

If undelivered return to:

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

April 2024

Standing in Solidarity with Israel

"Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her, That her warfare hath been completed."—Isaiah 40:1-2a

Dear friends and supporting readers,

It is not possible for a compassionate human being to see the pictures on our screens – you know the ones, carefully staged, beautiful photographs of children standing alone in Gazan ruins – without feeling something. Any human seeing those images and hearing the stories of ‘genocide’, and ‘carpet bombing’, let alone seeing the charts of casualty figures showing a ‘disproportionate response’, must – should – be moved.

But when you realise that the only images coming out of Gaza are those approved by Hamas, that there is no ‘genocide’, and that the casualty figures released by Hamas are mathematically impossible, the story changes somewhat.

So, when was the last time you saw images of the absolutely devastated families of the 134 Israeli hostages still being held? When did you last see images of the thousands of damaged or destroyed homes in Israel – or the hundreds of thousands of people affected? We know from the testimony and evidence from medical examiners that a large percentage of the Israeli hostages released so far had suffered considerable abuse, ranging from physical (including surgery with no anaesthetic) through to horrific sexual abuse – and we have every reason to believe that sexual torture is continuing for the hostages not yet released.

Israeli mothers are crying themselves to sleep at night, praying for their children who – many fresh out of high school – are serving their country in the IDF, fighting in the north, in the Palestinian Authority-Controlled Territories, or in Gaza, trying to prevent the horrors of 7 October from being repeated by the terrorists that have promised to do so. Seen pictures of that lately?

Of course not. The media has been thoroughly controlled by the images spoon-fed by Hamas and its proxies. They’ve carefully and brilliantly manipulated the hearts of the gullible masses, until now the whole war is claimed as some sort of ‘resistance’ – by the oppressed billionaires of Gaza.

But the most damaging, the most hurtful insults thrown at Israel? That they are alone. That the rest of the world is against them. Many released hostages have

continued over...



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shared of this incredible feeling of being all alone, but the whole of Israel is also feeling this in some way or another.

In November a very small solidarity expedition left New Zealand to travel to Israel. For a month we served, we visited, we encouraged, we blessed. The most significant conversations we had over and over again were simply telling people that we represented many thousands of New Zealanders and Pacific Islanders who do stand with Israel.

As this issue of *Israel and Christians Today* arrives in your letterbox, we will be back in Israel. This time with a small team of New Zealanders and our Australian brothers, we will again be in the middle of a country at war, telling Israelis that we stand with them. This **Solidarity Tour** shows we haven't forgotten them.

We will be interviewing, visiting, sending photos back to anyone who will listen. And we will be blessing Israelis. Last time this included even just buying essentials like blankets and pyjamas, for children evacuated under gunfire.

Right now, like never before, we need to **support Israel**. Even in the midst of war, the projects continue. Meals are still being prepared for the poor, Holocaust survivors are being cared for, children must still be protected and, while the world has turned its attention to Israel, our team is still frantically providing food parcels in Ukraine. We have many projects, but the most urgent need right now is our expression of **solidarity**.

Please consider **standing with us**, as we stand – literally – with Israel. Your donation right now doesn't just allow us to meet needs, it says we care. While in unimaginable pain, it says we – from the furthest parts of the world – are standing with them.

I pray that our God will honour his word – as He always does – when He states that those who bless Israel will indeed be blessed.

I look forward to bringing you updates, feel free to check out our progress on Facebook, our YouTube channel, or our website.

Back soon,

Bryce Turner
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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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People walk by photographs of the 134 Israelis still held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza, at 'Hostage Square' in Tel Aviv. | Photo: Flash90

Israel Condemns UN's Failure

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz sent a sharply worded letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in mid-March, charging him with a blatant disregard for the atrocities committed by Hamas against the Jewish people on 7 Oct. Katz called on the UN Secretary-General to declare Hamas, a terrorist organisation. "Your dismissal of the heinous acts as documented in the recent UN report—acts which are still being perpetrated—is not only inadequate but also offensive." "The world has been waiting five months for your actions. The necessity to declare Hamas as a terrorist organisation, and to impose severe sanctions similar to those placed on Al Qaeda and Daesh is critical and indisputable," wrote Katz.

"Your reluctance to lead a decisive international stance against these atrocities, instead fixating on criticism of Israel—a nation in self-defence after a barbaric massacre—signals a distressing bias.

"If the victims would not have been of Jewish or Israeli descent, your office would have responded in a much [more] vigorous way," the letter continues.

"Any moral leader" would have taken steps to immediately secure the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas, wrote Katz, noting that Guterres' office had not even "ensured that UN sub-bodies provide necessary medical care to the hostages."

What's more, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the UN aid agency for Palestinian Arabs, was

'implicated' in the massacre, Katz said, adding that UNRWA's corruption has been long documented, but that Guterres had "neglected to take appropriate actions."

Katz also called attention to the delay in addressing a report on Hamas's barbarous acts, "barring one brief mention in a footnote—your call for a Security Council session under Article 99, which ironically included an attack on Israel's response."

"Your tenure at the UN is set to be remembered for diminishing the organisation's stature to an all-time low, allowing it to become an epicentre of antisemitism and anti-Israel incitement," wrote Katz.

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Colophon

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

Mission

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

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Western-Islamic Alliance Not New

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | [Christians for Israel](#)

Already within days of the most horrific pogrom of Jews since the Holocaust on 7 October 2023, hundreds of thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators were marching in the streets of Western countries, shouting “death to the Jews” and “Palestine will be free from the river to the sea”.

Most had no idea which ‘river’ or which ‘sea’ they were chanting about.

Time and again throughout history, the killing of Jews has incited further calls for killing of Jews.

Just think of the crusades of the Middle Ages, when the Christians rampaged through the towns of Europe, slaughtering Jews on the way and gathering pilgrims to liberate Jerusalem, where many more Jews would be massacred.

A few weeks ago, Israeli President Isaac Herzog was invited to attend the opening of a new Holocaust museum in Amsterdam. In the Netherlands in WWII, more Jews were killed in percentage terms than in any other European country. Despite its tolerance and liberal culture, Jews were less safe in Holland than anywhere else. The Holocaust Museum is part of a recent move to repair this deep stain on the nation. A few years ago, soon after a very moving meeting in the Ridderzaal, (a Medieval hall in the heart of political The Hague, where the King holds his annual speeches, but also where the Austrian Nazi leader Arthur Seyss-Inquart assumed authority over occupied Netherlands in May 1940) organised by Dutch Christians, in which public repentance took place, the Prime Minister formally acknowledged the Dutch government's failure to look after the Dutch Jewish population during the Holocaust. Soon afterwards, King Willem-Alexander acknowledged his family's failures. And so, the new Holocaust

museum was intended to create a permanent reminder of the dangers of antisemitism.

And yet the opening of the museum was met with massive pro-Palestinian demonstrations, in which the crowds aggressively poured out their vitriolic abuse on those attending the event— including Holocaust survivors and their descendants. In the lead-up to the event, attempts were made to have Herzog arrested as a war criminal.

Since 7 October 2023, the radical Muslim populations of many Western countries have been emboldened to spew their antisemitic hatred. Demanding freedom of speech, they are allied with the woke groups that now dominate the universities and other public institutions. Together, this alliance of the devil is tearing down every high place, every citadel of culture and every bastion of decency built on Judeo-Christian values.

None of this should come as any surprise. It has all been gradually developed over the last century or more.

All of this became apparent to me when I recently sat in the International Court of Justice for one week, witnessing what can only be described as a full attack on the existence of the Jewish people as a nation. One after the other, representatives of the Arab, Islamic, African and Western/European nations poured out their denunciation of Israel.

I was reminded of similar events in WWII. From the 1920s, Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was so highly



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat pictured meeting with French President Jacques Chirac in 1996. | Photo: Flash90.

regarded in Europe that he spent the war years in Berlin. In radio recordings from this period, the German announcer can be heard describing the gathering in Berlin on 2 November 1943, of Arab nationalists mixing with the Nazis: “We are in the Luftwaffe building in Berlin, where Arab leaders are gathered to protest against the Balfour Declaration. The Hall is festooned with Arab flags and poster portraits of Arab patriots. Arabs and Moslems from every land pour into the hall. Among them are Moroccans, Palestinians, Lebanese, Yemenites, men from the Hedjaz, Indians, Iranians and Moslem representatives from all over Europe. Among the latter are a great many Germans friendly to the Arabs, high government officials, civilian and military, one of the SS chiefs, representatives of foreign embassies and at their head representatives of the Japanese Embassy.” For the last 70 years, European and other Western leaders have been bending over backwards to appease the Arab/Muslim world and create an Islamic Palestinian state. The Jewish people are always the price that must be paid. Tragically, it seems that on 7 October, the dams burst, and we are now facing the consequences. May God help us.

Prayer Points

Israel

- Pray for the release of all hostages. Pray also that all bodies of Israelis being held in Gaza will be returned to their loved ones.
- Pray for the well-being of all soldiers and their families. Pray for the families of those soldiers who have fallen and pray for a good recovery for the wounded soldiers.
- As *Passover* commences at sunset on April 22nd, Jews worldwide commemorate that thousands of years ago, God led His people out of Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. Thank God for deliverance from Egyptian exile and thank Him for His everlasting faithfulness to His people. Pray that Jews worldwide can celebrate *Passover* in peace.

Israel & the Nations

- The rise in legal actions against Israel is evident, with, for instance, the current court cases at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The legal

system is being used to delegitimise the Jewish state of Israel and force it to allow the creation of a Palestinian state. Pray for Israel's protection and that Jerusalem will not be divided. Pray that truth and justice may prevail in the legal proceedings in The Hague.

- ‘The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day, there will be one Lord, and His name will be the only name (*Zechariah 14:9*). Pray that God's Name will be the focus of Israel, the Church, and the world.

Christians for Israel

- In discussions about Israel, opinions can differ greatly. Pray that God's wisdom may guide our words and actions as we speak to others about His people (*Proverbs 2:6*).
- Give thanks that there are Christians worldwide who support Israel. Pray that God may give you courage and confidence.

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

Iran, Hezbollah: The Final Phase

■ Yochanan Visser

Correspondent in Israel

With all eyes on the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, this front is the least important in Israel's current multi-front war.

The reason for this is quite simple: Hamas and Palestinian Jihad in Gaza are isolated and do not pose an existential threat to Israel, certainly not now after they were handed devastating blows by the IDF.

Hezbollah and the Ansar Allah (Houthis) militia in Yemen, on the other hand, are much more dangerous because they are not isolated, have much better armaments, and essentially operate as a division of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Hezbollah and Ansar Allah are also a potential danger to world peace for the aforementioned reasons, with the latter already rapidly becoming a threat to world peace due to the continuing attacks on maritime traffic in the Red Sea.

Hezbollah's activities are not limited to Lebanon as the terror group is also active in Syria and Yemen, where the Lebanese terror group is now helping Ansar Allah set up its own weapons production lines.

This became necessary because Ansar Allah's supply lines of weapons from Iran are under pressure due to the presence of an international maritime coalition, which, in addition to neutralising attacks on cargo ships and tankers, also intercepts weapons shipments from Iran to Yemen.

Hezbollah is even present in South America, where, in addition to committing or organising terrorist attacks, the organisation is mainly involved in drug smuggling, raising funds, and money laundering.

Back to Hezbollah's current war with Israel.

So far, this has remained a low-intensity war with back-and-forth attacks every day as both Israel and Hezbollah have had an interest in keeping this war on the back burner.

From Israel's perspective the war with the Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza initially required the deployment of a large number of reserve units. Hezbollah's problem is that a large part of the Lebanese population does not want a new war with Israel. But the main reason the terror organisation has not used its full potential is that Iran has not given the order to use Hezbollah's full potential.

From the beginning of the war, Iran has worked according to a clear plan with four phases. This phase plan was drawn up by Qassem Soleimani, the liquidated commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Soleimani's vision was to create a 'ring of fire' around Israel, in other words, a multi-front war. This plan is currently being implemented by Ishmail Qaani, Soleimani's successor, and was approved by Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who agreed to provide unlimited funds at the beginning of the war.

We are now in phase three of this war with currently five fronts, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Yemen, and a front in Israel's heartland of Judea and Samaria.

Qaani was in Beirut at the end of February, where he met with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and the local leadership of Hamas, which has troops in southern Lebanon.

Reportedly, Ghaani criticised Hezbollah for the way it has operated against Israel thus far. In the eyes of the Quds commander, Hezbollah has been ineffective in its war of attrition against Israel and has wasted troops and ammunition.

This criticism probably had everything to do with the final scenario in phase three, when Hezbollah will use its full potential and start targeting Israel with long-range missiles that have GPS guidance systems. Before the war, Hezbollah had 200,000 rockets that could reach all parts of Israel, according to the Israeli think tank INSS.

In Israel, barrages of more than 1,500 rockets per day are expected, which will pose problems for air defences.



Israeli infantry soldiers near the Israeli border with Syria. | Photo: Flash90

We have learned from wars in Gaza that the Iron Dome anti-missile shield is not bulletproof when large numbers of rockets are fired simultaneously at cities in Israel.

Hezbollah will try to destroy vital military and civilian infrastructure in Israel with these barrages, Hezbollah leader Nasrallah has repeatedly said openly. It is known that Hezbollah and Iran have mapped all this infrastructure through espionage and with the help of satellite photos.

Civilian infrastructure experts warn of power outages that will cripple 60 per cent of Israel's electricity grid for a long period, and the consequences for the Israeli economy and society in this scenario will be devastating.

In the chaos that will then arise, Iran will further activate the front in Syria, and the so-called Golan Liberation Brigade will be deployed. Soleimani set up this brigade, which consists largely of Shiite fighters whom the liquidated Quds commander brought to Syria from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen.

Soleimani's scenario also envisaged the further internationalisation of the conflict. In fact, we see this happening now in Yemen but also in Syria and Iraq, where the militias created during Soleimani's time have now steadily increased their attacks on US forces.

In this context, it is also useful to look at Israeli security experts' latest warnings about a possible front in Jordan. The military expert of the newspaper Yediot Acharonot Nadav Eyal wrote in early March that there are warnings within the IDF about transferring the Shia militias from Iraq to the Jordan Valley.

Although Jordan has a peace agreement with Israel, it has been behaving increasingly hostilely to it since the start of the war in the Jewish state. It, therefore, does not seem inconceivable that Jordan will be drawn into the war, just as happened during the Six-Day War in 1967.

In the fourth phase of Iran's plan to destroy Israel, when chaos in the Middle East is complete, the Islamic Republic will break out with nuclear weapons. If we now take into account that the IAEA director announced on 5 March that his organisation has lost track of monitoring the progress that Iran is making in the development of its nuclear programme, we see that almost everything is going according to plan for Iran.

"The agency has lost continuity of knowledge on the production and inventory of centrifuges, rotors and bellows, heavy water and uranium ore concentrate," the IAEA director said.

What Israel can do now to avoid this doomsday scenario is to carry out the pre-emptive strike on Hezbollah that was proposed early in the war by Herzi Halevi, the IDF chief of staff. Political leaders in Israel have repeatedly made it clear that the IDF and IAF are capable of returning Lebanon to the Stone Age with a pre-emptive strike against Hezbollah. Such an attack now seems more likely by the day.

Short News

Wave of Detentions



Since 7 October, the Israeli military have detained more than 2,960 wanted Palestinians in Judea and Samara. More than 1,350 of them have close ties to Hamas. Frequently, tunnels are being discovered, loaded with explosives to inflict as much damage as possible on the Israeli army (when discovered). In addition, Palestinians in Judea and Samaria appear to have substantial stocks of weapons. | Photo: Flash90

Migrant Workers

Israel and India have reached agreements to allow migrant workers into Israel for the construction industry. The first migrant workers arrived in early February, and around 80,000 workers are expected to be needed. The manpower is needed because the construction industry has either collapsed or is idle. A major reason is that Palestinians do not currently work in Israel.

Ten Million Inhabitants

According to Israeli newspaper The Jerusalem Post, Israel's population will reach ten million by the end of this year. Around 73 percent of the entire population is Jewish and the Arab population constitutes 21 percent of the entire population. Israel holds nearly half the world's Jewish population, with 47% of all Jews living in Israel.

Genocide by Iran



Israeli Minister Gideon Sa'ar wants to do all he can to put Iran on trial by the International Court of Justice. "When it comes to allegations of genocide, Israel does not belong on the stand, but Iran, which is the classic example of a genocidal regime. It is important to hold Iran accountable in the international arena for its acts of terror against the Jewish state." | Photo: Shutterstock

Billions ‘Lost’ in Gaza

■ Wim Kortenoeven

Former Member of Dutch Parliament | Middle East Specialist

In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip. All 21 Jewish villages were evacuated, residents deported, and even Jewish graves cleared. Governance came into the hands of the Palestinian Authority, but in 2007, power was taken over by the popular Islamist terror organisation Hamas. This effectively made Gaza the second independent Palestinian-Arab state (after Jordan in 1946), but one that depended on revenues from criminal activities and international subsidies.

The international community systematically and completely ignored the fact that much of the aid money and other revenue flowing to Hamas disappeared into the pockets of corrupt administrators and terrorists or was used for hate education and the construction of the largest (underground) terror base ever.

The situation in Gaza changed dramatically in all respects after ‘7 October’. The Israeli military offensive since then against the terror organisations Hamas and Islamic Jihad, operating above and below ground in towns and villages, has caused enormous devastation.

Over half of the Arab population of more than two million souls has been displaced. Housing and infrastructure repairs are expected to take years, and the key question is how Gazans are supposed to survive this (now umpteenth) phase of recovery in socio-economic terms. And, of course, who is to foot the astronomical bill if the willingness to do so will exist at all?

Gazan’s not Welcome Anywhere

Arab and Western countries constantly claim to be deeply concerned for the Gazans, but in reality, they are not at all. The border with Arab brother country Egypt remains tightly closed to displaced people who cannot afford to pay exorbitant bribes. And no other Arab country has offered to take in Gazans. Even King Abdallah of the Palestinian state of Jordan has resolutely refused to provide relief to his trapped and languishing Palestinian brothers and sisters on his soil. His Majesty, as pilot of a cargo plane of his air force, took part personally in a propagandistic food drop over the Gaza Strip after publicly stating that the displaced people should not be allowed access to safe Egypt either. No country has condemned that unconscionable attitude.

No European Ferries

Gazans have nothing to expect from Europeans, either. Almost all European leaders demanded from Israel that military operations against the terror organisations be suspended or even stopped altogether so as not to endanger the Gazan IDPs concentrated in the south of the Gaza Strip. And in doing so, they warned of mass slaughter, famine, epidemics and other terrible conditions. But the Europeans, despite their dramatic predictions, have so far done nothing to actually free the Gazans from the danger zone. Egypt and Jordan were not pressured to open their borders, and no ferries were sent to evacuate the de facto Hamas hostages and transfer them to safe European asylum destinations.

Only Scotland’s Muslim prime minister, Humza Yousaf (whose in-laws live in Gaza), made a case for a generous European admission policy, and he even offered to start opening Scotland’s borders. However, his proposal did not meet with approval from London and the other European capitals. The unspoken consensus of European political leaders seemed to be: the displaced people of Gaza should definitely not be allowed to go elsewhere—simply to ensure that blame for their desolate conditions would be placed on Israel.

And so this phase of the Gazans’ demise caused by Hamas and Islamic Jihad also became part of the ultimate propaganda weapon envisaged by Iran, Arab countries and terror organisations in the fight against the Jewish state.

‘Singapore on the Mediterranean’

Even before 7 October, Gaza was a socio-economic disaster zone. That was no fault of Israel, whose successive governments had seriously set out to help turn it into ‘Singapore on the Mediterranean’ and established industrial parks there, among other things.

