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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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A man praying at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv. | Photo: Flash90

Praying for Redemption

There is so much turmoil in the world, and especially in and around Israel. Uncertainty looms over the future of the Ukraine/Russia war. The revolutionary regime in Tehran continues to threaten Israel (and the West) and is close to producing nuclear weapons. Israel faces unrest, threats, and danger on nearly all of its borders, including daily threats from Hezbollah in Lebanon. The situation in Syria is volatile. Israel is on trial—not only on the world stage, but also in the international courts such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Within Israel there is much conflict and unrest.

And all of this is unfolding just before *Passover* and Easter, the feasts of liberation and salvation.

The tense situation in Israel is concerning. For those of

us on the outside, it can be difficult to grasp the emotions within Israel. Israel's recent decision to resume fighting in Gaza signified an end to the ceasefire reached in January. No-one knows what this means for the hostages who remain in Gaza. All hope for the best, many fear for the worst. The country is divided. Emotions are high.

Consider the anguish of families who, in recent weeks, witnessed hostages being freed from Gaza while their own loved ones remain captive. What are they to believe, now that the first phase of the deal between Israel and Hamas has ended? And to whom can these families turn? Hamas, the group holding the hostages, ignores offers made by Israel and the US. Pressure from the UN is unlikely to yield results. Their only recourse is to appeal to Prime Minister Netanyahu and his

government.

The pain of separation is deeply familiar to Israel's Druze community and their relatives in Syria. For years, they were divided by an unforgiving border. And yet, what once seemed impossible became reality when Assad's regime fell, allowing long-separated families to reunite.

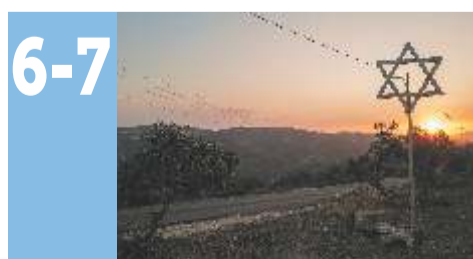
This month, as we celebrate Easter and *Passover*—the deliverance from slavery—we remember that the impossible has happened before.

The word '*Passover*' refers to the angel of death passing by, sparing the Israelites. But these holy days are about more than just passing; they are a pilgrimage, an ascent to Jerusalem, expecting a hopeful future.

That is what we pray and long for.



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Colophon

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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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It's time for Queen Esther to Appear Before the King

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The Jewish people recently celebrated *Purim*—the festival recorded in the book of Esther that recalls the Jewish nation being saved from the evil plot of Haman to eliminate them.

When Queen Esther's uncle Mordechai became aware of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews, he alerted his niece Esther, who had become Queen. She had the courage to appear before the king, where she informed him of Haman's plot and demanded the king bring an end to Haman's evil scheme.

The spirit of Haman is alive today. It is expressed in the radical Islamist world bent on annihilating the Jewish people, allied to neo-Marxist ideologues and their useful-idiot supporters in the West. Both are determined to destroy the West's JudeoChristian foundations. This means annihilating the Jewish nation—and then the Christians.

The Islamist *jihadi* fanatics are led by the revolutionary Shiite regime in Tehran. One of their projects is Hezbollah, the revolutionary organisation in Lebanon that is bent on annihilating Israel and has disrupted the region. Another is Hamas—an evil, terror group that is supported by most Palestinians in Gaza and the 'West Bank' and is openly and unashamedly dedicated to one goal: annihilating the Jewish nation.

Hamas still holds 59 hostages in Gaza, of the 251 taken on 7 October 2023. An unknown number of innocent civilians remain trapped in tunnels deep underground in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas demands many conditions for releasing the remaining hostages. One of their demands is that Israel stop the fighting and that Hamas be allowed to

remain in the Gaza Strip.

The world refuses to demand the immediate release of ALL hostages, and the TOTAL AND UNCONDITIONAL dismantling of the terror organisation Hamas. Why?

The answer is fear. The West itself is being held hostage by antisemitic Islamist extremists, their sponsors (especially Iran, Qatar and Turkey), and their allies like Russia and China.

Together, these countries have so much power that they are able to pressure Western and other more moderate states to give in to their demands, and those of terrorist groups like Hamas.

A strange coalition of Islamist antisemitism and woke neo-Marxist ideologies—united in their hatred of the Jews—has taken control of the United Nations, and the main institutions in the West, such as universities.

British journalist Melanie Philips recently described this as “a highly organised Islamist uprising against the West”:

“The West won't accept that it's facing an Islamic holy war because it believes it can't win against the world's 1.8 billion Muslims. So it's giving up without even putting up a fight, sheltering instead behind the comforting fiction that if Israel behaved differently everything would be absolutely fine.”

We see this, for example, in Geneva where the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) created a permanent Commission of Inquiry (COI) several years ago, with a perpetual mandate to investigate Israel for human rights and war crimes violations. It is a massively resourced, one-sided witch-hunt directed only against Jews. This COI recently published its latest report —this time accusing Israel of committing

'genocidal acts' against Palestinians by systematically destroying women's healthcare facilities during the conflict in Gaza, and used sexual violence as a war strategy. Israel's permanent mission to the UN in Geneva described allegations in the report as unfounded, biased, and lacking credibility.

UN Secretary-General Guterres refused to criticise the latest UN report, saying he has 'no authority' to do so. And so, the UN is allowed again to present lies to the world as facts.

The weakness of Western leaders has allowed the United Nations to become an echo chamber, where antisemites are appointed by Arab and Islamist countries and their allies to key UN positions—deflecting attention to their own abuses of human rights, such as anti-normalisation laws in Arab countries, pursuant to which it is illegal to have contact with Israelis.

Today, the Jewish people face another *Purim*. Let us pray that the Lord will raise another Mordechai, who will alert Queen Esther of the threat, and an Esther who will appear before the king, to reveal Haman's plot and demand that he be defeated.

This is the task of the gentile church.

The words of Mordechai to Queen Esther ring through the ages and are today more powerful than ever:

“When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”” Esther 4:12-14)

Prayer Points

Israel

- “On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover” (Joshua 5:10). From 12 to 20 April, the Jewish people celebrate *Passover*. Pray that they will be able to celebrate this in peace and have blessed holidays, despite the danger looming on all sides.
- Pray for wisdom for the Israeli government as it faces the very difficult task of negotiating with Hamas terrorists over the release of hostages and the continuation of the war.
- Pray for the recovery of all Israelis who have suffered immense trauma from the war, whether through the loss of a loved one, being driven from their homes, or their service in the army. Pray for deliverance and healing from trauma and pain.

Israel and the Nations

- Give thanks for what the United States has meant to

Israel during the recent period through its support and proposals to end the war with Hamas. Pray that relations will remain strong.

- Pray that Iran's power will be broken. Pray for the fall of the Iranian regime and pray that Iran will no longer have opportunities to support Hezbollah and Hamas with weapons and money.

Christians for Israel

- Give thanks for the activities that Christians for Israel is able to organise in many countries. Pray for our local teams.
- “Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Pray that all traces of the old yeast of antisemitism may be completely removed from the churches.

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

Syria Must Normalise Ties with Jerusalem or Accept IDF Presence

■ Israel Kasnett

Journalist | JNS

“Instead of merely reacting to developments, we now see an Israel that actively shapes events,” Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak tells JNS.

Syria, along with the rest of the Middle East, is undergoing unprecedented changes and Israel has announced its intention to protect its borders. As part of this effort, the Israel Defense Forces fighter jets targeted “radar systems and detection equipment used to construct an aerial intelligence picture,” as well as “headquarters and military sites containing weapons and military equipment belonging to the Syrian regime in southern Syria.”

Those questioning Israel’s actions aimed at preventing *jihadists* from accessing chemical and other weapons need look no further than the recent massacre of *Druze*, Christian and *Alawite* civilians. These crimes should not surprise anyone familiar with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and its leader, the unrepentant *jihadist* Abu Mohammad al-Julani who now goes by the name Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Dr Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University told JNS, “As the weaker party, al-Sharaa must either normalise relations with Israel and fully address Jerusalem’s security concerns, or accept the continued presence of the IDF within Syria. The choice is al-Sharaa’s.”

Al-Sharaa, who has appointed himself president of Syria, is not fooling Israel, as noted by Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar, who has warned others not to believe the former’s supposed transformation from *jihadist* to statesman. Israel views HTS and other Turkey-backed groups aiming to conquer Syria as a serious threat.

For this reason, Israel is working to minimise any threats in the post-Assad era. For example, IAF fighter jets have flown at a low altitude over Syria in recent days, sending a message to the Syrian regime that Israel will protect the *Druze* who fear being massacred like the *Alawites*.

At a recent military ceremony in Israel, PM Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the new Syrian government, outlining Israel’s strategy since the fall of the Assad regime. His speech emphasised three key points. First, Netanyahu said Israel would not permit the new Syrian government to deploy forces south of Damascus, calling for the ‘full demilitarisation’ of that area—specifically Quneitra, Daraa, and Sweida provinces.

