clear that Hamas and similar groups are the modern-day kindred spirits of Hitler, essentially, the Nazis of our time. And yet, once again, the world seems upside down: many accuse Israel of doing to others what was done to them during the Holocaust—in other words, of being the new Nazis. But the truth is very different. Even today, Israel continues to face threats from the actual ideological heirs of the Nazis—from those who follow in the footsteps of Hitler and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, just as in the 1930s and 1940s.

Jew-Hatred Among Muslims

It becomes clear that hatred toward the Jews in the Middle East is not primarily driven by the establishment of the State of Israel. The roots of this hatred lie much deeper—in religious rather than political circumstances. Even if Israel were to disappear completely, radical Muslims would still continue to hate, threaten and kill Jews. Hamas’ repeated calls for its followers to kill Jews around the world (not just in Israel) is clear evidence of that. The Quran contains verses that have been interpreted by extremists as calls to hate Jews and to wage violence against non-believers, including Christians. The real motivation behind this hatred is *jihad*, a religiously inspired worldview that fuels hostility not only toward Israel and the Jewish people, but also toward Christians, Western nations and secular society. This toxic ideology doesn’t stop at Israel’s borders. It is a demonic ideology and deeply rooted belief system that is gaining ground among Muslims across the globe, and it is something Europe and America are increasingly being forced to confront.

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

Facts Speak



HATIKVAH

THE HOPE

Israel's National Anthem

“Hatikvah” (The Hope) expresses the eternal longing of the Jewish people for freedom in their homeland — the Land of Israel.

ORIGIN & HISTORY

 1878 Poem written by Naftali Herz Imber	 1897 Sung at the First Zionist Congress in Basel	 1948 Unofficially adopted as Israel's national anthem when the State of Israel was established	 2004 Officially recognized as Israel's national anthem
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THE HOPE IN OUR HEARTS

“עד תקונו בת שנות התקנה בת שנות אלפים להיות עם חפשי בארצנו ארץ ציון וירושלים”

Od lo avda tikvateinu, Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim, Lihyot am chofshi b'artzeinu, Eretz Tziyon v'Yerushalayim.



Hope that has not yet been lost



Yearning to be a free people in our land



The Land of Zion and Jerusalem

Bringing Hope to Families and Children

The summer months provide valuable opportunities for ministry and outreach. Through the faithful work of Rev Naim Khoury and his church in Bethlehem and Rev Saleem Shalash and his church in Nazareth we spread light to children, families, and vulnerable people. Below are updates from both pastors on how God is working through their churches and how your support is helping make a difference.



Elvira Khoury teaches a Bible lesson.

Rev Naim & Elvira Khoury

Hope and Joy for Children in Bethlehem

We thank the Lord for His faithfulness and for your continued friendship and partnership as we do the work of the Lord in this critical time. Your prayers and generous support enable us to continue serving children and families, and we are grateful for the difference you are making.

This summer, more than 170 children took part in our annual Summer Programme. For many of them, these eight days became one of the highlights of their year. The excitement of the children was evident from the very beginning. Many eagerly waited for the church vans to arrive each morning. Some even called ahead asking when transportation would come, anxious not to miss a moment of the programme. Their



Outdoor activities in Bethlehem.



More than 170 children joined this year.

enthusiasm was a great encouragement to our team.

Providing transportation for so many children remains a significant challenge. Rising fuel costs have increased expenses considerably, and transporting children from different communities requires a great deal of planning and time. Yet we are committed to ensuring that every child who wishes to attend has the opportunity to be part of the programme.

Each day was packed with activities designed to help children grow in their faith while enjoying a memorable summer experience. Through Bible lessons, Scripture memorisation, songs, games, crafts, and sketches, they encountered biblical truths in engaging and practical ways.

The Bible stories formed the heart of each day. Children listened attentively, memorised verses, asked thoughtful questions, and learned how God's Word applies to their lives. They sang Christian songs enthusiastically and enjoyed creative activities that reinforced the lessons they were learning.

One of the greatest blessings came through the feedback we received from parents. Many shared that their children had begun praying regularly at home. Some started praying before meals for the first time, while others prayed before bedtime and remembered family members and friends in their prayers. Parents also noticed changes in their children's behaviour. Some children confessed wrongdoing and asked forgiveness. These testimonies remind us that God's Word continues to transform hearts. While the fun activities and outings are important, our greatest joy is seeing children grow spiritually and bring what they have learned back into their homes.

As we reflect on this year's programme, we give glory to God for every child who attended, every Bible verse learned, every prayer offered, and every seed planted in a young heart.

Thank you for helping make this ministry possible through your prayers and support.

Rev Saleem Shalash

A Place of Hope in Northern Israel

God is opening new doors for outreach in northern Israel. Over the past years, we have met many people carrying heavy burdens. Some families are facing financial hardship. Others are rebuilding their lives



Rev Shalash and his wife Nisreen.

after war trauma, or loneliness. Others simply need someone who will listen, pray with them, and remind them that they are not forgotten.

This is why the development of a new humanitarian centre (pictured below) in Nof HaGalil is so important to us. For many years, this project has been a prayer in our hearts. Our vision has never been merely to establish another building. Rather, we have longed to create a place where people feel welcomed, valued, and cared for.

The centre will provide practical assistance, encouragement, and support to people facing a variety of challenges. A place where Jewish and Arab families alike can come and experience practical help, encouragement, and genuine human connection.

Thank you for continuing to stand with us through your prayers and support. Your partnership is helping us continue being a light to many people during difficult times.



The new centre in Nof HaGalil.

Pray for the work of Rev Khoury and Rev Shalash and their families. Pray for strength, wisdom, protection and fresh encouragement as they continue serving faithfully.

You can support the important work of these pastors.

Please fill out the coupon and select:

Arab Christians.

Any amount is welcome!