That everything turned out diametrically differently is primarily the fault of the Hamas movement, which the people of Gaza themselves helped to power in democratic elections. Secondly, it is the fault of the international community, which for decades has tolerated Hamas turning Gaza into an ever-growing terrorist base from which Israeli civilian targets were systematically shelled with rockets and, on 7 October last year, a massive terror attack on Israeli civilians.

That disaster was predictable. The international community has willfully ignored the fact that through the UN agency UNRWA, billions in aid funds were used to radicalise entire



Relief supplies are distributed from UNRWA headquarters in Gaza. However, much of the emergency goods currently reaching Gaza are immediately seized by Hamas and then sold back to Gazans. | Photo: Flash90

generations of Gazans in the notion that it is better to die fighting Israel than to build a normal life. Through the education system provided by UNRWA, children were brainwashed and trained as early as the age of four to become Hamas fighters.

Obscenely Rich Elite

Meanwhile, Gazans were hospitalised en masse at Western taxpayers’ expense in the hopeless position of non-productive benefit recipients. According to UNCTAD, unemployment in the Gaza Strip in 2022 was over 43 per cent (other sources, such as Globes, even speak of 60 per cent), compared to 24 per cent in the PLO/PA-ruled parts of Judea and Samaria. Gross national product was \$1,257, compared to \$4,458 in the PLO/PA areas.

The gap between rich and poor was and is huge and hardly unbridgeable. On one side, the majority of socio-economically disadvantaged benefit recipients; on the other, a relatively prosperous middle class and a mostly obscenely rich, Hamas—and Islamic Jihad-affiliated corrupt elite living in magnificent villas overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

Hamas Millionaires

In 2012, it was revealed that over six hundred millionaires were already living in Gaza at the time. Most of them amassed their wealth by exploiting the hundreds of smuggling tunnels dug under the auspices of Hamas under the border with Egypt. Hamas levied 20 per cent import duties on the value of all goods brought in through that tunnel system. The tunnels were also the main supply line for weapons, explosives, ammunition and missile components supplied by Iran and other rogue states. The smuggling of those goods was and is unimpeded by the corrupt Egyptian authorities, who are bought off with bribes.

The best-known Hamas leaders, Yehia Sinwar, Ismael Haniyeh, Mohammed Deif and Khaled Mashal, are also millionaires. In fact, Mashal’s wealth is estimated at nearly five billion euros. Haniyeh and Mashal live in Doha, the capital of Qatar, Hamas’ main political backer and financier alongside Iran. Yet other Hamas leaders live with their families in great wealth in cities like Istanbul and Beirut. They, too, do not care at all about the fate of the Palestinian Arabs they claim to represent.

Criminal Project

All in all, Gaza can be described as a criminal project of the international community. If the real intention had been to help the inhabitants of the strip, different decisions would have been taken, proper control would have been exercised over the spending of aid funds, and compelling and effective intervention would have been made when it became clear many years ago that things were going wrong.

Why that did not, and still does not, happen can be traced to the demand that is once again being loudly addressed to Israel in the aftermath of October 7: there must and will be an independent Palestinian state based on the 1949 armistice lines that are indefensible to Israel. As a means to that end, the ‘Palestinian refugee issue’ has been kept alive artificially by the international community for decades, primarily in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza was a billion-dollar investment with a high-risk political goal: creation of a democratic Palestinian state. Refusal to accept failure to achieve that goal led to the international community’s strategic silence on the immoral and criminal manner in which those billions were handled.

Terrorists in Uniform

PMW Report: PA Security Involved in Terror

■ Itamar Marcus

Founder & Director | Palestinian Media Watch

As Israel's War against Hamas in the Gaza Strip progresses, concerned countries are now discussing who should rule Gaza after Hamas is destroyed. The US, the UK, and several other European countries have suggested that the reins of the Gaza Strip should be handed over to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its Security Forces under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party. This proposal assumes that the PA and its Security Forces are moderating factors and working to prevent terror.

To challenge this myth, PMW decided to write this report documenting that the PA Security Forces are not only deeply involved in terror but that the PA and Fatah brag about it. This report was presented in the last few weeks to members of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee (the Judea and Samaria subcommittee) of the Knesset and in the British House of Lords to MPs and Lords.

The report exposes the PA Security Forces' involvement in terror in recent years and documents that far worse than being ineffectual, the PA's security services have been playing a very active role in terror against Israelis. Both the PA and Fatah not only admit this terror role but regularly and proudly publicise explicit proof of it.

Examples from the Report

- Fatah: "By day Security Forces, and by night self-sacrificing fighters." A video released by Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party reiterates that the PA Security Forces fulfil a double role of cops by day and terrorists by night. In the video, Fatah glorifies four members of the PA Security Forces arrested or killed during gun battles with Israeli forces who were combatting terror.

Hamas, the PA, and Fatah are all fundamentally involved in terror, and it must be recognised that they will be the cornerstone that will rebuild terror wherever they rule.

In addition to glorifying the arrested and killed terrorists, the video further applauds the fugitive father of terrorist Ra'ad Hazem, who murdered three in a terror attack in Tel Aviv. The father holds the rank of Colonel in the PA Security Forces and was suspected of supplying the weapons for the terror attack.

- Fatah: "More than 1,500 military



Palestinian gunmen from the Fatah movement hold their weapons during a parade in the Balata camp in city of Nablus. | Photo: Flash90

operations (i.e., terror attacks) against the Israeli occupation were led by the Fatah Movement members and the [PA] Security Forces members [in 2023]"

- PA: "More than roughly 63-65% of the number of Martyrs in the West Bank, in the daily confrontations, are members of the Fatah Movement. And most of them are members of the [PA] Security Forces or their sons."
- Fatah: "More than 355 of our Palestinian people's prisoners inside the prisons are from the Palestinian [PA] Security Forces—in other words, the PA's soldiers."
- In August 2023, Fatah published a poster on its official Facebook page with the names and pictures of 30 members of the PA Security Forces to honour them as 'Martyrs.' PMW identified 23 of those whose names and ranks in the PA Security Forces were listed as known terrorists, most of whom were killed while attacking Israelis. Some are pictured in uniform.

- Another example of Fatah highlighting the participation of the PA Security Forces in terror was when Fatah publicised a video with pictures of 24 terrorists who were PA Security Forces officers in their PA military uniforms. To stress that the dual roles do not conflict, each picture includes the logo of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs'

Brigades terror organisation and the logo of the PA security branch in which they served. Each terrorist's picture is accompanied by their name, rank, and PA security branch.

Conclusions

The PA's Security Forces are fundamentally involved in terror. Their terror involvement is not condemned by the PA or Fatah but rather glorified. Terror involvement is not presented by the PA and Fatah as unfortunate exceptions but rather as the heroic norm. The officers involved are not ostracised but rather are honoured and given military funerals.

With Fatah and the PA Security Forces so deeply involved in terror in the West Bank, the British and American suggestion of empowering them to rule Gaza after Israel has destroyed the terror infrastructures is inconceivable to Israelis. The military force that rules Gaza after the war cannot be fundamentally involved in terror, or else the entire costly operation to destroy the terror infrastructure will have been in vain.

The political structure and accompanying security force that administers the Gaza Strip must be found outside the current Palestinian political leadership and military. Hamas, the PA, and Fatah are all fundamentally involved in terror, and it must be recognised that they will be the cornerstone that will rebuild terror wherever they rule. As a fundamental part of the problem, it is a mistake to believe they can be part of the solution.

The full report (English) and photos can be found here: www.palwatch.org/page/34944

Short News

Yad Vashem & 7 Oct.



Yad Vashem is featuring an art exhibition from 7 Oct. until early May called 'Bigger Than Me'. It is the first time in the history of Yad Vashem that the artist is not a Holocaust survivor, and the subject is not the Holocaust. The works were created by Shai Azoulay. According to curator Moreh-Rosenberg: "The events of 7 October were so traumatic that they ignited the national trauma of the Holocaust. It is clear that in its scope and sheer numbers of the tragedy, there is no comparison, but in terms of the sadism, the determination to destroy, and the pain, there is a reference here to the ultimate tragedy of the Jewish people." | Photo: Yad Vashem

Psychological Warfare

Documents recently found in Gaza reveal that Hamas has fully embraced psychological warfare strategies. These tactics involve the continuous dissemination of photos and videos of hostages with the intention of exerting pressure on the Israelis. Additionally, Hamas insists on the narrative that holds Prime Minister Netanyahu responsible for the events of 7 October. Hamas categorically dismisses the notion that the Israeli army's offensive could have any bearing on the potential release of hostages, considering it a falsehood that needs to be debunked.

K9 Save IDF Soldiers



Dogs are repeatedly proving invaluable during the fighting in Gaza. The dogs (often Belgian Shepherds) are specially trained to track down terrorists. Ziggy, one of the dogs active for the elite Oketz unit, recently saved the lives of seven soldiers during a raid on a house in Gaza. While doing so, the dog was unfortunately shot dead by Hamas terrorists. | Photo: IDF

Resilience in the Face of Adversity

■ Roger van Ordt

Former Director Christians for Israel Netherlands |
Manager C4I Projects

I recently spent several days in Israel, where I witnessed enduring hardship and sorrow. The tension is present in every family and organisation because children, grandchildren or close friends have to fight in Gaza. In some instances, anxious waiting spans weeks as communication from those serving in the army is limited for safety reasons. The fear of ‘the knock on the door’ is always there.

A young woman, for example, told me that she had left her car keys in the house. She went back and knocked on the door. Her father opened in panic and shouted at her, “How can you knock? You know what that means, don't you?” The president of Keren Hayesod, Sam Grundweg, as a reservist, is tasked with being the first to notify parents and relatives of fallen soldiers of the death of their son, daughter or beloved. This knock on the door is what every family with soldiers in Gaza, northern Israel, or Samaria fears. How can you give comfort in the face of such fatal news? And yet every grandparent, parent or relative realises that the task is to bear this suffering too, even if it is unbearable. ‘Fallen for the nation’.

Rehabilitation

There is also a large number of wounded (multiple soldiers have fallen so far). At Adi Negev, soldiers and others are rehabilitating after having sustained injuries. I spoke to a young soldier who suffered serious injuries to his leg, yet he preferred to rejoin his regiment as soon as possible. It seemed like an impossible task when I saw him busy, but his doctor, however, showed that he was making tremendous progress. He has an enormous willpower to train at least six hours a day on a variety of equipment for recovery. Christians for Israel funded part of the necessary rehabilitation equipment at the beginning of the war. Adi Negev is normally a ‘paradise’ for children with multiple disabilities but is currently reserving space, by government order, to accommodate the rescued hostages later. May it still be possible because their fate is uncertain in the hands of Hamas. A tragedy that pierces every Israeli to the bone.

Miracles

There are not many good reports, yet there are small and big miracles. A soldier turned his face to Jerusalem for prayer and was able to prevent an attack on his comrades because he saw a terrorist coming out of a tunnel. His comrades thanked the Eternal God who had provided preservation. We spoke with people who had been locked in the shelter of their homes for days while Hamas terrorists looted their homes but who walked past the door of their shelter. Guy, who lost almost all of his friends at the Nova music festival on 7 Oct., told of miracles he had witnessed. His life had been spared, though it hung by a thread. Will he ever be able to walk again?

Willpower

Karmiel in Galilee is the absorption centre for young people from Ukraine and the former Soviet republics. A group of thirty young people aged 16 and 17 who follow the Sela study programme arrived in November. Back in Ukraine, some of them received help from our Christians for Israel Ukraine team. And at Ben Gurion airport, they were welcomed by Koen Carlier. The



The youth in Karmiel, after they had just arrived in Israel from Ukraine to study in Israel. | Photos: Jewish Agency

parents of these teenagers found it difficult that their child wanted to go to Israel despite the war. However, the teenagers radiated willpower and joy in being in Israel and contributing to society.

Comfort and Connection

All of Israel has a lot of trauma to deal with. It is special to see that a visit from Christians from the nations or the help of many volunteers from outside Israel to help harvest or clean up the chaos brings comfort and strengthens the connection.

Light and Darkness

I also met Doron Almog, the president of the Jewish Agency. He expects a million Jews to return to Israel within a few years. The Jewish people are appalled by the reactions in the Western media and from governments that no longer know how to distinguish light and darkness and refer to terrorists as victims. Yet when you are in Israel, you hear and see what *Isaiah 40* says: “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” 7 Oct. is not the end. Redemption will come with great power. This is the hope of Israel and of us.



Roger meets a young man rehabilitating at Adi Negev.

Facts Speak

Humanitarian Aid to Gaza



Since the beginning of the war
323,910 tons
17,425 trucks



Food
218,820 ton
10,389 trucks



Water
27,260 ton
1,367 trucks



Medical supplies
19,220 ton
1,647 trucks



Shelter equipment
36,600 ton
2,539 trucks



Fuel
189 tanks



Cooking gas
361 tanks



Mixed
22,010 ton
1,483 trucks

Information as at 21 March 2024

The humanitarian effort is coordinated between Israel, Egypt, the US and UN. Humanitarian aid is routed to Egypt and then forwarded to undergo Israeli security screening at either Nitzana or Kerem Shalom Crossings. The volume of humanitarian aid is determined by the ability of humanitarian organisations within the Gaza Strip to absorb the aid. | Source: COGAT (Coordinator of the Government Activities in the Territories). <https://govextra.gov.il/cogat/humanitarian-efforts/home/>

A Greater Miracle than the Exodus from Egypt

■ Rev Willem Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel International

“So then, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt;’ but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.” (*Jeremiah 23:7-8*)

Yes, that is what it really says: a greater miracle than the Exodus from Egypt. Every day, we see Biblical prophecies being fulfilled with our very eyes. We may experience it and even be personally involved. We are privileged people, you and me. We have seen a great miracle happening before our very eyes.

One would almost forget because of all the emotions and the never-ending stream of anti-Israel information that was set in motion in the media because of the demonic hate explosion caused by the massacre of Hamas on 7 October 2023, and the ensuing war in Gaza. It is good to keep an eye on the big picture and to continue to see the situation in Israel and the Middle East from a Biblical perspective.

Israel’s history starts with the departure of the exodus from Egypt, with the miraculous ten plagues upon Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea, the establishment of the covenant at Mount Sinai. Impressive miracles that started Israel’s history.

603,555 men, twenty years old or more, not counting the Levites, left Egypt, according to *Numbers 1:46*. The worldwide return of the people to Israel in our time already numbers millions, not just from one nation, Egypt, but from many nations. That is even more impressive than the exodus from Egypt, some 3000 years ago. The prophet Jeremiah says that the miracle of the future exodus of Israel from all over the world would overshadow the exodus from Egypt. God is faithful, and His plans will not fail. Israel’s Messiah is coming, and His kingdom of peace and justice from Jerusalem will spread throughout the world.

God’s plan generates increasing aggression from the powers of darkness. Many unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled. The Bible speaks about wars of the Lord.

For example, *Isaiah 17:1-2* speaks of a complete destruction of Damascus, the capital of Syria, which can be seen from the Golan Heights in Israel on a clear day.

We read in *Isaiah 19:16-17* that Egypt will shudder with fear of Israel because of what the uplifted hand of the Lord Almighty will do through the land of Judah against Egypt.

Psalms 83 records that a first ring of nations surrounding Israel will plot together with one mind: “Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation so that Israel’s name is remembered no more.”

Ezekiel 38 and 39 prophesy that a second, wider circle of nations around Israel will suddenly attempt to wipe Israel off the map. Are the republic of Türkiye and the former Soviet republics and Russia in here? An Islamic holy war, a jihad against Israel?

Or *Zechariah 12 and 14*, in which ultimately all nations—one might say in our days: the United Nations—will try to lift that burdensome stone Jerusalem.

John sees in the *Book of Revelation* burning stars falling from the sky. He speaks about the destruction of one-



Jews from all over the world are returning to Israel. Like these girls from Ukraine, who have just arrived at Ben Gurion Airport. Excitedly, they are looking forward to what is to come. | Photo: Flash90

quarter and one-third of mankind and the poisoning of life in the oceans. Atomic-Biological-Chemical weapons? The Lord’s battles in *Ezekiel 38 and 39* and in *Zechariah 14*, will send shivers up your spine. And Gaza? Read *Joshua 15:45-47* about Judah’s heritage. Also, *Zephaniah 2:2-7*: total destruction, and owned by the remnant of Judah.

One day, the Lord’s promise to Israel in *Isaiah 62:8-9* will be fulfilled: “The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: “Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled; but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.”

Where and when will they then eat and drink? *Verse 9* says: “... in the courts of My sanctuary.” Consequently, one day, there will be a sanctuary again, and then this prophecy will also be fulfilled.

From this it becomes clear immediately that we are seeing many of these things already happening—frightening as they may be. Nothing happens beyond God. That there is indeed One who holds the history of mankind and creation firmly in His hands. The prophets of Israel, led by the Holy Spirit, have foretold us that the history of mankind and of this world will be led through judgements and plagues. Not to the end of the world, but towards the goal set by Him. That goal is ultimately the coming of His Kingdom. There are the Lord’s wars. In which He battles at the side of His people, Israel. The Old Testament is full of them.

In order that the nations will know Who the One and only God truly is: the Holy One of Israel. “The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day, there will be one Lord, and his name is the only name,” says *Zechariah 14:9*. “And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.” says *Ezekiel 38:23*. Also the final part of *Psalms 83:11-18*, in which Asaph calls out for the conversion of Israel’s enemies: “Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, “Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God.” Their slogan is: ‘From the River [Jordan] to the

Sea [Mediterranean Sea] Palestine will be free [meaning: the whole land of Israel back under Islam, including Jerusalem].’

The Psalmist continues by saying and praying: “Make them like tumbleweed, my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with Your storm. Cover their faces with shame, Lord, so that they will seek Your Name. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace. Let them know that You, whose Name is the Lord—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”

The Lord God of Israel will not abandon the works of His hands. He will be faithful to all His Covenants that He made with Israel. He will fulfil everything that He promised to Israel: to Israel! In the same way, He will fulfil everything He promised to His Church: to His Church. But we should not make a theological unholy mix of the two! As so often happened in church history. Biblical prophecies make it clear that we can be sure we are not yet facing the ‘end of the world’, the destruction of everything.

There are still so many unfulfilled promises for Israel! Yes, one day all nations will serve the Lord (see *Isaiah 19:23-25* as a foretaste!), and they will go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the *Festival of Tabernacles*, says *Zechariah 14:16*. Then peace will cover the entire earth from Jerusalem. Yes, He will ultimately make all things forever new! A new heaven and a new earth where righteousness will dwell in all eternity. Creation itself will be redeemed. Yes, one day every knee will bow, and every tongue will acknowledge and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, says Paul.

In our days, we see the miracle of the fulfilment of *Isaiah 43:5-8*, the *Aliyah* of the Jewish people, coming from all the nations of the world. We are even involved in helping bring that about. *Isaiah 49:22* says that the nations (the non-Jewish people of the nations) will bring Israel’s sons in their arms and carry their daughters on their hips back to the Promised Land. The Most High is involved in this with all His heart and with all His soul (*Jeremiah 32:41*). Shouldn’t we be dedicated and involved in this process as well?

Volunteering in Israel

■ Rita Quartel

Christians for Israel Netherlands

In the weeks and months following 7 October, a desire grew among many people to actually do something for Israel in a very practical way. It soon resulted in three trips of one week each, organised by Christians for Israel Netherlands, with a total of as many as 108 participants, ranging in age from 15 to 81, ready to do voluntary work in the Holy Land.