Second, Netanyahu positioned Israel as a protector of the minority *Druze* community, aligning with Defense Minister Israel Katz’s recent statements about strengthening ties with ‘friendly populations’ in southern Syria.

Third, Netanyahu reiterated Israel’s commitment to protecting its borders, asserting that Israeli forces would remain ‘indefinitely’ in the buffer zone and Mount Hermon area.

As part of the changes taking place within Syria, reports indicated that the *Druze* in southern Syria and the Kurds in the north are moving toward forming a geographically continuous alliance. This area encompasses the entire Syria-Jordan and Syria-Iraq borders, covering a vast territory.

However, recently the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) signed an agreement with al-Sharaa, agreeing to a complete cessation of hostilities and the handover of the region’s border posts, airport and vital oil and gas fields.

The agreement also recognises the Kurdish minority as “an integral part of the Syrian state” and guarantees “the rights of all Syrians to representation and participation in the political process.”

Druze militias in Sweida Province may soon sign a deal like the SDF.

The Kurds and the Druze

IDF Brigadier General (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, head of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, told JNS “the chances are low” of the *Kurds* and *Druze* establishing a geographically continuous alliance, “as the *Kurds* have already reached an agreement with the new government about their integration.”

Yanarocak said that the claims regarding an alliance “are unfounded.”

He also said that while these claims “are particularly voiced in the Turkish media, attempting to portray Israel as part of this alleged alliance,” the fact is that these assertions “do not reflect reality.”

“It seems highly unlikely that the *Druze* or *Kurds* could establish control over such a large area,” he told JNS, adding that “the realisation of this conspiracy theory appears to be a highly remote possibility.”

Meanwhile, Israel has threatened to intervene to protect the *Druze* from the Damascus government, which it considers a threat.

The US-backed SDF has controlled a semi-autonomous region in northeastern Syria since 2015. The agreement, if implemented, would bring that territory under the full control of the Syrian

central government led by al-Sharaa.

As HTS works to control Syria, Turkey plays a large role in shaping the country’s new government.

Yanarocak told JNS it is evident that Israel and Turkey “are engaged in a game of chess, particularly concerning Syria.”

“Both sides are trying to limit each other’s sphere of influence without causing direct harm,” he said. “Following Netanyahu’s speech regarding southern Syria, it is clear that tensions between Jerusalem and Ankara will escalate.”

According to Kuperwasser, Turkey “supports and guides the al-Sharaa regime,” adding that Turkey is “against an alliance between the various minorities.”

Yanarocak told JNS that Turkey’s “main concern” is the Kurdish *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*—People’s Protection Units, or YPG—the armed wing of the Syrian-based Democratic Union Party (PYD) composed mostly of Kurds.

“At this stage, Turkey’s primary objective is to address this problem both through the peace process it initiated domestically with PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and via the Damascus government within Syria,” Yanarocak said. “As of now, there is no concrete achievement. The resolution of this issue will depend on whether the US withdraws from the region or if the situation becomes even more complicated.”

In addition to the question of whether the US will pull out of the region, while Israel demands the demilitarisation of Syria, al-Sharaa is demanding that the IDF leave Syrian territory.

Kuperwasser told JNS he believes Israel will be able to stand up to al-Sharaa “for the foreseeable future, as the Syrian regime is not strong enough to face the IDF.”

As events in the Middle East move quickly, the weeks ahead are mostly unpredictable.

Even so, Kuperwasser believes that al-Sharaa “will be able to consolidate his power, but will have to come to terms with the *Druze* in the south.”

Yanarocak said al-Sharaa’s statements and actions “are completely at odds with Israel.”

“Israel will no longer pursue a passive policy as it did before 7 October 2023,” he said. “Instead of merely reacting to developments, we now see an Israel that actively shapes events. ... This marks a significant strategic shift.”

Short News

Israel Issues Mental Health Guidelines for Freed Hostages



Israel’s Health Ministry issued new guidelines for treating former Hamas hostages, focusing on trauma recovery, reintegration, and mental health support. The document focused on the urgent identification and treatment of post-traumatic symptoms, as well as a gradual reintegration into professional and social life with sensitivity and respect for the hostages’ individual needs. The protocol, developed by the National Council for Post-Trauma, acknowledged that returning from captivity required a complex adaptation process. Hostages who had been held by Hamas endured extreme psychological and physical distress, prolonged uncertainty, and a profound sense of loss of control. | Photo: Flash90

Historic Auction

A 1,500-year-old Samaritan stone tablet bearing the Ten Commandments was recently sold for \$5 million. The inscription follows the Biblical verses from Exodus but omits the third commandment, replacing it with a directive to worship God on Mount Gerizim, a sacred site for Samaritans. The tablet’s buyer intends to donate it to an Israeli institution.

Mount Hermon Reopens After Year-long Closure



After nearly a year and a half of closure due to the wars in Gaza and the north, the Mount Hermon resort finally reopened to visitors on 4 March. The site is open to visitors only, with no skiing due to significant war damage to the infrastructure, including direct hits on two ski lifts. Repair efforts are still underway. Visitors have access to a cable car ride, an extreme sledding attraction, and children’s snow sledding. | Photo: Flash90

Israel's Military a Necessity in Samaria

■ Amit Barak

Tour Guide | Judea & Samaria

Among my various occupations, I am a tour guide, primarily for Christian groups. On 7 October 2023, I was with a mixed group of Christians from Norway and African countries. We were supposed to wake up for the second-to-last day of the trip.

At breakfast in a hotel in Tiberias, I turned on my phone and started seeing WhatsApp videos, mostly of white pickup trucks driving through the streets of Sderot. I knew something unusual was happening, but I still didn't grasp the magnitude of the event. Slowly, more and more reports started coming in amid the uncertainty. If this was happening in Gaza, then what could happen in Judea and Samaria? In the north? In the towns along Judea and Samaria? The situation was chaotic.

At that time, I was the commander of the emergency response team in my community in Judea, where I live with my wife and three children. I knew that the community security officer wasn't even in the country. I was in Tiberias, a three-hour drive away, and everything was unclear. I began sending messages to the residents about how to act and to those in the emergency response team. I said goodbye to my tour group and started making my way home by hitchhiking.

My parents picked me up from the hotel, brought me my IDF uniform, and dropped me off at a central junction. From there, I continued hitchhiking, ride after ride, with reservists who were already on their way to their units. When I finally arrived home in my community, I greeted my family and immediately went to check on the security preparedness of the community, particularly among the residents serving in the emergency response team.

Gradually, the men began disappearing, called up to their units, and by the evening, I too left my family, my home, and my community when I was called to duty.

Almost no men remained in the community (a very small community, about 25 families, along with a few single residents, close to Arab villages) leaving it practically defenseless. One could say that we left to defend the State of Israel, but in doing so, we essentially abandoned our families. My settlement, like many others, was left almost entirely in the hands of women. Very few men stayed behind, and the army took time to organise its defense efforts.



Itamar's hill outposts, Samaria. | Photo: Michael Giladi/ Flash90

Gradually, the men began disappearing, called up to their units, and by the evening, I too left my family, my home, and my community when I was called to duty. Almost no men remained in the community ... leaving it practically defenseless.

This threat has not yet been removed. It's no secret that in Judea and Samaria, terrorist infrastructure is always present. The security forces of the State of Israel are engaged in a constant battle against Palestinian terrorism, which seeks to harm Israelis wherever possible. Many of the terrorists originate from areas within Judea, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, and the northern Dead Sea region—Jericho.

The main effort of Israel's security forces in their fight against terrorism in recent months has been focused on northern Samaria, its eastern slopes toward the Jordan Valley, and also in the Tulkarm area, which is located in western Samaria.

No settlement, no security

History has repeatedly proven that where there is no Jewish settlement, there is no security. The 2005 disengagement agreement saw Israel withdraw from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria. Dismantle four Jewish settlements, expel their Jewish residents, and evacuate military camps in northern Samaria. This left a significant geographical portion of northern Samaria without a single Israeli presence. The result? The Arabs, often referred to as Palestinians, did not seize the opportunity for normalisation or peace. Instead, they exploited the vacuum to establish and expand

terrorist infrastructures and launch attacks against Israelis. From the earliest days of Zionism, it has been clear: security in the Land of Israel is intrinsically tied to the Jewish presence.

Biblical and strategic importance of Samaria

Samaria, a biblical heartland liberated in 1967, is often referred to in international political discourse and media as the 'West Bank.' This terminology, however, ignores Israel's historical and legal ties to the land. The Jordan River, though narrow compared to many of the world's great rivers, defines a region that stretches up to 55 km at its widest point. Samaria is not only an area of deep historical significance but also a strategic necessity for Israel's security. With tall, dominant mountains that serve as a strategic security asset, primarily to protect the central region, Tel Aviv, and north of it—where about 70% of the population and 80% of Israel's economy are concentrated. To the east, the Jordan River and the Jordan Valley act as a natural barrier against military invasion.