The first group left for Israel on 21 February. We stayed in Jerusalem and went out from there to work in various locations. The day after our arrival, we drove early to Mosjav Tkuma, five kilometres from the Gaza



Strip. An orchard of over 120 hectares was desperately in need of orange pickers. There had been hardly any workers since 7 October, and there was a need to harvest. After a hard day's work, we (32 people) turned out to have picked over 18,000 kilos of oranges. The owner of the family business was overjoyed with our help. Our arrival really encouraged him, and we heard it time and again, not only from the people we worked for but also from the 'ordinary people' on the street. People thought it was so encouraging that we came to Israel to help precisely at this time, while we ourselves considered it a privilege to be there at that time.

Superficially, 'normal' life in Jerusalem and beyond seemed to be recovering a little bit, but the wounds are deep, the trauma still life-giving and the hostages on everyone's mind.

After the orange-picking adventure, we also picked the necessary kilos of clementines at another location. A slightly different work, as the clementines have to be cut from the branch with small scissors. The yield was slightly less legendary than the 18,000 kilos of oranges, but still, a mega-record in a few hours compared to other volunteers. Again, to the surprise of the owner of the orchard, who then had to haul in many more crates (each containing 360 kilos) than originally planned.

We also spent two days at a military base in the Tel Aviv area. During these days, we collectively dealt



with 85,000 meals for the soldiers in Gaza. As much as time (or the assembly line) allowed, we provided many meal boxes with a personal message: 'Stay Strong', 'Am Israel Chai' or 'Love from Holland', hoping to give some encouragement to the soldiers who have to fight in Gaza. It was great to be able to work among and with IDF soldiers. Some of them had already been active as reservists for several months, called away from ordinary life to contribute to the defence of the country. And in that respect, too, Israel is a special nation, as the reservists were all immensely motivated. 'If the country needs you, you are just available, no matter what.' The same was certainly true of the bus driver who had picked us up in Jerusalem that morning. After some probing, he told us he had been active as a tank commander in Gaza for over a month and a half. He was 51 and, therefore, did not have to report (the age limit was 45), but he took responsibility. Should the situation in northern Israel escalate (further), he will again be available for the front lines.

On one of the evenings, we had a special guest in our midst: Yossi Engel, the grandfather of the released hostage Ofir Engel (aged 17). He shared his grandson's story. He also urged us emphatically to keep calling attention to the 134 hostages still in Gaza, something the world seems to have long forgotten. People constantly talk about the humanitarian conditions in Gaza, but nobody on the world stage talks about the hostages anymore. He also warned about the West's naive attitude towards fundamentalist Islamist groups such as Hamas.

On Sunday, we drove early towards the Negev. There, we visited ADI (a care institution for disabled children; one of Christians for Israel's projects), which since last year also houses a rehabilitation centre. It nurses several wounded (including soldiers) on or since 7 October. In kibbutz Revivim, Julia (who leads First Home in the Homeland) shared her personal experiences of 7 October. It made us aware again of the horror of that day and many personal tragedies. This was, of course, reinforced by our visit to the site of the Nova Music Festival, where more than 300 young people were murdered in cold blood.



A few hundred soldiers were also present during our visit, attending a memorial ceremony. Seeing all these young people makes you realise again how absurd it is that this country needs such a large army to survive. The need was further emphasised by seeing the 'car graveyard': the huge number of cars of the victims of 7 October, many of whom were mercilessly murdered in their cars. In particular, the accumulation of totally burnt-out car wrecks provided a surreal backdrop to the lurid scenario that became a reality on 7 October.



On our last day—on our way to the airport—we visited the 'Square of the Hostages' in Tel Aviv. The sunlit morning was in stark contrast to the raw reality you face in the square. A large electronic board indicates the number of days, hours, minutes and seconds that the remaining (134) hostages have already been held in the hell of Gaza: 144 days at the time. As you walk around the square, the minutes and seconds tick away. You realise (once again) the urgency of releasing the hostages. The long table in the square is partly festively set. It symbolises the now-released hostages. On the other part of the table is a dingy tablecloth, bottles of contaminated water, and pieces of pita bread with a large nail in them. A reference to the degrading conditions in which hostages are held (with often a pita bread—or part of it—being the only food for an entire day). At the table also two highchairs for Kfir (1) and Ariel (4) Bibas, the two youngest victims of the Hamas hostage terror.

Although we noticed little of the physical war ourselves, the war was never far away. Our hotel in Jerusalem housed the necessary evacuees: elderly people from northern Israel who had been unable to return home for months due to the threat from Hezbollah (and daily attacks). The homes of some had been completely destroyed by rockets from Lebanon. The near future is one big question mark for them, too, for the time being. The same, of course, applies to the residents of the kibbutzim and villages along the Gaza Strip, who have also been relocated elsewhere in the country for months. The farms where we picked oranges and clementines would have seen much of their harvest lost without help. Workers are no longer available because of the war: they are either active as reservists, returned to their home countries (mostly Thailand) or came from Gaza (and are not allowed to work in Israel for the time being).

And then there were the many (short) conversations with Israelis: at the hotel, the shops, just on the street, after the service we attended on *Shabbat*, on our visits, and even on the plane. Everywhere, we heard the whisper of a grateful heart. Gratitude because we had come to Israel precisely at this time to help. Jews feel very much on their own. That's why the trip was also a wake-up call for us. The mission to 'roll up our sleeves' didn't end when we returned to the Netherlands. Especially in these difficult times for Israel, we are called to stand with the Jewish people and the nation of Israel: through our prayers for Israel, by continuing to plead for the release of the hostages, by actively standing up against antisemitism, the lies and half-truths, by pointing out to fellow Christians God's heart for Israel and His promises for His people, and our calling to bless Israel.



Our Boys are Coming Home... For Now

■ **Sondra Oster Baras**
International President of CFOIC
Heartland

After nearly five months of war, our reserve soldiers are starting to come home. On the morning of 7 October, as the IDF generals and the Israeli government were trying to make sense of the attacks that had surprised Israel just a few hours earlier, the IDF issued hundreds of thousands of emergency draft notices to reserve soldiers all over the country. It was the holiday of *Simchat Torah*, and young men received calls and departed the synagogue in a hurry, rushing home to change into a uniform and rush to the front. The vast majority of those reserve soldiers who called up that day remained on active duty until recently.

Beginning in January, the army started releasing most reserve soldiers. I had two sons and a son-in-law in the reserves. Today, only my son-in-law is still serving. As we meet friends and neighbours in the shops or synagogues, we exchange the news—who has come home and is still in. Most of my friends are able to rejoice in the return of their sons. Unfortunately, some of my neighbours have lost sons or grandsons. Others are worried about their wounded relatives. But I thank God each and every day that He kept my sons safe and brought them home safely. The war is far from over, but it has entered a new phase that allows most of the reserves to come home, at least for now.

So Biden has begun to turn the screws on Israel—blaming Israel rather than Hamas for the situation of Gazan civilians...

When the war began, Israel was embroiled in a civil conflict unprecedented in Israel's short history. Just over a year ago, the newly elected Israeli government proposed a far-reaching judicial reform, which sparked a controversy that shocked many on both sides of the divide. Accusations were flung across the aisle in the Knesset but spilled over into the streets. It is likely that the acrimonious atmosphere contributed to Hamas' decision to attack Israel when it did. It likely assumed that

Israel was at a weak point, plagued as it was by internal dissension.

But Hamas underestimated the Jewish people. Within minutes of the attack, the country came together with a solidarity and willingness for self-sacrifice that provided a welcome antidote to the hatred and evil that Hamas spewed across the Gaza lines. As soldiers joined their units and fought shoulder-to-shoulder against this heinous enemy, they buried their differences and fought as brothers. And when they had some downtime between battles, they shared their diverse opinions with one another—varying religious and political positions were common. But there was always an atmosphere of mutual respect.

During the first months of the war, all public political debates were shoved off the table. But recently, unfortunately, they are creeping back into popular discourse. Again and again, we are hearing calls for elections, as many in Israel do not trust Netanyahu and the original coalition government. Netanyahu's supporters are, once again, accusing his rivals, Gantz and Lapid, of stirring unrest and dissension.

And in the middle of all of this are the reserve soldiers. They are returning from months in difficult and dangerous conditions, having looked death in the eyes. Many have lost friends and neighbours or witnessed terrible scenes as they fought for Israel. And they are turning to the politicians and saying: Enough! Keep your childish, egotistical thoughts to yourselves. Focus on

defeating Hamas and releasing the hostages. Don't you dare stop the war until victory is achieved.

We sent our soldiers off to war to save the country. Now, they have returned and will, hopefully, save the country from the politicians. That is not to say that our political leaders are bad. There is overwhelming support in Israel for the way the war is being handled, and there is pride in the accomplishments of our soldiers alongside frustration for the fact that 134 of our people are still held



Thanks to generous donors, CFOIC Heartland purchased a surveillance drone for Argaman, a small, isolated community in the Jordan Valley. Photo: Members of the civilian rapid response team with their new drone.

hostage by Hamas and that Hamas' leader, Yahya Sinwar is still hunkered down in some tunnel waging war against us. But we are tired of the political games.

There is another series of political games, far more lethal than what is playing out in Israel, that is affecting developments in our country. US President Joe Biden is desperately trying to win re-election come November. His initial response to the Hamas attack was indeed amazing, and the ongoing provision of vital military supplies to Israel is critical. But Biden is losing support among the growing anti-Israel wing in the Democratic Party. They are not happy with Biden's support for Israel and are threatening to stay home come November, which may well hand the presidency to Biden's opponent, former President Donald Trump. So Biden has begun to turn the screws on Israel—blaming Israel rather than Hamas for the situation of Gazan civilians and trying to prevent Israel from continuing the battle in Rafah. Biden is insisting that Israel refrain from moving Gazans out of Rafah, a totally humanitarian move to protect them from the anticipated battle. However, if Israel does not move them, it will be accused of massacring Gazans in Rafah. The obvious solution would be for the US to

pressure Egypt to allow the Gazans into their territory, but Biden will not pressure Egypt.

Israel has a unique opportunity to defeat Hamas and save millions all over the world from the deadly arm of this evil terrorist organisation. But politicians all over the world are too busy looking out for their political careers, worrying about their Muslim and anti-Israel constituents to take a clear look at the situation and do what's right.

This is no time for games. Lives are at stake. In a few weeks or months, many of our reserve soldiers will be called back to active duty. The war will go on for a long time. And this is where you can help. Regardless of who your political leaders are and what they think of Israel, you can make a difference. Raise your voices for Israel in your community and combat the horrible voices of evil. And give. Give to support security needs in the Biblical Heartland. You can help us save lives. You can rise above the games and make a difference.

Sondra Oster Baras is the Founder and International President of CFOIC Heartland, which represents 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).



87 UN Member States Attack Israel

■ Andrew Tucker

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

On 7 October 2023, over 3000 Islamist extremists invaded Israel and slaughtered over 1200 innocent persons. It was a brutal attack on the existence of the Jewish State.

A similar attack is taking place on a larger but less visible scale within the United Nations.

A group of about eighty Islamic, Arab and African states, together with some European states, have banded together to assault the Jewish State of Israel. The scene of this massive crime is the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Astoundingly, this event seems so far to have avoided the attention of most people. Yet, it is no exaggeration to say that this legal attack presents an existential threat to the Jewish State. Some had likened it to the War of Independence in 1948 when the Jewish community in Palestine was fighting for the survival of the Jewish people and the infant State of Israel.

What is happening? In December 2022, a group of 87 UN member states voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly. The resolution is a lengthy document full of wild assertions and condemnations of Israel. It asks the International Court of Justice in The Hague to issue an 'Advisory Opinion' about 'the legal consequences' of Israel's 'policies and practices' in East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. The resolution basically asserts that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory since 1967 is denying the Palestinian right to a state on the whole of that territory. The Court should declare the occupation to be illegal.

Most UN member states did not support this resolution, and yet it was adopted because many states abstained from voting.

Since December 2022, fifty states and three international organisations (the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the African Union) have made written statements to the Court. Most of them are extremely hostile towards Israel. The essence of their claim: Palestine (all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean) belongs to the Palestinian people. The creation of the Jewish state in 1948 and the occupation of Palestinian territory since 1967 are preventing the establishment of an Arab State of Palestine.

They demand the immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli military and civilians from the entirety of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

This is an astounding and far-reaching claim. Never before has a claim been made that an occupation is illegal.

The arguments put to the Court are very similar to those put by the Palestinian Arabs led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al Husseini in the 1920s, denying the legitimacy of a Jewish homeland on Arab territory and demanding the right to use violence to prevent the creation of a Jewish homeland.

It is a continuation of the attacks by the Arab states on Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973—all of them intended to wipe the Jewish state from the map.

The difference is that claims are now being made by many UN member states in the highest court in the world.

The Arab, Islamic and African states were all represented in court by highly influential (and no doubt highly-paid)



H.E. Ambassador Filippo Tarakinikini, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations, presenting the oral submissions of Fiji to the International Court of Justice on Monday 26th February 2024. In the background Ms Robyn-Ann Mani (Fiji Mission in Geneva) and Andrew Tucker (Director General, thinc.)

international lawyers—like Professor Philippe Sands, a British/French Jewish academic who is the main legal adviser to the self-styled 'State of Palestine'.

Several weeks ago, the Court held oral hearings in which the states and organisations could present their cases in person.

thinc. was assisting the Republic of Fiji and had the opportunity to sit in court throughout the 6-day hearings.

It was an absurd and bizarre experience. Here were the world's leading lawyers—regally adorned and speaking the King's English—arguing that the Jewish State of Israel is illegitimate and does not even deserve to exist. One could feel a deep hatred of Jews in many of the presentations. Yet the judges did not bat an eyelid.

Although most states argued that the Court should issue an Opinion condemning Israel, several states have objected to the Court deciding on these issues. The UK, Hungary, Zambia, Czech Republic, France, Nauru, and Fiji all argued that the Court should exercise its judicial discretion not to issue an opinion at all because to do so would undermine the peace process requiring a negotiated outcome. The USA also argued that the Court should not take sides.

Fiji affirmed the important role of this Court as the highest judicial organ of the United Nations in resolving disputes between states and assisting UN organs in their activities, but objected to the use of the UN system to prosecute only one of the parties. The Court, Fiji argued, must not ignore the rights of Israel, or the responsibilities of the Palestinian people.

In Fiji's view, both Palestinians and

Israel are bound to comply with the Oslo Accords, which require negotiations on all final status issues, including Jerusalem, settlements, security and borders. Israel and the PLO have also agreed not to take unilateral steps to avoid negotiations.

In Fiji's view, the UN bodies have presented a distinctly one-sided narrative that ignores the complexity of the dispute and misrepresents the legal, historical, and political context.

Fiji provided several reasons why the Court should exercise its judicial discretion not to render an Advisory Opinion on the questions that have been posed by the General Assembly:

- First, the Request is a legal manoeuvre that circumvents the existing internationally sanctioned and legally binding framework for the resolution of the Israel-Palestine dispute;
- Second, to give an opinion, in this case, would have the effect of circumventing the principle that a State is not obliged to allow its disputes to be submitted to a judicial settlement without its consent and;
- Third, due to the one-sided formulation of the questions posed in Resolution 77/247, the Court does not have before it the accurate and reliable information that it would need to render an opinion on the questions posed.

The Court heard oral presentations from 19th–26th February 2024.

It is expected the Court will issue its decision within the next few months.

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

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Is There a Two-State Solution?

■ Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

Western leaders are pressing for a two-state solution. Two peoples struggling over one land? Let their two nations live side by side in peace. Prime Ministers Albanese, Trudeau and Luxon recently declared their “commitment to a two-state solution... where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in peace, security and dignity.” Problem solved!

Neither the Bible, nor history, nor present day political dynamics give the slightest support for such a notion. Among the many proposals since 1917 to divide up the Land, none have worked.

Cutting the Cake

The 1920 San Remo and 1921 Cairo Conference confirmed the Balfour Declaration’s pledge to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine and gave Britain the Mandate for Palestine. The British government subsequently declared that Jewish settlement would be permitted in the Palestine Mandate west of the Jordan River but not in the Trans-Jordan (Jordan today) part of the Mandate, which would be for Arab settlement only. This first two-state solution put much of Biblical Israel off-limit to Jews at a stroke.

Over the following years, British policy on the Palestine Mandate west of the Jordan River swayed around. The Churchill White Paper of 1922, the Shaw Commission of 1930, the Passfield White Paper and Hope-Simpson Report of 1930-31, and the MacDonald Letter of 1931 all took different lines in response to rising tensions between the British, the Jews, and the Arabs. The 1936 Peel Commission and 1937 Woodhead Commission produced various maps for the partition of the Palestine Mandate. Post-war, 1947 was a bumper year with the Anglo-American Morrison-Grady plan, the Special Commission on Palestine plan, and the UN General Assembly plan for dividing Palestine. To gain a Jewish state, the Zionist leadership accepted the UN offer of a sliver of land. The surrounding Arab nations rejected any such state.

The 1948-49 War of Independence produced a different reality. The 1967 and 1973 wars further changed Israel’s borders, as did the 1979 agreement with Egypt—the sole case of successfully trading land for peace.

Immigrants and Refugees

During the Mandate period, Britain increasingly restricted Jewish immigration whilst being relaxed about Arab immigration, a source of cheap labour. The 1948-49 war saw over 500,000 Arabs flee Israel—encouraged by the leaders of the invading Arab armies, whilst Israeli leadership encouraged most

Arab communities to stay. Arab states expelled almost their entire Jewish populations, sending over 500,000 to Israel and ethnically cleansing themselves of Jews. A major exchange of populations and an abrupt shift in the ethnic balance of Israel resulted.

Israel allowed its refugees to become citizens and build new lives there. Today, its Jewish population is majority Middle Eastern in origin. By contrast, Arab countries (with a land area 500 times greater than Israel) kept their influx of refugees as refugees and rarely allowed them to become citizens or integrate with the local population. Many of their descendants remain in refugee camps today. The focus has been not to help refugees but to maintain their descendants’ right of return to Palestine as a lever against Israel. That right has helped crush subsequent negotiations for a two-state solution.

Who are the Palestinians?

Since 1948, Arab residents of Israel have been citizens with full rights and today number some two million of its ten million population. From polling, the great majority regard themselves as ‘real Israelis’. They complicate the media’s simplistic narrative and so are mostly ignored—they cannot be proper ‘Palestinians’.

From 1948 to 1967, Arab states controlled both Gaza and the West Bank. They showed no inclination to establish self-government for the ‘Palestinian people’—possibly because, at that time, nobody had heard of such a people. Beyond local loyalties to villages, families and tribes, Arab inhabitants subscribed to a broad identity as Arabs. Until 1967, Palestine/Palestinian were geographic descriptors, not ethnic ones. In 1958, Egypt and Syria formed the United Arab Republic to emphasise their shared identity as one Arab nation and their need to remove the annoying country that lay between them.

After the 1967 war, the conflict was recast as the ‘Palestinian cause’—framing it as little Palestinians versus big Israel rather than little Israel versus big Arab states. This appealed to Western sensibilities but defined the Palestinian people to themselves in terms of victimhood.

Years of propaganda and UNRWA-sponsored education have produced a Palestinian people whose whole identity is based on being oppressed and robbed by Israel. This heavy emphasis on grievance and loss of agency—and consequent appetite for terrorism—has proved disastrous economically for the Palestinians, which in turn has reinforced their sense of victimhood.



Bill Clinton, Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat at the White House 1993. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, signed up to the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993 and 1995—gaining limited self-government for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. But, at the Camp David summit in 2000, when offered some 92% of his demands to achieve a final settlement, he said “No.” Renewed waves of terrorism followed.

His successor, Mahmoud Abbas, denies both the Holocaust and the Jews’ connection to the Temple Mount. Under him, the Palestinian Authority has maintained its ‘pay for slay’ policy of rewarding the families of Jihadist ‘martyrs’. TV features jihadist cartoon heroes; proud mums display small children who want to grow up to kill Jews.

In 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert improved even on the Camp David offer, saying to Abbas, “It will be 50 years before there will be another Israeli prime minister who will offer you what I am offering you. Don’t miss this opportunity.” He did.

Abbas knows that polling shows negligible support for a two-state solution among Palestinians, with Hamas far more popular than his own Palestinian Authority. Regarding 7 October 2023, Abbas said on Egyptian TV, “What is happening is worse than a genocidal war... The Israeli plan is to eliminate the Palestinian existence.”

Abbas presents a moderate face to Western media. Alas, the Palestinian leadership and people have consistently shown that there is no partnership for peace and no path to ‘revitalise’ (as US Secretary of State Blinken puts it) their governance to conform to Western expectations.

International Failures

Against these facts, international guarantees, funding and peacekeeping

forces have proved useless. The US did not stand by its 1950, 1955 or 1957 guarantees to Israel. A promised UN civil rule in Gaza in 1957 did not eventuate. UN peacekeeping forces withdrew from the Egyptian border in 1967 under Egyptian threats. Responding to terrorist attacks, Israeli forces entered Lebanon in 1978, 1982, and 2006. Each time, they withdrew with international guarantees. Each time, these failed.

The UN’s top body is the Security Council, where the US, UK and France each have power of veto. The Council has passed over 70 resolutions that condemn, deplore, censure or place demands on Israel. New Zealand, when a temporary member of the Council in 2016, co-sponsored Resolution 2334, which declares that all measures and constructions by Israel in Palestinian territory since 1967 “constitute a flagrant violation under international law.” Jerusalem’s Old City, the Western Wall and Temple Mount become ‘Palestinian territory’—to act otherwise is ‘a flagrant violation’.

From its record at the UN, the state of Israel accounts for most of the wickedness on earth. International bodies hold Israel responsible as an oppressor and deny Jewish history. Aid agencies give way to terrorists, telling themselves that they do justice in bending to favour the oppressed. World leaders now threaten to impose a solution through third-party action, ignoring the basic principle of international law: dispute resolution through negotiation.

Islamicists understand that the West clings to its dream of relieving victimhood as the path to peace and justice and will appease Palestinian claims. A two-state ‘solution’ is a path not to peace and justice but to the destruction of Israel.

Embassy News

United Nations
International Holocaust
Remembrance Day

Left to Right: Hon Chris Bishop; HE Ms Nicole Menzenbach, German Ambassador to NZ; HE Ran Yaakoby, Ambassador of Israel to NZ. Photo: Woolf-Holocaust Centre of NZ website.

His Excellency Ran Yaakoby, Ambassador of Israel to New Zealand, attended this year's United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day (UNIHRD) event at Parliament in Wellington hosted by the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand. The theme of UNIHRD 2024 is *From Generation to Generation: The Future of Holocaust Memory*.

UNIHRD events were held in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin. Deputy Head of Mission, Yael Holan, attended the event in Hamilton.

An Event Honouring
International Women's Day

An International Women's Day event was held jointly by the Embassy of Israel in New Zealand and the Council of Jewish Women of New Zealand. The event was held to shine a light on the ways Israeli women's organisations are addressing domestic violence and the immediate needs of women during wartime. With the use of online technology, speakers and participants attended from New Zealand, Israel, Samoa and Australia.

The first speaker was Professor Yifat Bitton, a legal academic and social activist for equality from Israel. She spoke about her activity in the Israeli and the international arena to raise awareness and address the sexual crimes against women by Hamas and other terrorist organisations on 7 Oct.

Ms Idit Codish was the second speaker who described her work at the Michal Sela Forum to combat domestic violence in Israel and globally. The organisation saves lives and prevents violence against women through innovation and technology. Melinda Jones was the final speaker from Melbourne, Australia. She is the Founder and President of The Kiverstein Institute, which is devoted to strengthening the feminist arena in Jerusalem. She spoke about the silence of the international community on crimes by Hamas against women and the call to action for Jewish women of the diaspora.

Israel Meets the Faithful

A meeting of the faithful was held for Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Yael Holan on Tuesday 19 March in Levin. Hosted by Jan Wade and Pastors Richard and Jo Brons from Life Changers church, guests came from the Kapiti Coast and the Levin area. Jan Wade heads up the local Heart for Israel group and there is also Zion house there. Recently there has been a marked unity amongst Levin churches and uptake in support for Israel around the area, so it was fitting that Yael came to witness the support personally and thank believers for their prayers.

Speaking from the heart Yael spoke about her life story, her heritage, what she does at the Embassy and a brief comment on the war situation. Yael grew up on a kibbutz in the Jezreel valley and began teaching Hebrew to her grandparents on their annual visits to Israel from France. She took her love of teaching and turned it into a profession, loving every minute of it. Her army service was in the education unit where she was teaching Hebrew to lone soldiers from 30 countries. Next up was her university education stint unsurprisingly an MPP in Education from Tel Aviv University. From there she spent a decade teaching Hebrew in youth villages for foreign Jews aged 15 and older who come to Israel with a view to immigrate permanently. Yael took the opportunity to speak Hebrew with Levin locals who are learning the language much to their delight. She speaks four languages: Hebrew, French, English and Russian.



Jan Wade, Yael Holan with Pastors Jo and Richard Brons from Life Changers Church.

As Covid hit, Yael headed to Tanzania to be part of a green initiative and got involved with social investment and aid. It was during this time she saw a Facebook ad for the foreign service and applied, not thinking she would get in as only a tiny handful is admitted. After a lengthy testing and interview process, Yael was accepted and began the cadetship for one year. From there it was to the Middle East Department. She never imagined her first post, a compulsory one, would be to New Zealand, but is so happy to be here.

Yael has three roles—a political one as the Deputy Chief of Mission, the Consul issuing visas and documents, providing

advocacy dealing with Israelis in trouble and Administration—running the Embassy operations and dealing with the staff. It's a hectic role made more so with war commitments. Yael spoke about the two NZ-born Israeli soldiers that have died in the war making it personal to NZ too.

As the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, Yael was keen to speak with Elizabeth Blauw, the daughter of Dutch believers who hid a Jewish child during the Occupation. Pre-war Yael's paternal grandfather changed his Jewish surname name to a common Czech one to avoid detection and thus Yael is the world's only Yael Holan. Everyone laughed.

Miki Goes to Parliament

Well-known journalist, TV presenter and former member of the Israeli Knesset, Miki Haimovich, visited Parliament on Tuesday, 5 March. She was an MK 2019-2021 as a member of the Resilience party under the Blue and White party banner. Prior to that, she spent more than two decades in the media and another in activism, including voter participation and veganism.

Miki was keen to explore some of the nitty gritty aspects of NZ's parliament, given the many similarities between the systems. On her visit, she was accompanied by Yael Holan, Deputy Chief of Mission. The visit began with an external briefing from Joanna Moss, an ex-parliamentary staffer and then proceeded to the individual VIP tour from Parliamentary Services with an expert guide who was simply delighted

to be able to dialogue over constitutional matters. Miki was surprised by the many links with Israel in the House. She had previously met Helen Clark offshore. At midday that day, there was a private members bill ballot that Miki was able to watch and view, and the range of bills was submitted by non-Cabinet members.

The Knesset uses a similar Select Committee process to provide a check in the bill formation process and Miki was intrigued by the Maori, Women's and Pacific Islands rooms. Later she was able to sit in on Question time and discuss matters as well as observe a media scrum. Her visit coincided with a shake-up in the media providing added interest.



Whilst in NZ, Miki has participated in a march for the hostages, connected with Israelis, stayed with a well-known HIT host in rural NZ and will be touring in the South Island for the rest of March. She is keen to meet Israel supporters as well as see the sites.

God's Covenant Promise to Israel

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up | New Zealand

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has morphed over the years. It used to be known as the Arab-Israeli conflict up until after the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The united Arab peoples of the Middle East and North Africa had sought to prevent the creation of a Jewish state in what had been referred to regionally as Palestine. Palestine had covered what is today the State of Israel and the disputed territories, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Having failed in their attempt to prevent Israel's creation, they then unified to destroy it. Most notably, in 1967, the Arab attempt led by Egypt completely failed. In 1973, after winning some prestige in their ability to confront Israel militarily, Egypt, Syria, and their allies again suffered defeat and could have lost the Arab capitals of Cairo and Damascus had it not been for the United Nations' call for a ceasefire at the bequest of the Arabs big backer, the Soviet Union.

The fight for Israel's survival and her right to exist goes on to this day. It will continue until the coming of the Lord.

After that war, which was brutal and confronting for the entire nation of Israel and led to major heads rolling because of Israel's inability to foresee the coming attack, both sides were in the mood for peace. Egypt signed its peace treaty with Israel in March 1979, and Jordan followed in October 1994. Syria has never come to terms with Israel, and the two sides are still technically in a state of war. Although most, if not all, of the Arab nations, are part of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, a bloc of 57 nations which often opposes Israel in the United Nations, the state of war that had existed between Arab nations and the State of Israel in its formative years is no longer in existence. The conflict for the last four decades has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That said, it is important to understand that the Palestinians are mainly of the Arab peoples of the Middle East and part of that larger and more universal Arab nation.

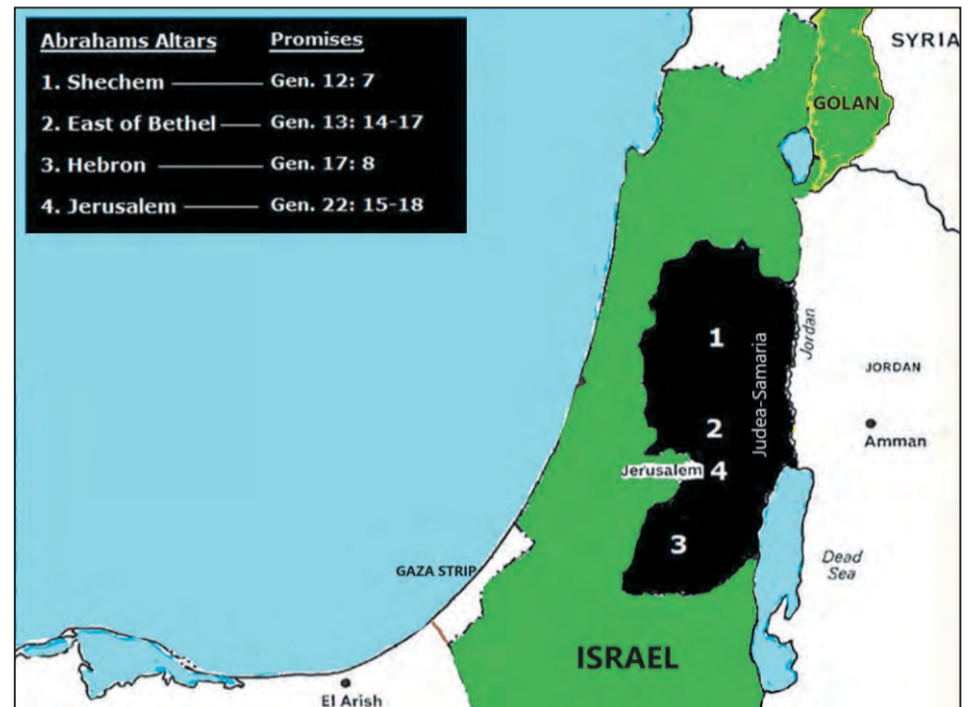
The history of Israel has been fraught with conflict and war, tragedy, and upheavals. What we see happening on the ground today is simply a reflection of a superior supernatural battle taking place between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light. Israel goes to war to defend itself today because the devil hates them and has been trying to

eradicate the people of Israel ever since God made a unique covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ever since that time, Israel has been at war. We see it in Pharaoh's attempt to enslave the Hebrews and exterminate all their firstborn sons. We see it in the attempt of the Canaanite nations to influence the people of Israel so they would assimilate and become like them, for which the Israelites were cast out of their land in God's judgment. We see it in Haman's attempt to exterminate 'all the Jews' in Queen Esther's day and in Herod's attempt to wipe out their Messiah in Bethlehem. We have seen it through centuries of persecution shamefully initiated at times in the name of Christianity. We have seen it in the pogroms which culminated in the worst of them all, the Holocaust, and we have certainly witnessed it from 7 October. Because it is a supernatural battle, the primary but not the only weapon for victory is prayer.

The fight for Israel's survival and her right to exist goes on to this day. It will

continue until the coming of the Lord. Jesus Himself will defend Israel's right to exist, her right to the land she dwells on, and He will remind "all Israel" and the entire world of that indestructible covenant He once made with Israel's great patriarchs. The contention is really over God's holy covenant with the people of Israel through their forefathers. When we see and understand the nature of the covenant, we can have a better understanding of the battle.

Abraham first heard God's command while he was in Ur of the Chaldees, modern southern Iraq: The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you" (*Genesis 12:1*). It was not until some years later that God would reveal to him exactly where that land was. After the death of his father, Terah, Abraham, still known as Abram at that stage, moved on from Haran and headed for the land of Canaan. We read in *Genesis 12:6-7*: Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring, I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.



| Photo: Nigel Woodley

Today, Shechem is in the vicinity of the Arab city of Nablus. Nablus is a centre of terrorist activity at different times. When God had spoken to Abram while he was still in Ur of the Chaldees, He said He would take him "to the land I will show you". Abram left Ur in faith but not knowing where this promised land would be. It was first at Shechem that God revealed to Abram that the land of Canaan was the promised land. Abram marked the site with his first altar in the holy land.

His second altar was built between Bethel and Ai. It was here God confirmed the covenant promise—the Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever" (*Genesis 13:14-15*). Once again, the altar site was accompanied by the covenant promise. This time, the land was promised to his descendants 'forever'. The ancient site is located just north of Jerusalem and is part of the 'occupied West Bank', a controversial term as the Israelis refer to the area with its biblical name 'Judea-Samaria'.

Abram's third altar was in the vicinity of Hebron, in the southern area of Judea/West Bank. Once again, the place of the altar was accompanied by confirmation of the covenant promise. "The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you, and I will be their God." (*Genesis 17:8*). Today, Hebron is an area of contention. It has a large Arab population, and the Jewish community of Kiryat Arba lives on the outskirts. Nearby is the Cave of Machpelah, where Sarah, Abraham,

Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob are all buried. At the resurrection, the Patriarchs will arise on their own land. It was here that God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision.

The fourth altar was Abraham's most memorable. Here, he was prepared to give up his son on Mount Moriah, the site of Solomon's temple many years later and referred to as the Temple Mount today. Once again, the altar site was accompanied by the covenant promise: I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me." (*Genesis 22:17-18*)

When you realise that all of Abraham's altar sites, which included the covenant promises of the everlasting possession of the land, are on the West Bank/Judea-Samaria, the most contentious piece of real estate in the world, then you begin to appreciate the real battle taking place. It is the forces of darkness contesting the covenant promises of God regarding His covenant people, Israel. If they can prevent Israel from possessing her promised land, then for the unbeliever, there is some justification that the God of Israel does not exist. However, God is coming through for Israel: they are back in the land; against all odds, they have survived repeated attacks against their people and nation; and the prophetic promise for this covenant people who are still gathering to the land is in *Amos 9:15*—I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.



From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



It's About the Hostages

We are well into March, and two seasons are behind us. Here in Israel, autumn and winter are receding into memory, and spring is about to herald its entrance. Nature follows its course, and yet, here in this homeland of ours, the beauty of the changing seasons is marred by the cruelty of reality. We are at war.

Over five months have passed since that dark day in October when messengers of evil brought death and destruction to southwestern Israel. As I write these lines, over 130 people are still held hostage, some of whom may already be dead. Families of the hostages have been facing this stark reality since 7 October. This reality has left its mark on the International Women's Day 2024.

Evidence of the bestiality of Hamas against women has been abundant since the early days of the war. Mutilated corpses of women laying in the Kibbutzim and on the site of the Nova party echoed the brutality of the terrorists. And yet, it took the UN close to 5 months to complete its report. Even then, the report omitted the identity of the culprits. We are still waiting for the Security Council to convene on the matter.

The entire nation of Israel shares the pain of the families. Yellow ribbons are emblazoned over public buildings and bridges. People wear yellow bands on their hands and join their families in marches and protests. Israel will never forget the hostages and will leave no stone unturned in the efforts to bring them home.

Answered Prayer

When the war broke out, Joanne Kelly asked God how she could stand with Israel and show her Christian love for Israelis when the world appeared to be turning against them. One morning as she walked out from her Wellington apartment, Joanne encountered a man who told her about a March for the hostages. She followed him and from then on became a much-loved regular at the weekly march. Joanne has just left on her OE and is looking to God for the next step to show support.



Joanne Kelly with Tom Rockman Arielly from the Holocaust Centre.

Revenge or a Fight Against Evil?

■ Ilse Strauss

Bridges for Peace

“Over the top.” That is how US President Joe Biden chose to describe Israel’s military campaign against Hamas in Gaza at a White House podium in early February.

The three-word phrase communicated a number of inaccuracies. To pick just one, the average civilian-to-combatant death ratio in conflicts since World War II is 4.5:1, which translates to a staggering four and a half innocent noncombatants killed for every soldier. Israel, however, has achieved an unprecedented 2:1 or less ratio in the Gaza conflict. While all civilian casualties are a tragedy, this figure stands as proof that Israel takes exceptional steps to protect Gazans. World leaders should commend the Israel Defense Forces’ capabilities instead of throwing around phrases like “over the top.”

Yet the biggest concern with Biden’s choice of words is neither the insinuating accusations nor the not-so-subtle charges but the fact that the entire premise of his situational assessment is flawed.

“Over the top” implies that Israel’s objective in Gaza is retaliation. It acknowledges that 7 October was horrendous. Of course, it does! It also concedes that Israel has every right to respond to the heinous attack—as every sovereign country rightly does.

Yet it also communicates that Israel’s military campaign in Gaza is aimed at paying Hamas back in kind and that when Israel has deemed the score settled and believes Hamas to have learned its lesson, Jerusalem will halt, and life will return to normal. Moreover, “over the top” insinuates that Biden is of the opinion that Hamas’s wrist has now been slapped hard enough and that the Jewish state’s thirst for revenge should have been quenched by now. After all, 1,200 people murdered is atrocious, but surely 28,000 Gazans reportedly killed is sufficient payback?

Yet the Israel–Hamas conflict goes well beyond retaliation. In fact, vindication doesn’t even factor into the equation, argues Col. (ret.) Grisha Yakubovich. “This is an existential war,” explains the last Israeli mayor of Gaza City and the former head of the Civilian Department of COGAT, the unit responsible for implementing Israel’s civilian policy and security coordination in the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria. “It’s about confronting global jihad and an evil that threatens not only Israel and Jewish values but the Western world, democracy and freedom as a whole.”



USA President Joe Biden and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu meet in Tel Aviv. | Photo: Flash90

Evolution of Evil

In 1979, Palestinian sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam bid farewell to his native village near Jenin and moved to Pakistan in a bid to help the Afghani mujahideen (holy warriors) fight the Soviet invaders. It was there, in the markets of Peshawar, that Azzam bumped into a bright young student by the name of Osama bin Laden, whom he took under his wing and nurtured in the “holy way of jihad.”

Azzam was killed in a car bombing in 1989, but when the planes crashed into the Twin Towers 12 years later, his fingerprints were so clearly visible on Bin Laden’s terror coup that the Palestinian sheikh from a village near Jenin was dubbed the father of 9/11, Al Qaeda and modern *jihad*.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Al Qaeda stood as the essence of extremism, the incarnation of evil, Yakubovich explains, yet radicalism has a way of breeding more radicalism until something even more malevolent is born.