The smuggling of weapons from Jordan

Although the Jordan River and the valley serve as a natural barrier against military invasions, smuggling is a different story. Recently, I heard an intelligence briefing

stating that the situation in Samaria (primarily) has worsened since 7 October 2023. There are more weapons, more firearms, including types of weapons and rockets that were not previously present.

One of the greatest threats to Israeli security in Judea and Samaria is the ongoing smuggling of weapons from Jordan. The State of Israel has yet to fully secure this border, allowing a steady flow of arms—many originating from Iran or passing through its channels—into terrorist-controlled areas mostly in Samaria. One of the decisions made, for example, is the future establishment of Israeli settlements along the border with Jordan.

Jordan is aware of this reality, yet the Jordanian army has done little if anything at all to curb the influx of weapons. This echoes Egypt's passive—or even complicit—role in allowing weapons to be smuggled into Gaza before the 7 October massacre. Egypt's lack of action raises questions about its involvement and possible indirect benefit from the ongoing conflict and Hamas' smugglings. The reluctance of both Jordan and Egypt to combat terrorism effectively only strengthens Israel's need for decisive military action.

The growing threat from Tulkarem

Tulkarem, a Palestinian city of approximately 90,000 residents, is situated on Highway 6, just a few kilometers from Jewish communities in both Samaria and the Sharon region and few cities like Natanya and Hadera. This area was Israeli territory even before 1967 and is only a 15-minute drive from the Mediterranean Sea. The 7 October massacre demonstrated how short these distances are and how vulnerable Israel is when terrorists exploit such proximities to launch attacks. The city has become a hub for terrorist activities, endangering Israeli civilians and infrastructure.

The deteriorating security situation in Samaria is a direct consequence of past strategic errors, particularly the 2005 disengagement. Terrorists have taken advantage of Israel's absence to establish strongholds, smuggle advanced weapons, and plot attacks against Israeli civilians. A decisive military operation is now a necessity to restore security, neutralize threats, and ensure Israel's continued sovereignty over its historic and strategic heartland. Only through action will Israel be able to protect its citizens and secure the future of its land.

Israel at Seventy-Seven: *Rebirth and Redemption*

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

On the 14 May 1948 at 4:00pm, Israel was declared a nation-state and successor of the British Mandate in Palestine. Minutes later, the American President, Harry S Truman, against the counsel of his top advisors, recognised the infant Jewish state. By midnight, Egyptian planes were bombing Tel Aviv, and the 1948 War (known in Israel as the war of independence), and the battle for Jerusalem had begun in earnest. Israel was birthed in the fire. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, the Jewish state survived. Jerusalem was divided: Israel captured West Jerusalem, the New City and Jordan occupied East Jerusalem, including the Old City.

All of this was seventy-seven years ago. Have the events since 1948 been a rebirth and redemption?

Accomplishments

Guess which US President said: “More than 3,000 years ago, the Jewish people lived here, tended the land here, prayed to God here. And after centuries of exile and persecution, unparalleled in the history of man, the founding of the Jewish State of Israel was a rebirth, a redemption unlike any in history.” Was it Reagan, Bush, Clinton, or Trump? No. It was Barack Obama in 2013.

Unlike many other nation-states, which were born once, Israel was born again (the same could be said of Poland, which was wiped off the world map in 1795 and reappeared after World War I). Rebirth, redemption, and restoration are apt adjectives that describe what happened seventy-seven years ago.

- **A reborn language:** Thanks to the tireless work of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the long dormant Hebrew language—tongue of the kings, priests, and prophets has been resurrected as a living language again. This alone is unparalleled in history.

- **A culture reborn:** The unique, if not miraculous, preservation of the Jewish people and their culture after two thousand years of dispersion and exile, faced with the twin threats of assimilation or annihilation, is remarkable. Jewish feasts, traditions and culture are thriving. And it never ceases to amaze the onlooker how a bustling, dynamic, robust society comes to a grinding halt nationwide every Friday evening for the *Sabbath*.

- **A currency reborn:** The *shekel* was the coinage of ancient Israel. A half a *shekel* was the flat rate tax on every Jewish male; Jesus of Nazareth paid it (*Matthew 17:24-27*). The coinage is back, known as NIS, New Israeli *shekel*.



Jaffa street in Jerusalem, during Israel's 76th Independence Day celebrations, 13 May 2024. | Photo: Flash90

- **Ecology reborn:** Though forested in antiquity, in recent centuries, especially in Ottoman Palestine, trees were cut down to avoid taxation. In the last 120 years, the Jewish National Fund has planted 240 million trees.

- **Agriculture expanded:** Ancient Israel was an agrarian nation (*Acts 12:20*). Water is a scarce resource but Israel managed to channel water from the only freshwater lake in the Middle East—the Sea of Galilee—to the fertile but arid Negev region in the South. With modern drip irrigation Israel has performed agricultural miracles, the desert is blooming (*Isaiah 35:1*), and it has become an exporter of food.

- **Immigration Record:** Modern political Zionism strived to establish a Jewish state for the ingathering of the Jewish exiles in the Diaspora. Israel has successfully absorbed Jewish migrants from over a hundred nations. History was made in May 1991, when Operation Solomon, using 35 aircraft in 36 hours, evacuated 14,325 migrants from Ethiopia to Israel. Two babies were born during the flight.

Challenges

The Jewish state has survived and thrived during the last seventy-seven years. This ancient yet dynamic modern nation has built up a robust economy, specialising in agriculture, tourism, diamond cutting, and hi-tech (It has its own ‘Silicon Valley’). Its armed forces are among the most highly rated in the world.

Yet this nation faces some very real challenges. They include:

- **Fierce adversaries:** Enemies who are sworn to Israel's destruction. That cloud has been overhead since May 1948. One of these enemies is close to nuclear breakout.

- **Who is a Jew?** Verifying Jewish

identity, particularly when it comes to immigration to Israel under the Law of Return, is not an exact science.

- **Messianic Believers:** Are they still Jews? Jewish-Christian relationship over the centuries has been bitter, with a high degree of verbal and physical persecution. The sense of betrayal by Jewish people towards loved ones who have converted to Christianity is very real. One Messianic leader said it would be like an American joining al-Qaeda after 9/11. Discrimination against Messianics is an issue.

- **Legitimacy:** Despite Israel's well-documented history and achievements, there is still a legitimacy crisis. After seventy-seven years, there are key people and nations who question Israel's right to exist.

- **Public Relations:** Israel, despite its superior military, is losing the PR war; the war that began on 8 October 2023, is a case in point. Good PR can help a militarily weak combatant lose the battle but win the war.

- **The Palestinian Issue:** This is an ever-present challenge.

- **Growing antisemitism:** This irrational ancient hatred has resurfaced in Europe, and made gains in the United States and Australia. Israel was created as a ‘city of refuge’ for persecuted Jews but its continued existence and success is spawning more antisemitism. Yet antisemitism prods reluctant Diaspora Jews to consider (*aliyah*) immigration to Israel.

Will these challenges prevent Israel from celebrating another 77 years? Or is the rebirth and redemption permanent? See *Amos 9:14-15* and remember the words of Israel's founder, David Ben Gurion: “A Jew who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.”

Short News

Fifth of Israelis Displaced by War



Around a third of Israeli households have reported a fall in their incomes since the start of the war, a proportion that reached as high as 44% among households in the north. One-fifth of Israelis who were forced to evacuate their homes after the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack have lost their jobs, the Israel Democracy Institute stated, underlining the broader cost to the Israeli economy from the war in Gaza. Tens of thousands of Israelis were evacuated from towns near the Gaza and Lebanese borders following the attacks, which were immediately followed by missile barrages from Iranian-backed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Most spent months living in temporary accommodation across Israel, helped by government subsidies that added to the billions of dollars spent on the military during the war, but away from jobs and livelihoods. | Photo: Flash90

Residence Status

Israel has granted residence status to five Thai hostages released on 30 January by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This means they have the right to stay in Israel and work after their hospital recovery period if they wish. The five released hostages are among a group of 31 Thai workers kidnapped on 7 October 2023.

US Seek to Rename West Bank



US Republican lawmakers in both the House and Senate launched a bill to end the use of the term ‘West Bank’ in all official government documents. Instead, they want to use the term ‘Judea and Samaria’. President Trump supports the initiative, and he is reported to have said that this will be a priority issue for him. According to Republicans, the term ‘West Bank’ is being used to negate Israel's historical claim to the area. | Photo: Flash90

Will God's Land be Divided?

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

In June this year, the United Nations will vote on the future of Judea and Samaria. The expectation is that a majority of member states will advise to take this part of the holy land from Israel.

The nations of the world use different terms to refer to this territory. They call it the 'West Bank' or 'the Occupied Territories' or the 'Palestinian Territories'.