What hatched in the wake of Bin Laden was a movement of fanatics that looked on their Al Qaeda brethren with contempt, viewing them as heretics and weaklings, Yakubovich continues. “With their black flag, orange jumpsuits and public beheadings, ISIS transformed jihadism into something unheard of,” he holds. “The kingdom of ISIS—inspired by the radicalism of the Palestinian sheikh from a village near Jenin—flourished in the plains of Iraq and Syria, and finally reached the Sinai desert, where fanatics and extremists swore allegiance to the black flag.”

Under Muslim Brotherhood-linked Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, ISIS rampaged through Sinai largely unchecked—and attracted every fanatic and extremist in the region to join their ranks. It was there, in the markets of El Arish and Port Said, that the ISIS holy warriors bumped into young Gazans

who had left the coastal enclave because Hamas was simply not hard-core enough for them. ISIS took these Gazans—including the nephew of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar—under their wing and nurtured them in the “holy way of jihad.”

When Morsi fell and his successor, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, launched a large-scale campaign to rid Sinai of insurgency, the young Gazans returned to Gaza, carrying evil with them. It was there, in the markets of Rafah, Gaza City and Jabalia, that they bumped into Hamas, took the terror organisation under their wing and nurtured them in the “holy way of *jihad*.” This evil had started with the Palestinian sheikh from a village near Jenin, transformed into the evil of Al Qaeda, morphed into something more radical still in ISIS and then came to roost in Gaza as a new level of fanatic obsession with a singular target in its crosshairs: Israel.

“That’s what we saw on 7 October, evidence of a radicalised cruelty that not only kills but rather takes great delight in a systematic pattern of rape, torture and butchery. It wasn’t an aspiration for a state but the evolution of evil that started with a Palestinian cleric, circled throughout the Middle East and then came full circle back to the Palestinians on Israel’s doorstep,” Yakubovich explains.

And that’s what makes this war an existential one, he holds. “Forget retaliation and revenge. We are fighting to send a clear message to radicalism breeding all over the Middle East that we will never give up. Evil will never win. We are fighting for us and our people, of course. However, the Jewish state serves as the final frontier for Europe and beyond. In the bigger picture, we are defending the Jewish, Christian, Western world and the values you and I hold dear.”



Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem



As Israel began the fourth month of its war with Hamas, a small contingent of Indigenous Peoples from around the world arrived in Jerusalem to make a bold statement and put a stake in the ground.

On 1 February the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem was launched at a formal event held at the Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem. Gil Haskel, Chief of State Protocol, announced the Indigenous embassy as the 100th embassy in Israel and Jerusalem's Deputy Mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, called it the fifth embassy in Jerusalem.

Dr Sheree Trotter, cofounder of Indigenous Coalition For Israel presented the idea of an indigenous embassy to Hassan-Nahoum, while visiting Jerusalem in September 2023. A month later, Māori leaders Bradford and Selina Haami and Pastor Greg Motu also discussed the idea with the Deputy-Mayor at a meeting at the Friends of Zion Museum. According to Bradford Haami: “Fleur was very supportive of this idea, as a ‘symbolic embassy’ not a political entity, especially to garner support from the outside world for Israel as an indigenous people of the land. She was keen to open it then and there at the Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem but we decided to defer it till later. She invited Brad and Rick to appear on a live television show that day to speak about the idea of establishing an indigenous embassy in Jerusalem.”

The war had broken out just as the New Zealand group were traveling to Israel, but twenty of their number chose to continue on regardless.

Brad wrote: “The team were saddened by the events in Israel. People were so vulnerable and fearful while we were in Jerusalem. People wanted to know why we stayed in the land and did not flee from the war like everyone else. We replied, “we’re here to support Israel in its time of need”. There were tears, but we were blessed to be in that situation. All of us learned a great deal about ourselves by being in the middle of a war.”

Following this, ICFI moved forward, with the endorsement of the Deputy Mayor to lead the embassy project.

Dr Trotter stated that she was motivated by the alarming rise in antisemitism following Hamas’s 7 October brutal attack on Israel. She felt that launching the embassy would send a strong message of solidarity from indigenous peoples around the world, of recognition of the Jews as indigenous to Israel. According to Trotter, “the embassy has long been a desire of indigenous peoples who felt connected to Israel. It had been one of the long term goals of the Indigenous Coalition

for Israel, established to create a platform for Indigenous peoples to express their support for Israel.”

“The inaugural event was successful beyond all expectations. A palpable energy and excitement filled the room as the Indigenous groups expressed their support and gratitude to the people of Israel. The Israelis in the audience, some with tears in their eyes, warmly welcomed the love and solidarity of our peoples, which stood in such strong contrast to the opposition and hatred they had received from many parts of the world. One Israeli woman later commented to me that she had not felt this way, at least for ten years, perhaps in her whole life”.

The formal event took an unexpected turn as the Indigenous groups spontaneously began dancing to the music of the Solomon Brothers, and many Israelis in the audience, including leaders and politicians joined in.

The Indigenous delegates included the Regent Xami Thomas, chief of the Khoi tribe who spoke out against the actions of the South African government in taking Israel to the International Court of Justice. Dr Ate Moala brought a message from Her Majesty Queen Nanasipau’u of Tonga. Native American representatives, Chief Joseph RiverWind, Peace Chief of the Arawak Taino Tribe of Puerto Rico and Dr Laralyn RiverWind, the Ambassador of the Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee gave a moving speech, stating: “It is only fitting that the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem be established in the capital of the very place that so many colonising empires have fought to wrench from the indigenous hands of the Judeans”.

Māori Pastor, Greg Motu spoke of how the Hebrew scriptures brought great benefit to his people and “changed us”. He shared the concept of *ahi kaa*—the way in which a tribe maintains its connection to a piece of land by keeping the fires burning. He affirmed that the Jews held *ahi kaa* over Israel. The delegation shared words and prayers of encouragement and hope, all of which were warmly received.

A few days after the event some of the delegates undertook a visit to the Gaza border area—the town of Sderot, Kibbutz Mefalsim, as well as the site of the Nova massacre. Members of the group were deeply moved to hear the heartbreaking and terrifying stories of the communities of southern Israel. The guide at Sderot explained that telling her story was her way of recovering and healing from the trauma. She was tearful as the group expressed their love and support for her. Mefalsim Kibbutz members told the heroic tale of how



Dr Sheree Trotter, Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem Director, speaking at the opening. | Photos: Perry Trotter



Some of the Indigenous delegates at the site of the Nova massacre.



Spontaneous dancing at the opening event.

their community succeeded in fighting off the invaders.

Trotter stated, “When we arrived at the Nova site, it was hard to hold back the tears, to think of the terror that unfolded that day, for the young people and their families. It’s beyond comprehension.”

The grounds of the Nova massacre have been turned into a poignant memorial site, where the images of the young people are displayed. Many visitors come to pay their respects, to reflect and to mourn.

According to Trotter, “The inaugural event for Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem has put a stake in the ground for Indigenous supporters of Israel. For that we are deeply grateful. Now the real work begins. There is much to do as we

move to establish and formalise the embassy and raise funding for its many goals. The blatant falsehood that Jews are foreign colonisers who have aggressively displaced the Palestinians, who of course are said to be the indigenous people of the land, is one of the central tenets of modern antisemitism. It is also one of the least addressed of the many lies undergirding Jew hatred. The Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem intends to confront these matters directly through media, articles—both popular and academic—and to show that we as the indigenous of the nations affirm the Jewish people’s millennia old connection to the land of Israel.”

For more information on Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem, visit: www.indigenousembassy.org



Destiny Warriors Stand with Israel

■ Apostle Brian Tamaki

Founder and Senior Minister of Destiny Churches International | Founder of ManUp International | Founder & Leader of The Freedoms & Rights Coalition

God has poked and prompted me many times with the verse in *Psalm 94:16* “Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?”

God’s promptings have caused me to stand up many times to politicians, for Kiwi families and my Christian faith, against mandates, lockdowns, segregation and a loss of our freedoms and rights. Since 2004 I have publicly stood up for what is right in New Zealand in a big and bold manner.

When news of Hamas’ horrific terrorist acts first broke, in my spirit I instinctively knew God wanted to see how His people would respond here in New Zealand. After years of studying God’s Word, I know that Israel holds pride of place in God’s heart. Israel is the apple of God’s eye (*Zechariah 2:8*). I knew our response needed to be a public display in number, showing a bold and courageous people who would support our Jewish brothers and sisters.

We have now held multiple marches and rallies to show our support for Israel. I hope you have felt our love and support during these difficult times. However, these have not just been any old marches or rallies. A stand-out feature has been when my warrior men perform the *Haka*.

Staunch Destiny Warriors

One thing the pro-Palestinians didn’t bank on when they began to march, was any staunch opposition. They know Christians in New Zealand are typically meek across the globe.

However, they underestimated an uprising from ‘down under’. Across New Zealand and Australia, they didn’t expect to encounter my Destiny Church warrior men and our spirit-led *haka* (Indigenous Māori war-dance or war-cry).

These men I have mentored and developed, are men with a difference. They are staunch in spirit, and strong in character. They are the finest breed of Christian soldiers as I build an end-time army to uphold Christ in our nation, and across the globe. We are a few, who dare to stand up to the many!

The spirit these men carry is causing Pro-Palestine/Hamas rallies to retreat in defeat. First in Auckland, then in Brisbane, and again in Auckland. The mere mention of us turning up is enough to make them turn and run. Here’s how it played out.

On 30 October, I took some of my team along to support a *Coalition of Israel Support Groups* rally at Aotea Square. In that moment, our team felt led to do an impromptu *haka* that was captured on Twitter (X)... and it immediately went viral with over 6.3 million views.

In November 2023 I got word that a Pro-Palestine/Hamas rally was planned for a Saturday at the Aotea Square in Auckland. I cheekily got my team to put out a message that I was holding a pro-Israel rally on the same day, at the same place, only my rally was an hour earlier. Next thing I knew, the Pro-Palestinian/Hamas sympathisers were quick to retreat and postpone their event to the Sunday. It was interesting to see their supporters questioning the organisers as to why they retreated in fear. In my spirit, I knew why.

As we met that Saturday in Aotea Square, my men performed an even bigger Pro-Israel *haka* and we



captured it on video again. This *haka* went viral too, reaching over 1.3 million people through X. Thousands of messages of appreciation began to flood in.

About this time I was due to visit my son Samuel Tamaki, a pastor in Gold Coast, Australia. As I travelled, I got word that a massive Pro-Palestine/Hamas rally was planned in Brisbane on the Sunday at 2pm at King George Square. They had their marketing material out, and the venue booked. I wanted to confirm what my spirit already knew, that the enemy is afraid of us.

I phoned my son and asked him to put out a message that we were holding a Pro-Israel rally on the same Sunday, at King George Square, again an hour earlier, at 1pm. I named it *ANZAC’s Stand With Israel*. Next thing we received word that they had moved their Pro-Palestine/Hamas rally to a different location at Queens Garden Park. I had a little chuckle that they’d gone from ‘Kings to Queens.’

That Sunday I was proud to stand and speak in Brisbane at King George Square, alongside my good friends Pat Mestiti and Avi Yemini. Then another rousing *haka* took place from my warrior men (and women) and it was captured beautifully on video by Avi Yemini—this reached another 2.1 million viewers.

I began to realise the magnitude and significance of these *haka* when I started to receive phone calls from journalists and commentators all over the world, including Israel, UK and New York. A Rabbi in Melbourne begged me to go there and stand with them.

I received another call from Sydney, asking us to go there and help them stand, as Pro-Palestinian rallies were becoming quite violent as they chanted despicable antisemitic statements.

It warmed my heart to hear that the videos of our *haka* even reached the frontline soldiers in IDF, and they were moved to tears as they relentlessly fight for their very existence as a nation.

I received another invitation from officials in Jerusalem that they wanted us to take our *haka* men over there to encourage the Israeli people. About then Elon Musk was visiting Israel, so I cheekily sent him a message suggesting that he may like to fund our *haka* men to travel to Jerusalem. No answer yet.

It has been a joy to spend time with NZ’s Israeli Ambassador, Ran Yaakoby, on several occasions. He has been overjoyed by the support we have displayed here in New Zealand towards Israel. The stomp, shout and spirit of these ANZAC warriors as they perform the

haka in support of Israel has gone viral across the world. Kiwis perform the well-known *Ka Mate Haka* every day around the globe, but the point of difference with our Destiny Warriors is the godly mana and spirit they emit and project into the atmosphere. We are serious about challenging and pushing back on all evil that swirls around us.

We’ve even taken our *haka* in support of Israel to the steps of Parliament as we presented our petition in December 2023. I was incredibly pleased to see that the NZ government recently heeded the petition calling for the entirety of Hamas and Hezbollah to be declared a terrorist organisation. They have now declared all of Hamas a terrorist organisation. I have also requested they go a step further in expelling any Members of Parliament who support terrorist organisations. It has been shameful to see so many MPs from the Green Party, Te Pāti Māori and Labour supporting Palestine during this war, and the lack of support shown to Israel. We will continue to push back on this.

The West has Discarded Judeo-Christian Foundations

I believe the Western world was built on Judeo-Christian beliefs, which brought so much peace to the West. Judeo-Christian beliefs are still the best thing to underpin our society. Yet, the West is discarding Judeo-Christianity at its peril.

I carry a strong sense of responsibility to protect our Judeo-Christian culture here in New Zealand, which has made this country great. For years I have been warning of the pending disaster with the West embracing multiculturalism. I will continue to stand against other religions and multiculturalism that want to ruin our country for future generations.

Final Word of Encouragement

To my Christian brothers and sisters...we must not remain silent and on the sidelines as the battle for our Lord Jesus Christ’s homeland intensifies. There is too much at stake. If Israel falls to Islam, our Western countries will be next in line. We must ashamedly stand up to Islam and all their cohorts. We can not hide in our homes, quietly awaiting the return of our Lord and Saviour. We must rise up as soldiers in God’s *End-time Army* now!

To my Jewish brothers and sisters across New Zealand and the world...know that you have the unashamed support of myself, my Destiny Church warrior men and women across New Zealand and Australia, and all those who follow our ministry.



Lessons from the 16% Church

Joanna Moss

Prophecy is a pattern. History provides valuable lessons. Antisemitism is rising again. The church is facing an existential crisis. Covid gutted many fellowships. The state intervened and dictated what the church could and could not do. It created division. It begged the question of what is the role of the state in church activities, especially when going to a casino was allowed but meeting or singing in churches was not.

Now, the issue of Israel divides the church again. What does it mean to stand up for Israel and the Jews? Can the church be neutral? What can we learn from the German church story of the 1930's? How did the church evolve as the political situation changed? What was the Confessing Church that Bonhoeffer belonged to, and what were the issues they faced? It is estimated that 16% of German Christians comprised this church.

Societal Background

Germany was where Martin Luther made his stand in 1517 by writing the 95 Theses (doctrinal errors) against the Catholic Church in Wittenberg. It was the birthplace of Protestantism and also of the twentieth-century charismatic revival amongst the Moravians. Interestingly, the state had been involved in the German church for a long time in both funding and organisation. In 1930, Germany was made up of 40+ million Protestants and 20 million Catholics, plus a tiny Jewish population. The Protestants were divided into Calvinists, Lutherans and United Church followers. The church was divided into regional bodies and overseen by a synod (like the Anglican Church today). In 1932/33, many Protestants voted for the Nazi party, less so the Catholics, based on the tradition of the strong bond between 'throne and altar'. The choice of words is important: 'throne' implies more than just state; it implies ruling and reigning by a monarch, and 'altar' is where you bow down, i.e. submission. Both concepts are relevant to what happened. Three men 'forerunners' and 'warners'

objected to Nazi party principles on moral and theological grounds—Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Wilhelm Busch. They argued that the Nazis were advocating total control over people, which was tantamount to sovereignty, something only God possesses.

Laying the Foundation

In the aftermath of the Great War, Germany was facing an existential crisis. Many had given up on God. Political plans afoot in 1918 were to radically interfere with the church and to control and minimise the church's role in society. Ultimately, the plan did not succeed due to an outcry of interference from church leaders, but the framework for change remained. The plans were to cut government subsidies (the nation was broke), confiscate church property (prevent fellowship), abolish theology in universities (restrict access to biblical learning including training of theologians/pastors, diminish a godly worldview and the role of theology in universities to be the voice of conscience, to underpin and challenge doctrines, i.e. remove opposition), ban school prayer (restricting children's access to God and the development of lifelong believers) and ban any compulsory religious activities (restrict access to teaching and normalisation of religion as an integral part of society). Note the emphasis on children and young adults, which would have long-term societal implications.

German Christian Movement

The German Christian movement was about refreshing the German church in the post-war era. Like any new movement, it offered freshness and hope and was supposedly anchored to national values, reflecting where the nation was at—relevancy. It has echoes of modern movements such as Wokeism, NAR Dominion theology, Liberation theology and the Seeker-sensitive movement. Adherents of this German movement sought office in church hierarchies to push it along. It had eight elements. Think about the movements and try to fit them into the framework below.



Symbolic 1930s ruined Deutsche Evangelische church was intertwined with Nazi state. | Photo: Shutterstock

New National Church

Evolving from the movement came a whole new church called Deutsche Evangelische Kirche. Note that it had evangelism in its title. It had a whole new constitution, linked churches into a regional structure and integrated church and state. Müller, Hitler's advisor on religious affairs, was appointed as bishop of the church. But this was an unpopular move, and he was later removed. Political power was used to elect the right people into the right positions in the new church's hierarchy. Hitler even made a personal plea for Germans and churches to join.

The new church had the ability to change doctrine. It removed any non-German elements from church services. Jesus was seen as a heroic figure and thus worthy of worship. The scene where he turned the table on the money lenders (e.g. Matthew 21:12-14, all 4 Gospels) was championed as a heroic leader dealing with corrupt Jews, rather than dealing with corrupt individuals and systems in a quest for holiness. It fitted right into the Nazi narrative. Depicting Jesus as having blue eyes and blonde hair helped, too.

True to form as part of their self-elevation, church leaders declared that they were 'true' evangelical leaders of Germany and the church was the 'true church'.

Opposition Movement

The Opposition was known as the Hold-outs. They classified churches as either 'intact churches' or 'destroyed churches'. The new church defrocked those who were Jewish, of Jewish descent or married to non-Aryans. Martin Niemöller created the Pastors Emergency League to assist the clergy of Jewish descent.

The Barmen Declaration stated that the German church was not an organ of the state. This doctrine shifted the focus away from the state and back to the church as a stand-alone entity, which was the foundational doctrine of the Confessing Church.

The Confessing Church sent a memo to Hitler to stop interfering in the church. The confrontation resulted in the arrest of hundreds of pastors; some were murdered, and others had their money and property seized. The state ordered that this stream could no longer take up offerings.

Looking at 1933 church data of the 18,000 pastors, 12,000 were neutral, 3,000 were pro-Nazi, and 3,000 were against. Most of those who opposed were arrested. Over time, the neutral pastors were given a choice, and many joined the new church. There was very little opposition, and none of it was effective in changing the direction. Yet a stand for righteousness was made.

1945 Guilt Declaration

Predominately written by members of the Confessing Church, the 19 October 1945 Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt confessed the national guilt on behalf of the German church for the inadequate role they played in opposing Nazism and their failure to protect the Jews. It was a start. **Interestingly, it recognised Christian duty to protect the Jews, something we need to think about today.**

Conclusion

Never let a crisis go to waste, as the nefarious saying goes. The crisis in Germany led to major, unscriptural changes in the church and the intertwining of church and state. It was a stepped process with enticing elements that appealed to the culture. But it went much further. The prospect of a One World Religion with church and state blended suggests that the future church will be a state church. Pastors and ministers will be given a choice whether to join. Christians will be given a choice, and the choice will cost. Unlike us, the German church was traditionally funded through taxation, with donations passing through the state being paid to the churches. Whether it's taxes, deductions or grants, the state can still exert control over the church. Do you have the 16% ethos?