It formed part of the Mandate for Palestine (1922-1948), in which a Jewish homeland was to be established. When the Arabs did not accept the so-called partition plan in 1947 (because they did not want to recognise a Jewish state), the Arabs invaded and Jordan occupied the area in the ensuing war. Jordan's occupation and subsequent annexation was only recognised by Great Britain and Pakistan, lasting until 1967. When numerous Arab states attacked Jerusalem that year in another attempt to wipe Israel off the map, Israel conquered the area—and more. Israel was prepared to give up the area of Judea and Samaria in exchange for peace and recognition, but their offers were repeatedly refused. You may wonder why the 'now so desired' Palestinian state was not formed between 1948 and 1967? One reason is that the so-called Palestinian people had yet to be born.

The heartland of Israel

In the Bible the Promised Land is referred to as God's inheritance. In fact, it does not even belong to the people of Israel (*Leviticus 25:23*). Therefore, they cannot do whatever they want there. It is given to God's people to live there in the presence of God and to honour Him. It is God's bridgehead on earth, the centre of the world where God's Kingdom will one day come, and the temple will be a house of prayer for all nations. The sages of Zion say that it is the site of paradise. That does indeed seem to be the case. There are various allusions to it in the Bible. *Isaiah 51*, for example, speaks of the land that was destroyed and will once again become the Garden of Eden (*Isaiah 51:4*). God calls it the navel of the earth (*Ezekiel 38:12*).

The biblical heart of Israel is deeply connected to the identity of the Jewish state.

The Promised Land is holy, different from the rest of the world, God's eyes are constantly upon it (*Deuteronomy 11:12*). You could say that the land has three degrees of holiness: First, there is the desert in the south with the Dead Sea and Galilee, the north with the sources of the Jordan and the lake and Mount Hermon, and the coastal strip with Jaffa and Caesarea. Second, you have the heartland of Israel where famous places from biblical history are situated: Gilgal, Bethel, Hebron, the town with the graves of Abraham and Sarah and the other patriarchs and matriarchs, Bethlehem, where Ruth lived, and David was born. There also are the mountain of the curse and of the blessing, Gerizim, where Joshua recited God's commandments to the tribes of Israel, Sichem and Shilo, where the tabernacle once stood and where the young Samuel served God. In short, the biblical heart of Israel is deeply connected to the identity of the Jewish state.

But third, the holiest of all, is Jerusalem, the city of the great King.



Jewish men pray on the Mount of Olives during *Sukkot* towards the heart of Jerusalem, the Old City with the Temple Mount. | Photo: Flash90

Zion

When the Palestinian territories are discussed, many Christians probably do not realise that the old city of Jerusalem is also part of the territory that the UN wants to give to the Palestinians. Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke there, God's house on earth was there, on the Temple Mount. The Mount of Olives is where the *Messiah* will return. Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead there, the Holy Spirit was poured out there, God's Kingdom will come there and the heavenly Jerusalem will descend to earth. No other place is so holy and important. Soon there will be no Jews allowed there! Because a Palestinian state will be an apartheid state.

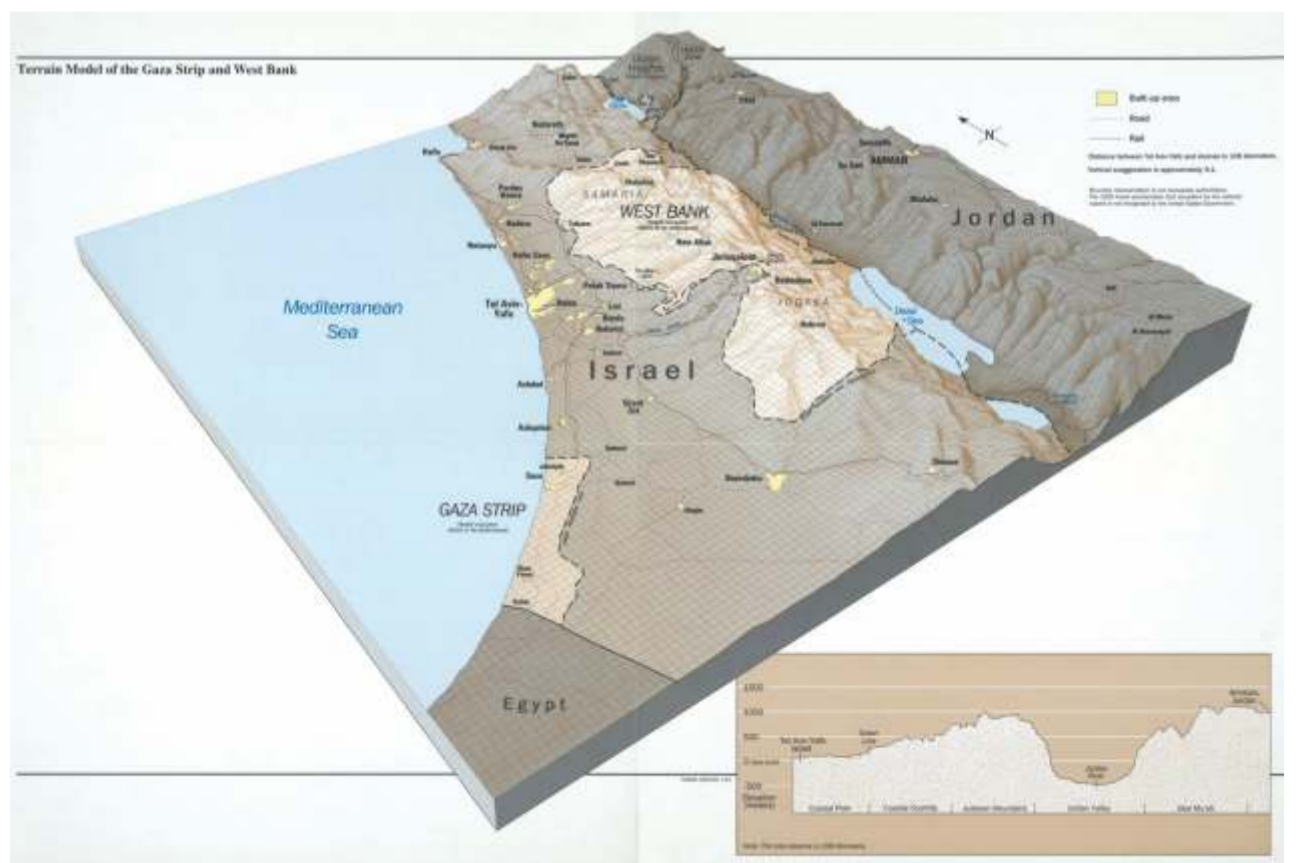
This is a spiritual war. After Auschwitz, the destruction of God's people, the city around which the future of the world revolves must now be torn out of God's land. That is the plan of the ruler of the world.

God knows

The Lord knows His people's age-old longing for Zion: *"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill... if I do not raise up Jerusalem, my joy is not full"* (*Psalms 137:5,6*).

Yet one of Israel's prophets prophesies that the land will be divided by the nations. Joel writes that God speaks of *"My land that they have divided"* (*Joel 3:2*). And the Lord says that the nations will try to remove Jerusalem from its place (*Zechariah 12:1-6*).

We live in an extremely prophetic time, God asks us what we will do now that the world is plotting all of this, and we wonder what the Lord will do. Will He break the counsel of the nations and frustrate the thoughts of the peoples? (*Psalms 33:10*). Or are we on the threshold of a new era and will the Holy One of Israel appear in His glory before the gates of Zion? (*Zech. 14:4 and 5*).



Topographical Map of Israel. Cutout of terrain model of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Copyright: Central Intelligence Agency 1994 | Photo: Library of Congress Geography and Map Division

The Jewish Temple Mount: *Holy Grail for the Nations—Part 2*

Wim Kortenoeven

Former Member of Dutch Parliament
| Middle East Specialist

The Temple Mount, located in the heart of Israel's capital Jerusalem, is coveted as a holy grail by the nations, as the prophets foretold, but only revered as holy by the Jewish people. Currently still occupied by Muslims, the Temple Mount has been the ideological and propagandistic focal point of the Islamic war against Jewish return to the land of Israel for almost a century.

References to the Al Aqsa Mosque appear in various ways. When Hamas and Islamic Jihad invaded southern Israel on 7 October 2023 with 6,000 terrorists and carried out a massacre there, they named it 'Al Aqsa Flood'. The Fatah movement belonging to the Palestine Liberation Movement (PLO) formed a special terror unit during the Second Intifada (September 2000–February 2005) named 'Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade'. While Yasser Arafat's PLO had become Israel's 'peace partner' in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords, it continued to propagate the Islamic doctrine of the necessary and inevitable destruction of the Jewish state in words and actions. During that Second Intifada, Arafat's Al Aqsa terrorists committed numerous (suicide) bombings against Jewish targets.

Jews 'storming' Al Aqsa

Both operational references to the Al Aqsa mosque make it clear that Fatah, Hamas and their allies, including Iran, do not merely intend to expel the Jewish people from the land of Israel by genocidal force. Their central aim is to make it impossible for the Jews to regain sovereignty over the place that legitimises Zionism and is central to Judaism: the Temple Mount.

The mere entering of the Temple Mount by 'unclean Jews' is considered an attack on Islam by most Muslims. In 2015, PA/PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas reaffirmed the premise that everything must be done to prevent Jews from 'defiling the Al Aqsa with their filthy feet'.



The logo of the Nablus battalion of the 'Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade', Al-Fatah's main armed unit.



The Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. | Photo: Flash90

"May it be Your will, Adonai, our God, and the God of our Fathers that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah. And there we will serve You reverently as in the days of old, and in earlier years. And let Adonai be pleased with the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem as in the days of old and in earlier years."

From the Eighteen Benediction, part of the daily Jewish prayer cycle.

This incitement not only 'legitimised' numerous, often individually inspired terror attacks, but also intimidated and terrorised peaceful Jews visiting the Temple Mount. Regularly, they are hysterically accused of 'storming' Al Aqsa and wanting to destroy the mosque. For years, special Muslim women's groups were active on the square, spitting on visiting Jews, physically assaulting them and cursing them.

Anchor of Jewish claims

As I pointed out in the first article of this diptych, the Temple Mount is not sacred to Islam at all. However, the site is the irreplaceable religious and historical anchor of Jewish claims to Jerusalem and all of Israel. The culmination of the Jewish return is the rebuilding of the temple on the site now occupied by Islam. Ironically, most Muslims seem more aware of this than most Jews. The anti-Jewish expulsion zeal for instance of Hamas and Fatah, which routinely receives acclaim from the Islamic world but evokes no significant disapproval in

the Western world, also applies to the Western Wall, by the way. On several occasions in recent decades, Jewish worshippers near the wall have been assailed by Muslims with stones and other projectiles from Temple Square. The fact that there have been no large numbers of casualties at these instances is a miracle.

Cornerstone third temple

During *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles) in October 1990, a mass stoning operation led to a massacre at the Temple Mount, where thousands of incited Arab youths turned against not only the Jewish worshippers below at the Western Wall, but also the Israeli police present on the Temple Mount. In the process, 19 Arab rioters were shot dead. The immediate cause of the tragedy was the Jewish action group 'Faithful of the Temple Mount', which ceremoniously transported a cornerstone towards the entrance of the Temple Mount. This cornerstone was intended to be used for the third temple that would eventually be built.

Amin al-Husseini

The 'modern' Islamic tradition of frequently and violently thwarting Jews at the Western Wall from fulfilling their religious obligations is not new. It escalated as early as August 1929, when the land area of Palestine was under British Mandate rule. Jews praying at the Western Wall had been a thorn in the side of Muslims for much longer even then, and had led to all kinds of harassment and disturbances.

This included regularly driving donkeys and camels through (at that time) the alley near the Western Wall, forcing Jews to step aside and polluting the pavement. In 1925, British authorities were prompted by Muslim leaders to forcibly remove chairs and benches. And on *Yom Kippur* 1928, the British forcibly removed a fabric partition between the men's and women's sections. On 20 October 1928, praying Jews near the wall were attacked by an Arab mob, during which the British did not intervene. The same happened on 14 August 1929, when the *Torah* scrolls brought by Jews were set on fire. The outbreak of violence was a result of incitement by notorious anti-Jewish agitator Amin al-Husseini (an uncle of the later PLO leader Yasser Arafat). He had spread the rumour that the Jews wanted to destroy Al Aqsa Mosque, and that the Western Wall was part of the mosque. The disturbances spread across the country and claimed the lives of 133 Jews. The theme introduced by Al-Husseini is used by Muslims to this very day to legitimise anti-Jewish violence.



Haj Amin Effendi el-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Jews in the alley near the Western Wall, around 1925 (archive photo).

God's Faithfulness to Israel Proclaimed

■ Renske Lankman

Christians for Israel Netherlands

For years, Rev Cornelis Kant has passionately shared the message of God's faithfulness to Israel across the globe. Now, as he steps down as Executive Director of Christians for Israel International (C4I) to retire, he reflects on his journey. "The Bible teaches that there is a time for everything. Now is the right time to rest for a while."

You studied theology at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. What led you to this path?

"Before I started university, I spent a year working with Youth for Christ, where I found great fulfillment in discussing the gospel with young people. After that year, I completed my military service and worked at a bank for a year. Though the job was stable, I couldn't see myself doing it until my retirement... I felt a stronger calling to engage with the gospel. A pastor advised me to study theology, saying it would open many doors. That led me to Utrecht, where I studied theology part-time. Eventually, in 1994, I became a full-time pastor."

In 2018, you became the director of Christians for Israel International. How did that come about?

"During my time as a church pastor, my passion for Israel grew significantly. This love for Israel was instilled in me from childhood—my mother was deeply engaged with Israel. Additionally, through numerous trips to Israel with my wife Joke and members of my congregation, my understanding deepened. While still a pastor, Christians for Israel invited me to lecture at various churches. Then, in 2018, they asked me to take on the role of Executive Director. I didn't hesitate, as it perfectly aligned with my calling."

What were your main duties as director?

"One of my key responsibilities was liaising with our teams worldwide. Some teams consist of large groups of volunteers, while others may have just one dedicated person. Regardless of size, all are committed to

spreading the Israel message. Our aim is to strengthen these teams in their mission, expand and reach out into new countries, and distribute our newspaper in English, German and Danish in several countries. We are also active on social media. We see that the work has grown a lot, because there is an increasing demand among pastors and preachers to receive reliable Biblical information about Israel."

What stood out to you during your travels in the past years?

"The incredible interest to learn more about Israel in places like India amazed me. When we host conferences there, hundreds of pastors attend. The same is true in Africa. In these regions, Biblical teachings take precedence over media narratives. In contrast, Europe tends to be more skeptical, often influenced by anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli sentiments. In Asia and Africa, people accept the Bible's message about Israel more readily. While they have questions about Israel and the current conflict, their faith in God's Word outweighs external opinions. In the Netherlands, you sometimes hear: "The Bible may be true, but that doesn't justify Israel's actions."

In contrast, people in Asia and Africa say, "God gave Israel the land as an eternal possession—that is the most important thing."

What is the aim and impact of these international conferences?

"Before planning a conference, I reach out to local teams to assess interest. If there is sufficient enthusiasm, we proceed. If I have the opportunity to teach 150 to 200 pastors for one or two days, it is well worth the trip. Each attendee receives a copy of 'Why Israel?' in their native language, allowing them to study and spread the message further. These conferences also foster unity, bringing together pastors from different denominations—Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal—to learn about Israel from a Biblical and historical perspective."



Cornelis Kant. | Photo: C4I

As you retire, what are your plans?

"After 49 years of work, my wife Joke and I will finally experience true freedom. My career often required me to be away—whether for church duties in the past or for international missions in recent years. Now, I look forward to dedicating more time to my wife, children, grandchildren, and friends. However, I remain available to be a volunteer for lectures because the calling to proclaim God's faithfulness to Israel and His plan with Israel does not end when I retire. Furthermore, I will continue to lead Sunday church services in the Netherlands, for these are great opportunities to speak from the Bible about the deep connection between Israel and the church."



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Staying Silent is not an Option

■ Bryce Turner

Executive Director | Christians for Israel
New Zealand

Thank you for joining us, in this edition of *Israel and Christians Today*. From the Christians for Israel New Zealand team, we are so grateful for your continued interest and support.

'New Zealand'

The name inspires pride and strength. It speaks of inventiveness, ingenuity, bravery, rugby,... and antisemitism. If there was ever any doubt of the existence of Jew-hatred, that doubt is gone. Somehow justified by the propaganda, decades of thinly-veiled enmity has exploded into public animus. Since the astounding propaganda campaign that managed to turn the grieving families of Israel into the 'genocidal villains' within only days of the 7 October attacks, a truly vile cancer has been unveiled. While the blood of Israel's children still soaked the ground, any sense of decency or restraint was thoroughly dropped. Protesting became 'anything goes', everything justified by the fairytale figures and toxic tropes of the Hamas ministry of **misinformation** health. Of course, if anybody dares to push back, to question why the hostages aren't released, or to challenge any of the lies, a barrage of invective worthy of Satan himself inevitably follows.

In the ever-changing circus that is international politics, some remarkable developments have happened. President

Trump—regardless of what you might think of him—has issued some very strong warnings to Islamic terrorists and their supporters. Of course, the massacre of thousands in Syria, the beheading of 72 Christians in the DR Congo, or the dozens butchered in Niger only days before writing this, barely made the news media. While university students protest the arrest of 'green-card' terror inciters in America, the top 20 terrorist organisations in the world are all Islamic.

So we waited, we prayed, for an agreement that would see the rest of the hostages released. After Hamas typically played to the cameras by agreeing to a 'peace agreement' that was not only untenable, but never actually existed, war has recommenced. The inevitable condemnation of Israel echoed around the world within milliseconds. Apparently Israeli lives still don't count for anything and Israel is supposed to just walk away from its loved ones, to wait patiently for the next Hamas attack and more Israelis murdered.