FOUNDATIONS	KEY DOCTRINES	CHURCH/STATE
Germany as global head of the Protestant movement (power)	Antisemitism from Martin Luther (<i>Gen 12.3</i>)	<i>Romans 13</i> doctrine of obedience to state (being a good citizen, not whole Bible counsel). Allegiance
400 years History (tradition and pride)	De-emphasis on the Old Testament (removing Israel's central role)	Race and ethnicity important aspects of church. Jewish converts & their families were out
Nationalism (Pride)	Replacement Theology Re-written De-Judaized New Testament called <i>Die Botschaft Gottes</i> . Message of God (linked to the two above)	

Calendar Themes

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



April: Canaan Dog

White is the colour of holiness and purity, so given God's call on Israel to be a holy people, it's not surprising that the national dog of Israel, Canaan, is all white. Canaan's have a healthy coat for winter warmth. But being white is also cooler in the hot summer climate. The name Canaan sounds similar to canine, but that word has a Latin root.

The Canaan's temperament, alertness, suspicion of strangers, strong defensiveness, and quickness to react all sum up the IDF. That includes not being aggressive. Dogs play an important role in Israel's defence and search and rescue.

Yom HaAliyah: 18 April

Aliyah, the return of the Jews to Israel, is both a biblical phenomenon and a safety imperative, offering Jews a haven. *Aliyah* has made a huge short-term and long-term contribution to the population and society. As antisemitism is increasing, expect *Aliyah* numbers to rise.

Pesach: 22-29 April

Passover falls in April this year and is far apart from Easter due to the added month of Adar in February. First fruits can be on different days depending upon the tradition. For Messianic believers, it falls on a Sunday—Resurrection Sunday.

May: Israel Flag



May is the patriotic month for Israel with three significant dates—Yom HaShoah (Israel's own Holocaust Remembrance Day), Yom HaZikaron (Fallen Soldiers Day) and Yom HaAtzama'ut (Independence Day). Since 7 October, many flags have been sold. These dates will have added meaning, given the attack and subsequent war. Commemorations will be very different to last year.

Yom HaShoah: 6 May

When the alarm sounds, the nation stops even on the roads

Yom HaZikaron: 13 May

When families visit cemeteries

Independence Day: 14 May

on both Hebrew and Gregorian calendars.

Between Hamas and Israel, Where Should Christians Stand?

■ Yifat Goddard

Not much has changed since the 70s, when Golda Meir said, "The world hates a Jew who hits back. The world loves us only when we are to be pitied."

After 7 October, there was a brief moment where the world stood with Israel. It was a fleeting two seconds before they went back to hating us again. But what did they expect us to do? Sit and wait for our hostages to return home while our citizens were being terrorised and our country was under constant threat? It's easy for the rest of the world to pass judgment and criticise our actions, but they have not experienced the constant fear and danger that Israel faces every day. Israel has a responsibility to protect the people and defend the nation against those who seek to destroy it. It is not an easy task, but it is one that we have to undertake for the sake of our survival. We will not apologise for defending ourselves, and we will not back down in the face of adversity. Israel will always stand strong and determined to protect its people and its future.

As believers, Christians are called to love and support the Jewish people, who are God's chosen people.

Christians have a moral and biblical responsibility to pray and hold in their heart the victims of both sides of the war. They also have a responsibility to support Israel at this time of conflict.

As believers, Christians are called to love and support the Jewish people, who are God's chosen people. In the Bible, God promises to bless those who bless Israel and to curse those who curse Israel. By standing with Israel during times of war, Christians are fulfilling this promise and showing their obedience to God.

Additionally, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and is constantly under threat from terrorist groups who seek to destroy it. As Christians, you must stand against terrorism and support a nation that shares your values and beliefs. Moreover, by supporting Israel, Christians are also supporting the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The return of the Jewish people to their homeland is a key sign of the end times, and by standing with Israel, Christians are playing a role in God's plan for the world. Ultimately, by supporting Israel at this time of war, Christians are showing their love for God and his people, fulfilling their spiritual duty and standing against evil in the world.



Golda Meir, former Prime Minister of Israel. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

So Where are They?

Unfortunately, many Christians support replacement theology because it is rooted in the belief that God's promises and covenant with Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That theological perspective

In conclusion, replacement theology goes against biblical evidence and historical facts, proving it to be a flawed belief.

In the *Book of Romans*, the apostle Paul uses an olive tree as a metaphor to explain the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. He emphasises that just as a tree cannot survive without its roots so the Christian faith cannot exist without acknowledging and understanding its Jewish heritage. Paul cautions against disregarding the importance of the Jewish faith and culture, stating that one cannot simply cut off the roots and continue to enjoy the fruits. This analogy serves as a reminder for Christians to respect and honour the traditions and teachings of Judaism, which laid the foundation for their own beliefs.

By using the image of a tree, Paul highlights the interconnectedness of the two faiths and emphasises the need for unity and mutual respect between them.

This metaphor also serves as a warning against arrogance and exclusion in the Christian community, reminding believers to remain humble and grateful for their spiritual heritage.

Overall, Paul's use of the olive tree effectively conveys the crucial message that Christianity is built upon Judaism and cannot thrive without acknowledging its roots.

"In days to come, Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit" *Isaiah 27*

"As you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief." *Romans 11*

teaches that the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people, and therefore, all of Israel's blessings and promises now belong to the Christian church. Such theology gives some sense to the historical tensions between Jews and Christians and to the false idea that God's chosen people rejected the Messiah. The Bible states that God's covenant with Israel is eternal and unchanging. In *Genesis 17:7*, God declares to Abraham that He will establish His covenant with his descendants forever. This promise is reiterated throughout the Old Testament, such as in *Jeremiah 31:35-37*, where God states that as long as the sun, moon, and stars exist, so will His covenant with Israel. The New Testament also presents evidence against replacement theology. In *Romans 11:1-2*, Paul affirms that God has not rejected His people, Israel, and in *Ephesians 2:12*, he reminds the Gentiles that they were once without Christ, strangers to the covenants of the promise given to Israel.

History also disproves this theory, as the Jewish people have continuously existed as a distinct ethnic and religious group for thousands of years despite facing persecution and exile.



Red Heifers Ready for the Temple by Passover?

■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

Game changing developments are happening right now in Israel concerning the Third Temple. A critical missing link that prevents the rebuilding of the Temple is set to fall into place within months with crucial help from Christians. Meanwhile, Hamas is watching developments closely. It even claims such developments to be a major motivation for the heinous 7 Oct. terror attack. With tensions already at boiling point across the Middle East, will we shortly see Israel take bold steps towards rebuilding the Temple?

Christian Rancher provides the Missing Link

The final missing piece of the Third Temple project—the infamous ashes of a red heifer—is expected to be in place within months. These ashes are Biblically mandated for purification in a range of situations, including contact with dead bodies (see *Numbers 19*).

Without the red heifer ashes, priests and Levites currently in training with the Temple Institute are disqualified from serving in a future rebuilt Temple. Furthermore, with all the bloodshed on the Temple Mount down through the centuries, the Mount itself must be cleansed before the Temple can be built.

The problem is that finding an unblemished red heifer is extremely rare. In recent years, Temple activists have had their efforts end in frustration time and again. Potential red heifer candidates have been located with great excitement, only to end up later developing white hairs or getting otherwise disqualified before they reach the required age to be sacrificed.

It was in this context that Byron Stinson, a Christian rancher from Texas, baffled Rabbis in 2022 when he invited them to his ranch to inspect what turned out to be five unblemished red heifers.¹

What happened next sounds rather like a scene from a Hollywood movie script. The heifers were airlifted to Israel as one year olds (how do you even go about flying cows to the Holy Land?). Met at the airport, with a special ceremony officiated by Rabbis, the heifers were then taken out of the public eye to continue being quietly and meticulously groomed for the sacrifice. Although one of the five was disqualified last year due to the emergence of a few white hairs, the remaining four remain on track to be eligible to be sacrificed this year. According to All Israel News, Temple Institute Rabbis hope to perform this ceremony prior to Passover this year,² while other sources claim it will happen sometime between Passover and

Pentecost.

Linking Cows and Terror

While the story of the flight of the five heifers to Israel and their subsequent journey has certainly stirred great excitement among Temple activists as well as Christian students of Bible Prophecy, it curiously hardly got a mention in mainstream Israeli news.

It will surprise many Christians to discover that, by and large, secular Israelis are uninterested and unaware of these developments. In addition, many Orthodox Jews are opposed to any current moves to rebuild the Temple as most hold that it can only be rebuilt by the Messiah in the Messianic era.

However, the radical Islamic world understands the significance of the arrival of the red heifers and is incensed by their presence. It was no coincidence that Hamas called its infamous and deadly 7 October terror attack *Operation Al Aqsa Flood*. Speaking at the 100-day mark of the current war with Israel, Abu Obeida, a military spokesman for Hamas, said that the aggression against “our path and Al-Aqsa” reached its peak with the “bringing of red cows.”³

Hamas’ passionate calls for the ‘liberation’ of the Al Aqsa Mosque from the Israeli threat hits receptive ears in the Islamic world. Highlighting the broad level of Islamic concern for this site, the Organisation of Islamic Co-Operation was founded in 1969 with the specific goal of protecting the Al-Aqsa mosque. Today, this influential organisation boasts 56 member states and is the second-largest intergovernmental organisation in the world after the UN.

Will there be a Third Temple?

Israeli government officials of all persuasions are highly aware of Islamic sensitivities concerning the Temple Mount and have, through the years, repeatedly committed themselves to maintaining the ‘status quo’ on the Temple Mount for this very reason.

While the ashes of a red heifer may become available in the next few months, the Temple rebuilding project still seems unrealistic in the current environment. The fears of the Israeli government leaders of sparking an all-out war, combined with the lack of interest and even outright opposition from many Israelis to the project, make it seem completely impossible.

However, the events of 7 October show how quickly long-held views can change. Prior to this heinous terror attack, the majority of Israelis were seeking to get on with their lives in some kind of peaceful co-existence, with Hamas being contained by Israel’s state-of-the-art



The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. | Photo: Deposit Photos

border fence. The dismal failure of this high-tech fence to stop the 7 October attack has smashed this long-held Israeli view, changing the perspective of the nation overnight into a determined decision to eradicate Hamas from its borders. Similarly, I believe that long-held Israeli reservations towards the Third Temple will one day change.

What Does the Bible Say?

‘...not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord’ (*Zechariah 4:6*).

Rebuilding the Temple seemed completely impossible for the impoverished Jews returning from Babylonian captivity in the days of Nehemiah. Into this context of mounting opposition from surrounding nations and countless delays, Zechariah, the prophet, spoke the above words of encouragement, proclaiming that God Himself would make a way by His Spirit. Through the prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai, God’s Spirit indeed strengthened the hands of the builders, paved the way politically and enabled the miraculous construction of the Second Temple, which stood when Jesus came to earth. Couldn’t God do the same again in our day?

I believe that both Old and New Testament Bible prophecy is clear that the Temple will be rebuilt in the End times. In his famous Olivet discourse, Jesus predicted, “When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...For then there will be great tribulation” (*Matthew 24:15-21*).

While some Bible prophecy teachers interpret these words of Jesus in a symbolic sense and apply them, for example, to the Pope as a ‘false prophet’, Jesus’ Jewish listeners would have understood His words quite literally. They would have seen His words as referring back to an almost identical event that occurred around 170 BC, where a literal

idol was erected in the Temple, leading to widespread persecution. Jesus’ prophecy was therefore seen as predicting a literal repeat of these events to occur in a real physical Temple in Jerusalem at the End of Days.

Being Ready

The Temple Institute speaks of the shame they would feel if they were given the go-ahead to build the Temple tomorrow and were caught completely unprepared. Therefore, they have spent many years in meticulous preparation and training for that day to come, and the ashes of the red heifer will mark the crowning achievement of this preparation.

While many Israelis are unaware of these developments, so too is much of the Church. Just as He promised, Jesus will soon return to this earth to rule, and these developments point us to the nearness of His coming. Following the example of the Temple Institute, we, too, should be preparing ourselves for the soon fulfilment of prophecy, doing everything in our power to be ready for that great day.

Let us also remember to pray not only for the fulfilment of Bible prophecy and the coming of the Messianic kingdom but also for the eternal destinies of Jews and Arabs caught up in the current and future waves of conflict. Days of great tension lie ahead, but God’s purpose in the midst of these shakings is to bring many people into His Kingdom. May we all play our part at this significant time in history.

¹ Joffe, Tzvi. «From Texas to Israel: Red heifers needed for Temple arrive», *Jerusalem Post*, 20 Sep., 2022 <https://www.jpost.com/judaism/article-717650> (accessed 5 March 2024)

² Mitchell, Callie. “What do five red heifers have to do with the 7 Oct. massacre?” *All Israel News*, 25 Feb 2024. <https://allisrael.com/blog/what-do-five-red-heifers-have-to-do-with-the-oct-7-massacre> (accessed 5 March 2024)

³ Eliyahu, Shimon. “WAR UPDATE: Why Hamas Hates the Red Heifer”. *First Fruits of Zion*, 23 Jan. 2024. <https://ffoz.org/messiah/articles/war-update-why-hamas-hates-the-red-heifer> (accessed 5 March 2024)



The Story of Jews in Muslim Lands—Part I

■ Joanna Moss

Since 2014, on 30 November, Israel remembers the exodus of North African and Middle Eastern Jews from their homelands, often after centuries of existence. In this series, we will look at the background of these Jews, explore the terms and learn how they have shaped modern-day Israel and how their culture is reflected in the Israelis you encounter in NZ!

The day chosen, 30 November, is actually a Gregorian calendar day, not a Hebrew one. It has a long official title but is colloquially known as *Yom HaGirush* or the Day of Expulsion. It is to remember the day after UN Res 181 passed on 29 November 1947, the Vote of the Partition Plan was to partition the land of Palestine into two states—an Israeli state and an Arab one. Partition plan for the land of Israel into two states, does that sound familiar? Amazingly, the vote was passed in the UN, with Australia and NZ supporting, amongst others, and NZ playing a key role under the auspices of PM Peter Fraser. The Arabs refused the plan, but the Jews said yes despite it being a tiny and indefensible state. Their reasoning was simple: any state is better than no state. Prior to the vote, many Middle Eastern nations threatened that if this vote passed, there would be anti-Jewish pogroms across the region, and that's exactly what happened. Jews could live in the Middle East under subjugation, but they were not allowed to have a state of their own. Does that sound familiar?



The iconic image (shown) of Yemenite Jews fleeing with minimal belongings was recreated in colour for impact. | Photo: Shutterstock

It was not just the intellectual property that was left but also the collective wisdom. These states are the poorer for their departure in so many ways. In the upcoming articles, we will examine the role the Jews played in these lands and what is left of their legacy, as well as their contribution to modern Israel.

Whilst many people think erroneously that the Holocaust was instrumental in the founding of the

visiting us and those living here are often from other parts of Israeli society, so we need to understand their story, too.

Let's begin by looking at the regions, countries and terms that make up this group. By placing Israel in the centre of a map, to the west lie the North African nations from Egypt to Morocco (part 2). To the north lie Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Azerbaijan. To the east lies Jordan, Iran and Iraq and to the south lie the Gulf States, Aden and Yemen.

Often, people get confused by the terms used to describe these Jews from Muslim lands. Some of the terms refer to the type of religion and cultural tradition and not necessarily from the region or country per se. That is because Jews migrate when times are tough or when opportunities arise, and they take their culture and traditions with them, holding on to them even after hundreds of years. Today in Israel, there are two chief Rabbis—one is Ashkenazi and the other Sephardic.

Sephardic Jews are those that originated from Spain and Portugal. In 1492 they were expelled from Spain first, then Portugal soon after and fled to America and South America, elsewhere in Europe e.g. Netherlands and to North Africa and around the Mediterranean.

The term *Mizrahi* literally means East. It refers to Jews from East of Jerusalem. That includes the countries of Iran, Iraq, and Yemen *et al.* Most of these Jews are more religious and traditional than their Tel Aviv liberal, irreligious cousins. Some follow Sephardic religious traditions in synagogues, whilst others have their own religious streams. But for the most part, there are three main types of Jews in Israel. These distinctions are lessening with time and as intermarriage is now common. Note that Jews from Muslim lands always saw themselves as being part of a minority, sometimes with a distinctive role and never as full citizens, whereas European Jews always desired equality, were integrated into society, and more laterally were afforded universal suffrage. For both groups, moving to Israel meant being part of the majority. It marked a complete change in perspective. For Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, it meant the opportunity to vote and participate in a democracy, a foreign concept to many.

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Many Jews were forced to flee with just the clothing on their backs. A factor not well-known is that some Jews had been put in camps like those in Europe in the North African desert as the Nazi war machine expanded to North Africa, creating a holocaust connection to North Africa. Many Jews were barred from returning and are still banned today. But tourism to Jewish sites in places like Morocco was booming until the war.

Overnight, many Jews were forcefully evicted from their homes, murdered and lost land and businesses, often very substantial holdings. It is estimated that the Jews owned as much land as five times the size of Israel. Sometimes, the rioting continued for weeks and months. Many were forbidden from leaving the country and so left illegally. Overall the exodus process which began in 1940s took decades up until the 1970s. These Jews have never been compensated for their losses or received UN support to re-establish their lives. There was never an UNRWA for the Jews, nor did they get help under UNHCR. It was left up to impoverished Israel with the support of wealthy, foreign Jews to help these people. These Jews were naturally aggrieved when they observed German reparations, saw the Claims Conference payouts and the return of valuable artworks, plus the incessant sums paid by the UN to so-called 'Palestinian refugees' living all over the world, when they got nothing.

Some Middle Eastern Jews played influential roles in their Arab communities that were lost when they left.

state of Israel, the local story was pivotal. Res 181 and the British withdrawal from the Mandate forced the Jewish hand. Ultimately, Ben Gurion took a major risk in declaring a state that was seemingly indefensible and could be lost within hours. But as they say, the rest is history, and the War of Independence resulted in a much larger state, but at great cost.

In declaring a state and the fact that the state endured, provided a place for the North African and Middle Eastern Jews to run to. Some even walked all the way to Israel. Sadly, the numbers suggest many were lost along the way. Many were penniless and unable to go elsewhere. Also, the country they came to was foreign to them, as there was little contact with Israel prior to their expulsion. So, Israel became a haven for them, too. They suffered from shock and dislocation like the survivors.

Yom HaShoah, the day Israel commemorates the Holocaust, is a very important day because of the brutality and the sheer number of Jews that died. But so is the day commemorating the exodus of regional Jews, as these Jews are the dominant group in Israel. Putting it into perspective, we are talking about 850,000 when, in 1948, Israel had 600,000 people. Both days represent the loss of long-standing communities and the end of Jewish presence in those lands. In the West, we are European-focused, and since most Jews who came to NZ are European or Ashkenazi Jews, it stands to reason that we understand the European story. However, the Israelis

Believing Without Israel Dual Covenant Part 10

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

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

We believe Israel is still God's chosen people. This sometimes triggers the question if there are two ways to God. A so called 'dual covenant': two ways to achieve salvation: one through the people of Israel and one through the Christian church. How is that compatible with Jesus' statement: "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but through Me" (*John 14:6*)? And with the apostle John's writing: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (*1 John 5:12*). These are straightforward words. Living in a relationship with God and receiving eternal life don't go beyond Jesus Christ. Since the Jewish people, most of whom do not (yet) believe that Jesus is the Messiah, are still called God's people, it may seem like a dual covenant: a Jewish one and a Christian one. Still the criticism of a dual covenant is false. God's eternal covenant with Israel doesn't go beyond Christ but through His Son Jesus Christ. When God made His covenant with Abraham He included the promise: "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (*Genesis 12:3*). Even when God fearing Jews do not (yet) recognise that Jesus is their Messiah, once God will reveal to them that Jesus is their Messiah, for whose coming they pray daily. So the alleged dual covenant is seen to be false, when God declares that He will remain faithful to His eternal covenants with, and promises to, Israel. God will show enduring mercy on His people through grace and in Christ.