Depressed yet? So, what do we do about it?

I've often shared of lessons from my childhood. Many—most—I am truly grateful for. But the odd one, under the scrutiny of my life's experience so far, simply doesn't stack up. We used to be told 'if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all'. Do you remember that? Up until even a few years ago, I

would still have agreed.

The problem is, in the absence of challenge or 'calling out' of bad behaviour, evil flourishes. We have watched as a carefully orchestrated—and to be honest, very clever—propaganda campaign has been waged all around the world. We see every day that the loudest voices calling for the extermination of Israel are not necessarily the radical foreigners 'planted' in our universities, but the indoctrinated students. Not the diplomats (although parliament has increasingly been taken over by Hamas sympathisers also), but the fringe. By somehow merging climate change, slavery, oppression, indigenous rights, and blind support for the 'poor Palestinians', along with the usual rebellion against 'the system', every stray protester has been roped in to make up numbers. The particularly vile Swarbrick has made a career out of it, in between calling for the extinction of Israelis. She simply hammers the same message over and over, as loudly as possible. By screaming into every camera, parading outside parliament, and flooding MP's desks with letters, these people have become used to getting their own way. They expect nothing less over 'Palestine'.

Staying silent is simply not an option.

We must continue to escalate our response. Are you able to write letters to your local MP? Are you using social

media? Do you have a group of friends who meet regularly to pray for Israel? Can you find others around you who support Israel—however timid they may be—and give them a copy of this paper? Help them to subscribe!

Christians for Israel NZ, with our friends in various other pro-Israel organisations, want to help. We have resources, books, even flags, available. If you need a speaker to come to your church or group, call us. We are blessed by godly Israel-supporters throughout New Zealand, so that we can support you in standing for Israel.

Please also see the cover sheet (attached) for details of our pending solidarity mission to Israel. Whether you feel called to come with us to Israel, or to support those of us hoping to go, we believe God wants us to stand with Israel and let Israelis know we have not forgotten them! Please consider supporting this unashamed statement of solidarity.

Dear friends, these are challenging days, but we should expect nothing less. The God who created the universe did warn us things were going to get tough for a while. But we know who wins in the end! Regardless of your eschatology, we look forward to ultimately standing before our God, right beside our Jewish brothers and sisters.

So let's not abandon them in the meantime.

Keep up the fight!

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The Future—Part 4

■ Tony Kan

President | NZ Friends of Israel

In Part 1, we described the six horsemen influencing the Western thinking:

1. **Critical Race Theory:** All the woes of the world are due to Caucasian white people.

2. **Settler Colonialism:** All the woes of indigenous people are due to colonialism.

3. **Neo-Marxism:** Society is divided into oppressors and oppressed.

4. **Linguistic Theft:** The meaning of words can be changed to suit, no matter what the word originally meant or by whoever first coined it.

5. **The Big Lie:** The idea of creating a lie so audacious everyone would believe because no one would be so brazen to say it in public if it were not true. Repeated enough times, the facts are rejected in disbelief.

6. **Cancel Culture:** Anything that you deem unacceptable must be shut down, boycotted, and alienated. The result is civil discussion and debate becomes impossible because it creates a climate of fear. People stop speaking up for fear of losing their livelihoods, their friends, and their reputations.

We also explained how the UN is highly regarded and why its performance falls far short of Western expectations. Having set the scene, our focus now shifts to NZ.

In Part 2, we covered how little experience New Zealanders have with war, see the tragedy of it and just want it to stop without considering the wider context. The Palestinian Solidarity Network have fallen for the six horsemen and have tried to shame and intimidate the rest of New Zealand to their view. Pro-Israel supporters inside and outside the Jewish community have joined forces to show their support for the hostages and Israel's efforts to prevent further attacks.

In Part 3, we discussed a Christian approach to the Gaza-Israeli War.

Now, in Part 4, we will examine the New Zealand government's response and finish with some thoughts on what we can do from here.

The New Zealand Government tries to satisfy all stakeholders and instead, leaves everyone dissatisfied

The NZ Government, like any democracy, is torn between several conflicting forces. Building international trade, maintaining good relations with its allies, and appearing to be fair to its constituents leaves the two administrations that have had to deal with the Gaza-Israeli war making dissatisfying compromises.

Preserving trade with Muslim countries causes NZ to soften its statements about Hamas

Although Israel's trade with New

Zealand has been growing at 32% per year for several years now, it is still minimal at around 0.1% of our total annual international trade.

Muslim countries make up around one-eighth of New Zealand's annual international trade. New Zealand's wealth and prosperity are heavily dependent on international trade.

Thus MFAT's position is careful not to jeopardise our trade with Muslim countries.

But in doing so, they betray our values for thirty pieces of silver.

Maintaining solidarity with its allies causes NZ to make joint declarations

In July, New Zealand made a joint statement with its allies, calling for a ceasefire.

All the Western nations have voters who are rightly horrified by the images and videos of children being harmed by the war.

They also know that if they do not make a call for a ceasefire even though the safety of Israelis remains in jeopardy, they will alienate their political support.

Together, NZ's leaders sent out mixed messages

The National Party and the Act Party, then in opposition, were the first to take a position on 7 October, strongly condemning Hamas' actions.

In stark contrast, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nanaia Mahuta was heavily criticized for her tepid statement and was forced to make a stronger statement after the then Prime Minister Chris Hitchens made his own statement after observing the scorn poured on Mahuta's initial reaction.

Calls for ceasefire and the return of hostages

Right from the outset, even before the full extent of the 7 October atrocities were known, ceasefires were already being called for.

A ceasefire appeases those voters who just want the killing to stop, without considering the wider consequences.

When the plight of the hostages became known, New Zealand's position on this was and continues to be clear: the taking of hostages is against international law and they must be returned.

NZ withdrew its funding to UNRWA but in fact, it will still give UNRWA the same funding

When UNRWA staff were accused of participating in the 7 October attacks, New Zealand along with its allies declared that it would stop funding UNRWA.

However, NZ's funding is made in periodic payments. During the time that



The MFAT building at 195 Lambton Quay sits in the heart of Wellington city.

it said it wasn't going to pay UNRWA, it wasn't due to make a payment anyway.

Now that UNRWA has completed its investigation and given its assurances Winston Peters has announced that normal funding will resume.

NZ has declared both arms of Hamas a terrorist organisation

We were greatly heartened by New Zealand's decision to designate both the military and civil arm of Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

That means that New Zealand's legislation relating to terrorism can be brought into play, preventing New Zealanders from funding and abetting their operations.

What more could New Zealand have done?

The New Zealand government could have taken stronger positions against terrorism:

1. It could have drafted and proposed a stronger resolution against Hamas' actions on 7 October by calling for Hamas' leadership and all other perpetrators of 7 October to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity in the ICC.

2. UNRWA has lost its independence. New Zealand could stop funding UNRWA.

Pro-Palestinian support is waning

We see that attendance at pro-Palestine protests on university campuses and in major town centres has fallen considerably.

Challenges remain

Yet there are challenges. Students for Justice in Palestine are claiming that they have persuaded the Academic Committee to consider a motion to cut all academic ties to Israel.

Doubtless, similar efforts are being made at our other universities.

Our academics are still pushing the horsemen on our students, the future leaders of our nation.

New Zealand Mainstream Media continue to parrot Hamas' propaganda.

Te Paati Māori and other radicals are rewriting *Māori* history so that parallels between the Palestinian narrative and a contrived *Māori* narrative can be brought into alignment. In this way, a new generation of *Māori* victims can be inflamed. The horsemen's fingerprints can be seen here too.

The current Mayor of Wellington has instructed her staff not to remove pro-Palestinian graffiti defacing public buildings.

Since 7 October we have received more hate mail and death threats than in the preceding ten years combined.

Trump has proposed deporting all Gazans from Gaza so that it can be transformed. It is controversial as it is also ethnic cleansing. But all other solutions have not worked. When two students can't get along the teacher separates them. If they continue to be in conflict, one or the other is removed from the classroom. Dispersing the Gazans maybe the only way for them to be freed from Hamas' indoctrination. The NZ Government has so far been silent on the idea.

For the rest of us, it will be a slow burn

It will take time for all of us to engage with our family, friends, and loved ones in conversation that inform, challenge and persuade them that Israel is in the right. Israel is not perfect but the best champion for freedom in the Middle East.

The vigils, marches, and prayers will continue for the hostages still in captivity. Support for the brave soldiers of the IDF will continue as long as it takes.

We must think through a robust biblical defence against the horsemen and expose them for the lies they push. Don't let scorn and derision replace reasoned debate.

God has blessed us with a democracy. Engage with your local politicians. Invite them out for a coffee. Be gracious.

Ephesians 6: Pray.