Mystery

Paul says: "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written.

"The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."

"This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (*Romans 11:25-27*). Paul explains that God's covenant with Israel means that ultimately 'all Israel'



| Photo: Unsplash

will be saved through the 'Redeemer from Zion', who is Jesus Christ. God's eternal faithfulness to His people and the ultimate redemption of His people are therefore not outside Jesus Christ. How God ultimately realises this is a 'mystery'. That is not our business as Christians from other nations. It is His business, not ours. There is no question of a two-way doctrine, a separate way apart from Jesus.

In Christ

Paul then continues, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable... for God has shut up all in disobedience, so that He may show mercy to all" (*Romans 11:28 and 32*). We can clearly see here that God remains faithful to His people and will ultimately have mercy on them all. Here we must not forget that the non-acceptance of Jesus is not just stubbornness or unbelief on the part of most Jews. There is the hand of God behind this too, which is unfathomable to us. Paul says: "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" (*Romans 11:11-12*). Not being able to believe in Jesus has been of great wealth to us as believers from the nations. Salvation has gone out to us as Gentiles as a result. And that richness will soon become much greater when the true identity of

the Messiah is revealed to Israel and the Jewish people will come to their 'fulfillment'.

That God will enclose His people in mercy through His Son is very strikingly evident in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. (*1 Corinthians 10:1-4*). An important point is made here. The people of Israel were connected to Him in a special way centuries before the birth of Jesus, by eating the manna and drinking the water from the rock. We know that before His incarnation on earth, the Son of God was with the Father from eternity (*John 1*). He was connected to His people in a special way when they drank from His rock. So, there is a close connection between Israel and Jesus, their Messiah, whom Paul describes above as 'the rock'. It is therefore very understandable and striking that Paul ends his impressive chapter with the words: "Oh the depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgements and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?" (*Romans 11:33-34*).

Bread

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

Bread—isn't that more of a sign of the Christian faith? After all, it is one of the elements of the Lord's Supper. But if you consider the blessing pronounced by the Jews before eating bread, you could certainly also call bread a sign of Jewish faith. Besides, the Lord's Supper has its origins in the Jewish *Seder*, the first night of *Passover*, where the *matzah*, the unleavened bread, is so full of meaning.

Bread appears in countless places in the Bible. Bread is essential. You could say that bread is *pars pro toto*

for the whole meal. Abraham offers bread to his guests (*Genesis 18:5*), and Sarah has to 'hastily' bake it. What Abraham then puts before his guests is much more than bread. God gave Israel bread in the desert (*Deuteronomy 8:3*). Jesus handed out bread to the crowd.

Still, on Friday evening (the beginning of the *Sabbath*), the two *Sabbath* loaves recall the double portion of manna that Israel was allowed to collect for the *Sabbath*. When a piece of *Sabbath* bread is eaten, people dip it in salt. Salt recalls the meat offering in the temple (*Leviticus 2:13*). Actually, the table is an altar (*Ezekiel 41:22*, where the altar is called a table). This is why Jews ritually wash their hands before eating bread.

The blessing is pronounced on bread made from wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats, grains that were already prevalent in ancient Israel. Moreover, it is bread only if the liquid ingredient of the dough is (mainly) water and is baked. Pasta, therefore, is not bread.

How does this blessing on bread read? "Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." NB: the bread is not blessed, but God is given thanks as the Giver of bread. God not only makes the grain grow, He brings forth bread. In other words, the whole process from sowing—the grain dying in the earth and germinating—and harvesting to grinding, kneading and baking is something God gives. It is not we who produce, but our labour is a conduit to receive God's blessing.

Recommended Reading

The Uniqueness of Israel by Lance Lambert

Woven into the fabric of Jewish existence there is an undeniable uniqueness. Israel's terrain, her history and chief city, all owe their uniqueness to the fact that God's appointed Saviour for the world was born a Jew. His destiny and theirs are forever intertwined.

In *The Uniqueness of Israel*, Bible scholar Lance Lambert combs through the history of Israel as a nation, their rise and fall, and then their second rise and fall, and how the nation has miraculously risen again.

The land of Israel was totally demolished, and yet the people returned back to their land with the same language and the same God. No other nation has ever done this. Israel did it twice. There is something unique about this nation.

Lance Lambert also speaks about the spiritual aspects of the nation of Israel, how they were the homeland of the Messiah of the world, and how the world is spiritually split into two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem—the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God.

There is a bitter controversy over the subject of Israel, but time itself will establish the truth about this nation's place in God's plan.

For Lance Lambert, the Lord Jesus is the key that unlocks Jewish history. He is the key not only to their fall but also to their restoration. For in spite of the fact that they rejected Him, He has not rejected them.

Lance Lambert was an itinerant Jewish Christian preacher who lived in Jerusalem, Israel, from 1980 to 2015. Prior to his move to Jerusalem, Lance lived in Richmond, England and met with a small local church group called Halford House, where the believers met solely under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and under no other name. Lance's ministry burdens were primarily teaching both Jews and Gentiles about the continued relevance of Israel and the importance of the Church being built together as one body in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<https://lancelambert.org/books/israel/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Uniqueness-Israel-Lance-Lambert/dp/1683890175>

Those Who Bring Good News

■ **Johannes Gerloff**
Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

We continue our study of *Romans 10:14-15*:

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?" As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Paul is addressing Gentiles about preaching to the Jewish people. He quotes extensively from Isaiah.

Neither Paul nor Isaiah were 'unrealistic Israel-fans'. Paul knew that his "kinsmen according to the flesh" were "cursed and cut off from Messiah" (*Romans 9:3*). Otherwise, his plea to take their place would have been meaningless. He had repeatedly experienced hatred and rejection by his own people (*2 Corinthians 11:24-25*).

Neither did Isaiah fall prey to delusion. In *Isaiah 52:7*, which Paul quotes in *Romans 10:15*, Isaiah says that Zion has to wake up (*verse 1*); that she is dusty, dirty, humiliated and captive (*verse 2*); that she has been sold, i.e. she belongs to an illegitimate owner (*verse 3*); that Zion is being oppressed by tyrants, whose rule results in the name of the Lord being "blasphemed continually day long" (*verse 5*), and that "my people" do not know "my name" (*verse 6*).

The message of the watchmen and ambassadors of joy that God had sent is a message against all odds. And it is also an ancient message.

But despite everything, the prophet speaks the Word of the Lord:

"Can a woman forget the child whom she is nursing? Will she not have compassion on the son of her womb?— Even if she will forget [him], I will never forget you" (*Isaiah 49:15*). He calls the deceitful Jacob, who held his brother's heel, "Israel" and encourages him: "Fear not! For I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine!" (*Isaiah 43:1*).

And, in the Scripture we are looking at, he speaks to the (physical and spiritual) "waste places [of] Jerusalem" to "break through together into joyful singing... for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem" (*Isaiah*



Beautiful sunburst over the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: Shutterstock

52:9). The message of the watchmen and ambassadors of joy that God had sent is a message against all odds. And it is also an ancient message.

An Ancient Message

The context Paul refers to also reveals the actual content of the message brought by these heralds of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Those 'who bring good news' don't talk about their own experiences or theological insights. They simply say to Zion: "Your God is king! Your God reigns" (*Isaiah 52:7*).

The non-Israelite messengers of comfort in the second part of the book of Isaiah do not testify to Israel about their own God. They do not offer an anti-Jewish religious alternative, and they do not draw the chosen people away from the One who revealed

return to her own original God and Father.

Gentiles have to be "cut off from an olive tree which is wild by nature" in order to be "grafted into a good olive tree contrary to nature". In contrast, the people of Israel, "which are the natural branches", are being "grafted into their very own olive tree" (*Romans 11:24*). There are fundamental differences between Gentile evangelism and Jewish evangelism. A 'missions theology' which does not take the biblical differentiation between Israel and the Gentile nations into consideration and tries to address Jewish heritage as just another version of 'contextualising the gospel', risks making the same mistake as 'Moab and Se'ir' who claimed that "the house of Judah" was just like "all the [other] Gentiles" (*Ezekiel 25:8*).

According to the New Testament, the Gentile Church has nothing to offer Israel other than the ancient message of the Old Testament prophets: "Behold, there is your God!" (*Isaiah 40:9*) and "Your God reigns!" (*Isaiah 52:7*). An Orthodox rabbi in a Jerusalem synagogue once commented to this statement: "We actually should proclaim this to our people!"

The people who convey the message make the decisive difference: "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but is now being revealed to his saints..." It is not the words or theological-philosophical content but the very human beings who bring the old message. The crucial 'new thing' is; "the riches of the glory of this mystery being among the Gentiles; which is Messiah in you" (*Colossians 1:26-27*; compare *Romans 16:25-26*).

Himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" at Mt Sinai and, in the course of time, through the prophets. The God of Israel explicitly commissioned them to: "Go up onto a high mountain, you, who bring good news to Zion. Lift up your voice with strength, you messenger of good news to Jerusalem. Lift up [your voice], do not be afraid, tell the cities of Judah, 'Behold, your God!'" (*Isaiah 40:9*).

The message of the one and only living God to Israel is totally different from His message to the Gentile nations. Whereas the Gentiles are being called "to turn from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan to the [one, true] God" (*Acts 26:18*), Israel is called to

Israel at War: Prophecy Fulfilled—Part 3, Psalm 83

■ Kameel Majdali
Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

Israel is at war. This current conflict is giving sleepless nights to foreign secretaries, military officials, defence contractors and economists. To this, we add another group: Bible prophecy teachers. They are eagerly observing these events to get insight into the future.

Israel—a name used 2,568 times in the Bible¹—is a prominent subject in the last days (*Daniel 9:24*), and some of the events surrounding it involve war. There are several armed conflicts to choose from. *Psalm 2*, *Ezekiel 38-39*, known as the ‘Gog and Magog’, *Zechariah 12* and *14*, *Revelation 16:16* and *Revelation 19*, are key end-time military passages.

Psalm 83: The Neighbours are Restless

“They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance”—*Psalm 83:4*

Our focus will be *Psalm 83*. The psalmist calls upon God to take action against this neighbouring conspiracy against His people. Their goal is simple: to cut Israel off from being a nation so that its name and memory will be erased. In other words, it is an unprovoked, gratuitous war of annihilation.

Question: Was Psalm 83 Fulfilled Historically, or is it Yet in the Future?

One mandatory requirement is that a nation-state called ‘Israel’ has to be in the promised land during this invasion. The state ceased to exist after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and was reconstituted in 1948. To the best of our knowledge, nothing in the past fulfilled all the conditions of prophecy. Therefore, we base this article on the premise that *Psalm 83* has not yet been fulfilled.

Psalm 83 Invaders

Invader	Location
Edom	Southwest Jordan
Ishmaelites	Arabia
Moab	Central West Jordan
Hagarenes	Sinai
Gebal	Northern Lebanon
Ammon	Northern Jordan
Amalek	Southern Israel or Northern Sinai
Philistia	Southwest Palestine
Tyre	Southwest Lebanon
Assyria	Syria & Northern Iraq
Children of Lot	Moab & Ammon

There is a significant nation not listed in the *Psalm 83* invasion coalition: Egypt. This is a big omission. It is not as if Egypt is unknown in Scripture; indeed, it is mentioned 611 times in 558 verses in the KJV.² Why is Israel’s most important and populous neighbour overlooked? That is an important question but beyond the scope of this article. One guess: the 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty stays intact—miraculously.

The 1948 War against Israel involved Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, though the last four nations were barely active. The fact that Egypt fought Israel in 1948 precludes that war from being *Psalm 83*—though it could have been a dress rehearsal. In *Psalm 83*, it appears that every nation that shares a border with Israel is part of the invasion force, except for Egypt.

As we consider the plausibility of a *Psalm 83* invasion happening in our lifetime, consider this: the historic Abraham Accords of 2020 gave Israel peace treaties with Morocco, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Sudan. Saudi Arabia is waiting to make peace, too. Yet, despite this breakthrough of peace and moderation, Israel’s enemies today are as ferocious and dangerous as ever, particularly Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah. If the current conflict is prolonged, more Arab nations will turn against Israel. This means a *Psalm 83*-style invasion is more possible.

What is the result of this unprovoked spontaneous invasion of Israel? The text does not say; however, it offers this curse:

“Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.



Psalm 83 Invasion: Israel and its enemies. | Photo: CIA World Factbook

Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.” *Psalm 83:9-11; 16-18 (KJV)*

In summary, *Psalm 83* involves a coordinated last-day invasion of Israel by its neighbours, minus Egypt. How does *Psalm 83* fit into the bigger prophetic picture? One possible outcome is that the neighbours invade and lose the war. They are thus put out of military action. This allows for the Gog and Magog scenario with a secondary ring of nations joining a coalition to destroy the Jewish state.

Prophetic Hope

There is a redemptive side to *Psalm 83*. The last verse is a prayer asking that all involved will know that God alone, named Jehovah, is the Most High over all the earth. As we observe the current unfolding drama in the Middle East, remember that we are called to ‘watch and pray’ (*Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:35-37*) that the people in the region and nations around the world will come to know the Most High God in their personal lives.

¹ KJV Search Results for ‘Israel’. Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 9 January 2024.

² Blue Letter Bible. Dictionary and Word Search for ‘Egypt’ in the KJV’ Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 11 November 2012.

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Christians who actively support Israel and the Jewish people often find their scriptural sources in the *Book of Esther* within the Hebrew Bible.

Esther 4:14 is usually translated as: “For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Without a doubt, the phrase ‘for such a time as this’ has spiritually motivated Christians who have a heart for Israel to speak out against antisemitism and has called many to help Israel since 7 October.

Many translators of *Esther 4:14* assume that if Esther does not save her people, they would still be rescued by some other agent. Moreover, if she fails to act, Esther and her household will be lost in the annals of sacred history. The challenges to this reading are: (1) “Who else will be rescuing the Jewish people from attempted genocide;” and (2) “Why would Mordechai, who is part of Esther’s household, suffer from Esther’s inaction to save her people?”

The Hebrew Bible, written in scroll format, does not contain chapters, verses, vowels, or punctuation marks. The Hebrew expression for ‘time’ in *Esther 4:14* is *eit*, which has two meanings: (1) A point in time; and (2) A duration of time. Furthermore, the rhetorical Hebrew expression “who knows,” *mi yodeya*, only appears ten times in the Hebrew Bible.

So, *Esther 4:14* can be translated as two rhetorical questions rather than a straightforward statement followed by a rhetorical question, such as:

“For if you certainly keep silent at this time, will relief and deliverance arise for the Jews from another place? Then you and the house of your father will be destroyed. And who knows if next year, at this time, you will attain royalty?”

Mordechai is not expecting some mysterious deliverer to rescue the Jewish people nor is he threatening divine retribution as motivator for Esther to act. Rather, he is engaging Esther’s fidelity to her people and her family. It works! Esther from that point forward becomes an active agent in the story. She is now cognizant that any attempt to thwart Haman’s plot to kill Jews lies squarely on her shoulders, even if the consequences may lead to her death.

Christians are going beyond the *Genesis 12:3* expectation of divine rewards. They are deepening the covenantal bond with the Jewish people when assuming the Esther role. It’s fidelity to family that becomes the motivator for standing in the gap.

Seder Meal and Holy Communion

■ Rev SP Tabaksblatt

“In the night in which He was betrayed” (1 *Corinthians 11:23*), i.e. on the night of Thursday to Friday, the Lord held His last meal with His disciples, at which Holy Communion was instituted. The question arises of whether this was also the evening on which the Jews celebrated their Seder evening. In other words, was this the evening of 14 to 15 Nisan? *Matthew 26:17*, *Mark 14:12* and *Luke 22:7* differ in this from *John 19:31* and 42. Very likely, the Last Supper did not coincide with Seder evening. But that does not mean that the last supper was not a Seder supper.

According to *Luke 22:15*, it was the Lord’s ardent desire to eat the Passover with His own before He went into suffering. So it is likely that the Lord, knowing that this would no longer be possible for Him the next day, made the last meal with His own a Seder evening meal, especially if one pays attention to the liturgy, which the Lord followed during that meal.

The Seder evening meal consists of fourteen parts, which include the washing of hands, opening with a cup of wine, followed by further cups of wine, singing *Hallel* (*Psalms 113 to 114*), breaking bread (or *matse*) and eating bitter herbs as an introduction to the actual meal, which concludes with drinking a third cup of wine, called ‘*kos shel berakha*’—cup of thanksgiving (1 *Corinthians 10:16*), continuing the singing of the *Hallel*, *Psalms 115 to 118* concluded with *Psalms 136*, the great *Hallel*, and drinking the fourth cup. This order, or ‘Seder’, was also followed by the Lord at the last meal with His disciples. And according to the apostle Paul, the Lord instituted Holy Communion at the drinking of the third cup ‘after supper’ (1 *Corinthians 11:25-26*). The fact that such an order is followed only at the Seder meal makes Holy Communion a Seder supper. However, the Lord gave a special dimension to this meal.

Seder night is a remembrance of the miserable time the children of Israel went through in Egypt. In breaking bread and drinking wine, the Lord points to His body and blood (*Luke 22:19* and 1 *Corinthians 11:24-25*). In *Exodus 12:14*, Passover was instituted as a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. Messiah instituted Holy Communion in remembrance of His suffering and death. The great teacher of the apostle Paul, Rabban Gamliel, says: “In every generation, man is obliged to consider himself as if he himself had gone out of Egypt, as it is written, ‘proclaim it to my children on that day’” (*Mishnah tractate Pesachim 10:5*). The apostle echoes him regarding the Lord’s Supper: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the



Passover table setting with a Seder plate and a Hagadah (the guidebook for Seder meal). | Photo: Shutterstock

cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 *Corinthians 11:26*). Just as the people of Israel must remember the exodus from Egypt, so too the congregation of Messiah must remember His suffering and death.

with which, in the church at Corinth, the celebration of Holy Communion was also connected.

It is still customary among devout Jews today to use the so-called ‘third meal’ of the *Sabbath* in the house of learning.

The fact that such an order is followed only at the Seder meal makes Holy Communion a Seder supper

The apostle’s word “so often, etc.” suggests a frequent celebration, more than once a year. On every first day of the week—the Lord’s resurrection day—the early Messianic congregation would meet somewhere to ‘break bread’ and to pray (*Acts 2:42, 46* and *20:7*) to commemorate the Lord’s death. These gatherings were so-called ‘love meals’,

Each Jew brings some food from home. After the afternoon prayers, they sit at the table to consume the food and drink brought in. The custom, however, is that richer people, who bring tasty things, never use the food they bring but leave it to the less fortunate. In the church in Corinth, the rich ate the things they brought with them, while the poor had

to make do with their meagre sandwiches or nothing at all... This attitude of the rich is denounced by the Apostle and considered ‘unworthy’ to participate in the subsequent celebration of Holy Communion (1 *Corinthians 11:20 to 23*).

As the church expanded, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was separated from these ‘love meals’ or ‘agape’, and transferred to the ordinary meetings where the Word was proclaimed. How often the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was held then cannot be said with certainty.

Rev SP Tabaksblatt (1902-1992) was born in Poland in an orthodox Jewish family. He came to faith in Yeshua and was baptised in 1930 in the Netherlands. He served the Netherlands Reformed Church as minister for the relations of Church and Israel.

The Bible Speaks

Deuteronomy 11:11-12 & 24

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea.

“From the river to the sea” is mentioned in the Bible. The words of God resound as the children of Israel are about to enter God’s inheritance. It is striking but not unexpected how Satan steals and abuses God’s promises. Also today!

The sea at Bat Yam in northern Israel | Photo: Flashgo

Nation of White Colonialists?

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

William Safire, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary, once wrote, “For the first time in history, thousands of black people are being brought into a country not in chains but as citizens.” He was not writing of the era of the slave trade, nor even of Mandela-era South Africa.

His observations were of *Operation Moses* in 1984.

It is somewhat ironic in the current propaganda-determined culture, where crowds of ignorant sheep scream out against the supposed ‘white colonialist Jews’ that the incredible story of *Operation Moses* features...Ethiopian Jews. One very clear feature of the people of Ethiopia is that they are most certainly not white.

Known as ‘*Falasha*’ (meaning ‘stranger’ or ‘exile’ in Ge’ez), approximately 30,000 have lived for centuries in the north and northwest of Ethiopia. Believed to be descendants of the Cushite people, there are records of many converting to Judaism in the 5th century BC.

The late 1970s saw a catastrophic decline in Ethiopia’s economic and political conditions. Tens of thousands fled across the border to neighbouring Sudan, including many Ethiopian Jews. As thousands of Ethiopians filled the squalid refugee camps, small private—covert—operations managed to extract some Ethiopian Jews, sending *aliyah* to Israel.

Initially, the process involved a superb piece of espionage. Mossad agents, disguised as businessmen from Switzerland and other European nations, leased an abandoned luxury holiday resort on the Sudanese Red Sea coast. Although originally built by the Sudanese Government, it was never properly completed with the necessary roading and other infrastructure to be commercially successful. Israeli agents, under the guise of a fake tour company, rebuilt the resort and connected the appropriate infrastructure. Locals were hired to man the front desk, but all other roles were carried out by undercover Israeli agents.

The resort, near the town of Arous, became well-known and popular with European tourists. It regularly hosted diplomats based in Khartoum. Before long, the resort was financially self-sufficient and offered a wide range of tourist activities, including windsurfing and scuba diving.

In between the tourism, truckloads of Ethiopian Jews were smuggled out of the refugee camps and brought to



Immigrant children from Ethiopia at the reception centre in Kiryat Gat. | Photo: GPO Photos

Arous. Here, they were transferred into dinghies and then smuggled out to waiting Israeli ships in the Red Sea. As the operation continued, airstrips large enough for transport aircraft were built.

News leaked out that Jewish refugees were being increasingly persecuted in the refugee camps. It became clear that as soon as one group had been evacuated, many more Jewish refugees arrived. As a result, many became focused on finding a solution and a means of rescuing these Jews, including the US Coordinator of Refugee Affairs, Richard Krieger, architect of *Operation Moses*.

As Israel was technically at war with Sudan at the time, the political implications of any rescue were massive and hence secrecy was imperative. It was later revealed that the USA played a significant part in the negotiations, putting pressure on Sudan to allow—albeit unofficially—the airlift of Ethiopian Jews to be evacuated from the refugee camps to Israel in return for additional US aid.

The operation began on 21 November 1984, and continued until 5 January 1985. Every night—except *Shabbat*—Jewish refugees were picked up by bus and taken to the airport at Khartoum, where they would board chartered Boeing aircraft. Some 7800 Ethiopian Jews were rescued.

Unfortunately, news of the brazen operation leaked, and the Israeli government was forced to confirm the rumours. The Sudanese immediately directed a halt to the operation. The following outrage of the Ethiopian government was quickly dwarfed by the celebration of the rescued refugees and supporters all around the world, only to be tempered by the realisation that there were still up to two thousand Jewish refugees left behind in the refugee camps. If only the airlifts had continued for just another couple of days, experts believed all Ethiopian Jewish refugees would have been evacuated safely.

Straight away, Israeli and US officials

began to explore other options to complete the rescue.

Diplomatic negotiations—and pressures—meant that a ‘blind eye’ would be turned to just one, single operation. With Sudan facing increasing pressure from the Arab League, it certainly couldn’t risk being seen to show any favour at all to Israel, so the USA organised the evacuation flights. Heavily camouflaged Hercules transport aircraft were prepared in Frankfurt, Germany, whilst food, water and medical supplies were flown in from an Israeli airbase near Eilat, in what came to be known as *Operation Sheba* in Israel—*Operation Joshua* in the USA. Just under 500 further Ethiopian Jewish refugees were evacuated to Israel, representing about a third of the Beta Israel population, and most of the worst-affected refugees at the time. Encouraged by the success of the operations, a further 14,000 Jews were airlifted in military aircraft in *Operation Solomon* in 1991. Subsequent operations enabled the evacuation of virtually all remaining 8,000 Beta Israel-Ethiopian Jews.

Operation Moses was the first time Israel had mounted a large-scale smuggling operation to rescue Jews from the diaspora. Representing not only the passion, dedication, and commitment of the Jewish people to bringing their brothers and sisters home in a dangerous covert operation but also to the internal processes required—even law changes—to enable the mass return of Jews from afar, *Operation Moses* was the first of a number of operations implemented to rescue Jewish populations and return them to their ancestral homeland.

Forty years on, many have forgotten the joy of tens of thousands of black Jews returning to the homeland they’d dreamed of for over 2500 years. But echoes of ‘apartheid’ and ‘white colonists’ in the woke halls of the UN don’t change the facts for the Ethiopian Jews of Israel, who are finally home.

Short News

Longest *Challah*



Members of the New York Jewish community hope to set a Guinness World Record for the longest *challah* after making a 35-foot braided bread. The initiative came from the Rodeph Sholom school and was part of the ‘Shabbat of Love,’ a national event to ‘spread love for the Jewish people at our darkest time.’ The record is currently held by Grandma Moses Bakery in Australia, which won the title in 2019. | Photo: Rodeph Sholom

Rise in Antisemitism

A report prepared by the Jewish Agency in cooperation with the World Zionist Organisation shows that the number of antisemitic incidents worldwide has risen dramatically since 7 Oct. For example, the United Kingdom is experiencing a 512 per cent increase, Australia 738 per cent, France 400 per cent and Canada an increase as high as 800 per cent. Online, the number of messages with antisemitic content has risen by 1,200 per cent. 45 per cent of all antisemitic incidents took place in the United States.

Anti-Israel Propaganda at School



In America, several teachers abuse their classrooms to influence their students with anti-Israel rhetoric. This often includes elementary schools. For example, children in Brooklyn schools are confronted with popular children’s songs that are ‘remodelled’ with lyrics promoting the destruction of the Jewish state. The new lyrics were written by activist Akeia Gross, who says, “Israel is a made-up that has settlers called Zionists who are harming and killing the Palestinian people who have always lived on the land.”

| Photo: Shutterstock

Shifting Perspectives in Times of War

■ Tal Hartuv

Israeli Tour Guide | Author | Cartoonist

You don't have to be a professional photographer to know that the closer you get to an object with your camera, (optical or physically) the less background will appear in the final photo, and the further you step away from the object you want to take a photo of, more things will appear in the surroundings. This zooming in and zooming out is a little bit like war.

When Israel was attacked on a day which will forever be inscribed in history, Israelis and people worldwide zoomed in on our little state. There could have been a plague decimating half of the world, but that wouldn't have mattered. Nothing else mattered except the fact that Israel's borders had been violated, and the Jewish people had sustained the worst atrocities since the Holocaust. Depending on who they were, there was shock or glee.

For Israelis, there was, and still is, something so unbelievable about the footage of our women in blood-stained pants and Grandmothers displayed on Israeli golf carts dragged off to Gaza that no matter how many times we watch it, it still doesn't sink in. Posters of the kidnapped are plastered on road junctions, walls, fences, public buildings and schools. Right at the beginning of the war, local municipalities enlisted thousands of residents for first-responder training. WhatsApp groups all over the country were formed, and people checked in hourly as the news got worse and worse. National enlistment and volunteering were at a fever pitch. The likes of those who only a day before had locked up their hi-tech office for the weekend now travelled miles either to serve in the military or get their hands dirty by helping the local farmers. Radios blasted on public transport where passengers sat in an unfamiliar silence, waiting for news of who else had died. Ever since the ground invasion began, the Israeli collective heart sinks when another soldier falls. The tension is unbearable as people wait for the names to be announced. Will it be their own son or daughter, father or husband who never again shall return?

This has been the state of being for a staggering five months, yet with that, in the last week of February, there was one day when the only item on our screens was the excitement of the local municipal elections. More hours were devoted to covering that frankly boring event than a terror attack in which two people were murdered that day in cold blood. Talking of terror attacks, they too have become so frequent that what used to be days of coverage prior to 7 October now barely makes the evening news.

Back to the local elections, of which there was more to the reports of this tedious event than meets the eye. Bearing in mind that we still have babies held hostage in Gaza, and tens of rockets fell on the Golan from what seemed to be a precursor for a bigger war, this disproportionate coverage was, in effect, our national camera zooming out.

It wasn't just a reminder that somehow, even in war, life must go on, or just a necessity to lift the public morale. It was something far deeper. Those peripheral things we complained about before the war were wiped off the map on 7 October. It is these very same peripheral things that we now so sorely miss.

The Greek historian Herodotus famously said "No water flows in the same river twice." It is human nature



Shifting Perspectives—Photograph taken with a zoom lens; focal length was varied during the course of the exposure | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

to pine for how things were. But Herodotus was right. We can't go back. Ever.

For an individual or a nation to physically, nationally and mentally survive a war, it is necessary to adjust and accustom ourselves to death. Adjusting to death for the sake of survival means postponing personal and national long-term grief until the war is over. As King Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, so succinctly said, "There is a time for everything."

Yet, accustoming ourselves to death is a delicate psychological predicament. If we don't, we stand to become overwhelmed and unable to function, but if we do make ourselves "get used to it," we are in danger of becoming so hard-hearted that we are unable to ever love or care again. Accustoming ourselves is like the zoom on a camera. We need to know how and when to zoom in and out, what to focus on and why. Objectives and emotions must be kept sharp. The big and small picture are both essential, and focusing on the right object—at the right time—is critical.

There is a passage in the *Torah* (*Deuteronomy 21:22-23*) in which the children of Israel are commanded to take down before sunset the body of an executed person hanged from a tree. God knew his handiwork. He knew that if we looked at death for too long, it would have a price. That price was explained by the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi. For a body to be left visible too long was akin to degrading our Creator. To look too long at a corpse was also a violation of those made in the Creator's image. Death was something that mere human beings could never really understand, except the fact that Death was sacred.

Back in contemporary times, Death was forced upon Israel again when the war broke out five months ago. War is real, grief is real, the bitterness is real. The Jewish people are in a familiar situation in the sense that Death has hounded us for thousands of years all over the world. But in our own Homeland, we find ourselves juggling with Death on such a scale we could barely have imagined.

Ironically, it is this unwelcome visit from Death which is something that those living in peacetime societies invite into their personal space. From comfy living rooms, millions tune in to social media and the entertainment industry to be entertained by the death of another. However, far away someone is from the carnage, computers and phones see to it that anyone can satiate a macabre yet natural fascination with

Death. Murder mysteries, murder documentaries, murder-this, and murder-that.

What was unacceptable on screens just a few years ago is boring for most today, even the news, which often covers slaughter in real time. What makes a clip more appealing is eavesdropping on the pleas of the dying. Even more binge-worthy is watching those around, desperately trying to help: if they're not too busy filming with their phones, making something go viral is more important than helping someone out.

Death should not serve as entertainment or be used as a platform for popularity to boost our following and accumulate 'likes'. The role of death is not to arouse in us fascination or voyeurism as it comes to claim the lives of others. Ignorant of the fatal blow that watching these things has on us, we become desensitised. So, it is not just the object of our fascination who dies, but we are dying too. We are dying of overexposure to death. Death has a task. Death serves to remind us that life is to be cherished because life is not forever. The role of death is to instil in us appreciation for life; it is to remind us that we have a role, to take on the yoke of responsibility that comes with the business of living.

If the coverage of the Israeli local elections has taught Israelis anything, then it is good to zoom out and remind ourselves that life goes on. But it was temporary. We have had to zoom in again and go back to the war.

Although we may want to go back to who we were before this war, deep down, we know there is no going back. It is a matter of keeping firm in our mission to destroy the savage enemy but soft enough in our souls so as not to become accustomed to Death. And for those who are fortunate to live in peace, the obsession with Death as entertainment will remain repulsive to those of us where Death is part of our landscape.

Thus, even in war, Israel has a commission. I believe we should remind others that it is imperative that every individual, whoever they are, use their time for the good of their families, their friends, their communities, and their nation. The certainty of our own death spurs us on to become kinder and better people. Drawing on our ancient sources and contemporary reality, Israel can remind the world that if, and when, someone has the misfortune—or makes a choice—to watch someone dying, then Death is a sacred event to be handled with care, trepidation and caution so as not to desecrate others or the Divine.

Reaching out in Times of Need



A group that recently made Aliyah with our help. | Photo: C4I Ukraine

Jeremiah 31:8 and 10

See, I will bring them from the land of the north. And gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labour; A great throng will return.

“Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; Proclaim it in distant coastlands: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them, and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.’”

■ Marijke Terlouw

Christians for Israel Netherlands

Two years have passed since Russia’s war against Ukraine began. And the end is not in sight. Koen Carlier: “Unfortunately, the war is still raging. The notion of an imminent end is but a dream.” In these two years, our work in Ukraine has been turned upside down, but at the same time it continues unabated. So where are we at?

Koen gets straight to the point when we discuss the ongoing work in Ukraine. Koen: “Of course, you want to know if there is any positive news. But unfortunately, there isn’t any. The war

continues, and our tasks are not becoming any easier.”

Despite the challenges, our mission has remained the same. However, we had to make adjustments: the route for bringing Jewish people who want to make aliyah to the airport has changed, and we take people from Ukraine to Moldova. Our team’s dedication has remained the same. The support programmes for impoverished Jewish communities in Ukraine remained. In short, we can still help those in need.

Concerns

Nevertheless, lingering concerns persist. “Initially, the panic stemming from the outbreak of war was palpable. Now, amidst air alerts and bombings, a semblance of normalcy is emerging. However, I notice a shift from the determined thought of ‘we will conquer’ to a more cautious ‘if only we can persevere.’ It appears to be evolving into a war of attrition. Exhaustion so that Ukraine will soon be forced to the negotiating table with Russia.

The trajectory the war will take remains a genuine concern, also in the context of our work. Our activities primarily involve transportation, picking up individuals, and visiting those in the war zone. Additionally, the ongoing mobilisation has implications for aliyah,

as families are hesitant to relocate if a father, brother, or son must stay behind because they are not allowed to leave Ukraine. The potential confiscation of our vehicles for military use is also not entirely implausible. We fervently pray for the continuity of our mission.”

Gratitude

“Above all, our gratitude prevails,” Koen expresses. “We are thankful that our work continues and grateful that we’ve been protected. Over the past two years, amid the ongoing war and occasional air alerts, we know the Almighty protected us. During a recent visit to Kiev, shortly after our departure, a missile struck the very place we had been.”

When asked about moments of miracles or instances where he sensed divine guidance, Koen reflects, “For me, the remarkable aspect was how well-prepared we were before the onset of the war!” Another noteworthy point Koen raises is “the route to Kishenov in Moldova. After two years, it is the sole connection. Initially, one could leave the country through Warsaw, Bucharest, or Budapest, but those routes are no longer open. Our route remains the only accessible one.”

New Option

“What we really want to do is reach out to people in times of need,” Koen says.

“That’s why we’re excited to unveil a new option to help people to get their documents ready. The Israeli consul has asked to assist people in getting their documents ready, even if they do not want to go to Israel straight away. Participants can complete part of the procedure online, and we step in to facilitate transportation for their consulate appointments, a significant hurdle for many. What really helps people is that they are then registered. Consequently, even if one’s apartment is destroyed by a missile strike, a swift journey to Israel remains possible, even if their documents are lost.”

Following my conversation with Koen, I find it astonishing that amidst the challenges of war, when the workload intensifies, and the end of the conflict seems to be far away, the return to Israel from Ukraine continues. Truly miraculous!

War or no war, the return of Jews from Ukraine continues. Despite facing more challenging circumstances, your support enables us to provide assistance. Furthermore, your contribution to our food parcel programme remains vital for the Jewish communities in Ukraine.

Our Work in Ukraine in Numbers

- We support **17** soup kitchens
- We distribute **30,000** food parcels every year
- **1,200** poor elderly and Holocaust survivors are sponsored monthly
- We conduct **2** weekly trips to Kishenov in Moldova
- Our dedicated team consists of **20** employees and volunteers, led by Koen and Ira Carlier



Koen Carlier handing out a food parcel with essential food items. | Photo: C4I Ukraine

Prayer Points

- Pray for protection during the many trips that will be made to deliver food parcels and visit Jewish communities.
- Give thanks that there is a new option for people to arrange the proper documents and obtain permission to leave for Israel.
- Give thanks that we have already been able to help so many Jews on their way to Israel.
- Pray and give thanks that our work may continue despite the war.

“We are not a Programme, but a Family”

Valeria Zakharov

Programme Coordinator | First Home in the Homeland

“We are not a programme but a family...” This is what a Hebrew teacher of one of our groups of new immigrants said at their graduate party after the group completed their intensive Hebrew language course. In their case, it was a unique situation because the group had been evacuated from the Negev five months ago to safer areas. They managed to stay afloat and keep studying Hebrew under difficult circumstances. Cramped with their families in a hotel room, they succeeded in studying Hebrew via Zoom for five hours per day.

It all started when ten young families joined the First Home in the Homeland Programme in two kibbutzim near the Gaza border in August 2023—Kibbutz Nir Am (800 meters from the border) and Kibbutz Or Ha Ner (2 km from the border). The families were well-prepared for any unexpected situation and had been instructed on how to act in case of emergency. Of course, no one had any instructions for what happened on 7 October. The families entrusted to our care were on their *Sukkot* holiday (i.e. *Feast of Tabernacles*), looking forward to their following class on Sunday. *Black Shabbat* disrupted all their plans. They locked themselves in their safe rooms, being scared to come out to have some food or water. For some time, we had no connection with them because of a lack of the

Internet and electricity. It was a blessing that the terrorists were unable to get inside.

Not Alone

After a day of horror, the families in our programme were brought to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv on 8 October. Honestly, we had no idea whether they wanted to stay in the programme or if they wanted to leave the country. The first message was, “Don’t worry, we are safe now. Could you please arrange a remote study?” It was because they didn’t feel abandoned from the very first minute. Volunteers, coordinators, people from the kibbutz, and representatives from the Jewish Agency for Israel took care of them. Their Hebrew teacher came to the hotels to encourage them. And, of course, our friends from Christians for Israel also visited them, prayed for them, and gave them tremendous support as true friends.

It’s About the People

That is why we are convinced that First Home in the Homeland is not about a place, but above all about people, community, assistance, friendship and family. It was a privilege for us to be able to congratulate them on passing their final exam. The first important step in their integration process. Let’s wish them *Behatzlacha* (good luck) in their new life in the Promised Land!

We welcome your support for families integrating into Israel through First Home in the Homeland! Please complete the coupon below.



Unusual Hebrew lesson in the Hotel | Photos: Jewish Agency for Israel



After the ‘Graduation party’, the families visited former programme director Elena Kovarsky in kibbutz Mashabei Sadeh

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