Why the UN Push for Palestinian Statehood Should be Rejected

■ Andrew Tucker

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

On 7 March 2025, thinc. published an extensive report entitled: “The Future of the ‘Occupied Palestinian Territory’: Will Common Sense Return to the United Nations?”

This report analyses recent UN resolutions calling on Israel to unilaterally withdraw its military and civilian presence from the ‘Occupied Palestinian Territory’ (East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip), and to facilitate the swift establishment of a Palestinian state on the entirety of that territory.

Resolution ES-10/24 (September 2024) demands Israel’s unconditional withdrawal from this territory within 12 months of its date of adoption.

Resolution A/79 L/23 (November 2024) calls for a high-level, international conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, in New York in June 2025.

The purpose of this briefing is to assist UN member states in making informed and balanced policy decisions in preparation of the high-level UN conference scheduled for June.

There are three main problems with these resolutions

First, the UN ignores the massive problem of internationally sponsored, extreme Islamist terrorism in the region, and specifically in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By failing to acknowledge that Hamas’s ultimate goal is the elimination of Israel and failing to hold Hamas and its sponsors (especially Iran and Qatar) accountable for their incitement to and acts of terror, these UNGA Resolutions reinforce the cycle of violence.

Despite the fall of its key ally, Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Iran remains a major security threat, and the situation in Syria has introduced a heightened risk of regional instability and aggression against Israel. Qatar’s sponsorship of terrorism is highly problematic and should also be addressed.

The recent provisional ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza provides only a brief respite; it does nothing to increase the long-term prospects for stability in the Gaza Strip. In fact, leaving Hamas in power significantly undermines the prospects of peace and security.



Al-Qassam Brigades hand over Israeli hostages to the Red Cross, as part of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, 15 February 2025. | Photo: Flash90

The recent provisional ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza provides only a brief respite; it does nothing to increase the long-term prospects for stability in the Gaza Strip. In fact, leaving Hamas in power significantly undermines the prospects of peace and security.

Second, they ignore the problem of the lack of Palestinian governance in these territories. Palestinian governance in Gaza is non-existent, and in the West Bank remains a critical security risk. The Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to struggle with corruption and inefficiency and remains committed to terror. Its weakness and inaction were significant factors leading to Hamas’s attack on Israel on 7 October.

UNRWA has undermined peace, inter alia through its education system that teaches hatred, and its infiltration by Hamas and other hostile groups. As long as UNRWA exists, the Palestinians will be unable to achieve good governance, and any resolution of the conflict will remain unattainable.

In this context, hasty implementation of a two-state solution will present major security risks—not only for Israel, but for local, regional and global stability.

Third, these resolutions are flawed from a legal perspective. Reflecting weaknesses in judicial procedure and reasoning of the recent Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), they conflict with Israel’s rights under international law to

territorial integrity and political inviolability.

In particular:

- the Court and UNGA have failed to properly analyse the territorial sovereignty of these territories;
- they make a fundamental error in concluding that Israel’s presence in the territories is illegal;
- they conflict with the agreements made in the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO;
- they incorrectly define the scope and content of the Palestinian right to self-determination under international law; and
- they fail to properly consider the legal implications of the security threats emanating from the ‘occupied territory’.

Recommendations

thinc. argues that UN member states should:

1. Reject the terms of UNGA Resolution ES-10/24, which calls for an immediate and unconditional Israel withdrawal from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
2. Prioritise the legal obligation of states to neutralise internationally sponsored

terrorism and *jihadi* threats in the region over Palestinian demands for Israeli withdrawal and immediate and unconditional statehood;

3. Recognise that international law entitles the State of Israel, subject to the principles of international humanitarian law, to use necessary and proportionate force to eliminate the threat posed by the existence of Hamas and other hostile forces in the territories controlled by Israel since 1967;

4. Affirm that further implementation of the Palestinian right to self-determination is conditional upon -

(a) the cessation of violence and removal of extremist and destabilising forces of the radical Islamist camp in the West Bank and Gaza;

(b) dissolution of UNRWA;

(c) the replacement of the Palestinian Authority with a stable, effective and independent Palestinian government; and

(d) recognition of Israel’s right to secure borders, its sovereignty over East Jerusalem, and its legitimate sovereignty claims to the territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip;

5. Recognise that under international law Israel is entitled and obliged to maintain control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip until these conditions have been satisfied; and

6. Affirm that the future for Gaza must break completely with current paradigms. In order to address post-war Gaza’s security and governance challenges, an international peacekeeping force should be established, led by Israel and the United States and supported by Arab nations, including signatories of the Abraham Accords, Saudi Arabia and other peace-supporting countries from regions such as Latin America and Africa. This initiative could be followed by a modern trusteeship to oversee governance, reconstruction and development, to ensure a sustained peace. For the purposes of this recommendation, ‘post-war Gaza’ means a scenario in which Hamas has been decimated or has unconditionally surrendered.

The full report can be accessed on the thinc. website: www.thinc-israel.org

thinc. is actively briefing governments around the world on these issues, in the period leading up to the UN conference planned in New York in June 2025.

The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (thinc.) is a global network of international lawyers who promote the fair and equal application of law to support international cooperation and development.



Glacial Change: *Haredi* Draft—Part 2

■ Joanna Moss

In the last issue we saw that under Israeli law all citizens must serve in the IDF as it is a people's army not a professional army, but that certain groups get an exemption. As the percentage of *Haredim* increases, the pool of available men, decreases. This puts an increasing burden on the non-*Haredi* Jewish Israelis and even more so in war time when the reserve service requirements and sacrifices are beyond what most people ever imagined and is realistic for a functioning society. Israel desperately needs soldiers now and military service provides important glue in society. These distinctions are creating angst, anger and division.

Components

Whilst compulsory military training (CMT) starts at 18 years, many Israelis enter a pre-service programme to prepare them for basic training. Prior to IDF entry, all trainees are required to sit an aptitude test to determine their basic level of ability and skill tests to direct them to specific areas within the three services: Army, Navy and Air Force. Different units carry differing levels of training and prestige, and competition is fierce for the elite units. It's not just military training, the CMT programme includes Jewish history and visits to key sites anchoring them to the land and state. Many of the recruits have never even been to Jerusalem and other key sites. Friendships develop across the society. Thus in not serving, the *Haredim* miss out on valuable experiences enhancing their isolation.

Religious suitability

Some people claim that the *Haredim* are unsuitable for military service because they lack basic skills. Under religious freedom, the state has no jurisdiction over their education and non-religious components cease very early on. That means that *Haredim* have limited



In a *Haredi* version of *Your Country Needs You* poster, secular and religious Jews show support for IDF *Haredim*. | Photo: Flash90

mathematics, science, writing skills and a foreign language like English. They don't do physical education (PE) so their fitness is minimal. Due to a prohibition on the use of the internet and technology, their knowledge of key components of society and what is going on in the world is limited. Some 40% *Haredim* deem Hebrew to be a sacred language, so speak *Yiddish*, the language of European Jewish communities pre-Holocaust and thus Hebrew as a medium of communication within the IDF is just not possible. In 2023-2024 less than 1,000 *Haredim* men enlisted annually mostly *ex-Haredi* when 11,000 pa were eligible. Strict community control exists resisting enlistment. Many who did enlist came back secular, thus reinforcing the sociological reason not to enlist.

Religious preconditions

Haredim insist that the IDF provides a minimum of religious conditions for their soldiers such as *kosher* foods, *Shabbat* observance, *torah* study time and a prohibition on mixing religious men with female service personnel. Some *Haredi* leaders fear that contact with secular Israelis will lead their flock astray and open them up to the internet and other vices. In response, the IDF has created special *Haredi* units and all food served is *kosher*. But it does place restrictions on what *Haredi* soldiers can and cannot do. If the number of them increases, then more of these special units will need to be created. But what does that mean for the regular forces and for the social contract between the various units?

CHRC: Antisemitism and Human Rights

■ Heather Moore

"Leaders across the political spectrum need to speak out against antisemitism and in support of New Zealand's Jewish people", says recently appointed Chief Human Rights Commissioner (CHRC), Dr Stephen Rainbow. Speaking on 27 January at International Holocaust Remembrance Day; which was also the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp, Dr Rainbow called for the government to appoint an envoy on antisemitism.

"We must never forget that previous generations fought and died for the freedoms we now enjoy."

He drew attention to the escalation in violence in Melbourne and Sydney and said we should not be naïve about the potential for that to happen here in NZ:

"I believe the New Zealand government needs to follow the Australian example and appoint a special envoy for antisemitism as one of the actions that could be taken

to send out a powerful signal to the small, but vulnerable, Jewish community in New Zealand that they are valued and their concerns and their fears are taken seriously." Then, "Let me state unequivocally that the safety of Jewish people is a litmus test for our society."

He added, "We need to see our political leaders across the political spectrum speaking out against antisemitism and Jew-hatred because that is the best way to show the lessons of the Holocaust have not and will not be forgotten."

Drawing on our history, he noted, "We must never forget that previous generations fought and died for the freedoms we now enjoy." He said New Zealand troops were "absolutely critical" in the allied victory at El Alamein and that had Rommel been successful in North Africa, there was an Einsatz killing squad poised ready to move from Greece into British Mandate Palestine to kill the half million Jews living there. Dr Rainbow said it was no coincidence the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created in 1948 in the immediate aftermath of WW2. "Sadly, nearly 80 years after its adoption, the increasing evidence of antisemitism around the globe confirms (Sir Winston)

Churchill's adage that the one thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history."

Dr Rainbow's journey of interest in Jewish history and the Holocaust began as a 13-year-old after reading Leon Uris' book *Exodus* and, while having an awareness of the Holocaust was important for all people, it was especially so in any human rights role. "My commitment to you is to ensure the (Human Rights) Commission continues to protect and promote the human rights of all New Zealanders, including Jewish people in New Zealand".

Dr Rainbow said a lack of historical awareness was reducing the impact and significance of the Holocaust. "As there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors left, the ability of the Holocaust to mobilise people for the cause of human rights will continue to erode." He noted the popular portrayal of Auschwitz as the sole centre of evil encouraged us to blame only one nation with one malevolent leader, whereas understanding of the Holocaust fully revealed demonstrates that wherever antisemitism was allowed to flourish, there was the potential for violence against Jewish people, anywhere and anytime.



Discrimination in Nursing

■ Name Withheld

I am a Christian nurse working in the public health system. For me nursing is not just a job, but a calling in which I can be the face, hands and feet of Jesus reaching out to people in need with the love and compassion of God. There are a few of us Christian nurses who see what is going on, but we are too few in number to speak out. We are facing soft discrimination and walking a fine line over what we can express.

In the aftermath of 7 October 2023 I understand that all sorts of unlikely organisations began making antisemitic overtures, especially professional bodies. Sadly, the NZ Nurses Organisation was one. What has the Palestinian cause got to do with nursing in New Zealand one may well ask? It's just another example

of activists taking over professional bodies with their causes and sticking their nose in areas where they have no business. They didn't ask us for our opinion.

Nursing is in the headlines following NSW nurses who allegedly threatened to kill Israeli patients. As you can imagine, NZ nurses are talking about it too.

"The antisemitic incident in Australia does not change our position to oppose the horrific loss of life in Gaza, including the killing of health workers and the bombing of hospitals, which even the United Nations has described as crimes against humanity". *Kaiwhakahaere Kerri Nuku from NZ Nurses Organisation Newsletter—21 February 2025.*

Really, is that the truth? How can you link the two events? When does a

hospital become a legitimate target? What about Israeli lives? Real war crimes? Other war zones e.g. Ukraine, Syria? Mistreatment of Israeli hostages? We are concerned that under the BDS banner, namely boycott, divestment and sanction, NZNO told our government to step away from anything medical that's connected with Israel. Really? What happened to our duty of care to do no harm and seeking the best cost-effective solution for a problem based on limited health resources? It's not just words in the Bible that Israel will be a blessing to the nations. It's real. We see it clearly playing out in the medical field. It's no secret that Israel produces the best cancer drugs, they manufacture amazing devices that save lives and develop innovative solutions for medical problems. The list of products is huge.

Israelis are natural innovators and problem solvers. Their products are high quality and often fix problems with one product that might have taken several in the past. People tend to heal faster with Israeli products simply because they are targeted. They save us a lot of time too. Why should our patients be denied the best? Allow people to make decisions over their bodies or their children's bodies.

Many people have no idea where their drugs, devices and treatments come from. They have no need to know. If we took away Israeli products and technologies then medical care in NZ would suffer greatly. So, if you feel inclined, please investigate further and write to Minister of Health, your local DHB or the NZ Nurses Organisation. It's time to speak up for Israeli products.

Israel, Antisemitism & Civilisational Collapse

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

A report on seminars in the South.

At the end of February my husband Perry and I held seminars in Dunedin (Cornerstone International Bible Church) and Invercargill (Tay Street Baptist Church), entitled, 'Israel, Antisemitism and Civilisational Collapse'. The broad title enables us to address many of the relevant historical, political, biblical and theological issues.

Perry presents sessions on the various divine institutions under attack today, (including the divinely instituted nation of Israel), biblical prophecy, and an in-depth examination exposing the frailty and incoherence of replacement theology (or supersessionism) and its massive foothold in the evangelical church. I address some of the ways history has been used and misused and tackle many of the false accusations made against Israel in academia, media and popular culture.

It's perhaps not surprising that our meeting in Dunedin was met with opposition from the pro-Palestinian movement. Since 7 October the pro-Israeli community have faced an onslaught of anti-Israel protests, screeds of vile and hateful antisemitic graffiti around the city along with posters openly supporting Hamas. Israeli visitors to Dunedin have been shocked and have felt unsafe. Israel supporters found that, time after time, their pleas to the police in times of need were ignored. The Dunedin City Council has openly supported Palestinian propaganda and the media

and university are often hostile. The Otago Regional Council's recent bus safety campaign featured a teenager in a keffiyeh and a necklace with a map of Israel, the implications of which are clear. Complaints to the OCC regarding inappropriate political messaging have largely fallen on deaf ears.

Not only was our Dunedin meeting greeted with protestors outside the church who stayed for the entire day, but it was also infiltrated and interrupted by young women wearing keffiyeh, waving Palestinian flags and mindlessly shouting, 'from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'. Only with the arrival of police did they depart. A local pro-Palestinian organiser, Sam Bosshard wrote on social media,

"Today a couple of this country's foremost Christian Zionists (Doomsday cultists who want to send Jews to Israel to trigger the end times) thought they could waltz into Otepoti Dunedin and spread racist nonsense about Israel being a bulwark holding back the hordes of Arab barbarism." The Otago Daily Times published this accusation in their online article, only taking it down when it was pointed out that our views are readily available online and in print and that such a statement was defamatory. When one tries to engage with such protestors it quickly becomes clear that their knowledge base is paper thin. Yet, they manage to propagate lies and slander against Israel and her supporters, usually without challenge. This simply underlines the need for more teaching and seminars, to educate and strengthen voices willing



Anti-Israel protestors in Dunedin. | Photos: Perry Trotter



More protestors in Invercargill.

to speak up with sound information. The events in Dunedin and Invercargill were well attended and feedback has been excellent. We were grateful to meet many wonderful supporters of Israel.

Other seminars are in the works and we welcome opportunities to travel to other regions. For information on our schedule, please visit: www.israelbiblicalworldview.org



The Bibas Family: Society's Litmus Test

■ Dr Sheree Trotter

Historian

Following the funerals of the Bibas boys and their mother, Shiri, hundreds of New Zealanders gathered in vigils across New Zealand, in Whangarei, Auckland, Hastings, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill and Wellington, to mourn the loss of the Bibas family and to call for the release of hostages.

Dr Sheree Trotter gave this speech at the Auckland Vigil.

Over the past few weeks we have joined with Israel and the Jewish people in a roller coaster of emotion, as hostages held for over 15 months have been released in highly choreographed, staged affairs. We have rejoiced over the captives set free and grieved with them as they faced the reality of loved ones lost.

Today we think of the Bibas family and mourn for the loss of 10-month-old Kfir, 4-year-old Ariel and their mother Shira Bibas and we send our *aroha*, our love and words of support to Shiri's husband, Yarden.

How can we forget the image of this young mother, clutching her babies to her breast, torn away from her husband and her home, her safe place?

We saw the face of innocence in 10-month-old Kfir and 4-year-old Ariel.

We saw the face of vulnerability and fear in Shiri, as she protected her boys with all she had, her loving arms and a protective heart.

We saw the face of evil in those who violently seized her and tearing her away from her home, to an unimaginable fate in Gaza.

For months we hoped and prayed that this family would be released, along with all the other 250+ hostages. But as the months passed, hope faded, as we became more aware of the bestial brutality of Hamas terrorists and their accomplices—as reports came to light of rape, torture and beheadings, the burning and mutilation of bodies, of the use of hospitals and schools in Gaza as bases of operation and the hiding behind human shields. And in recent weeks, as hostages have been released, we've witnessed the grotesque ceremonies, the pantomime, the celebration over the coffins of the dead.

What disturbed us more than the evil of Hamas, was the reaction of the western world, the propensity, to look away
to turn a blind eye
to make excuses
to justify these atrocities...

We've seen months of moral inversion.

- Israel falsely accused of genocide, when it was Hamas that committed genocide on 7 October—an intentional act of war to eliminate a group of people, with a commitment to repeat it again and again and again.
- The false accusation of famine— when it was Hamas commandeering the many tonnes of food supplied by Israel, starving the hostages, abusing and torturing them and preventing medical assistance.
- The false accusation of targeting women and children, when it was Hamas that murdered, babies, children, women, Holocaust survivors—10-month-old Kfir and 4-year-old Ariel Bibas, strangled to death and their bodies mutilated to propagate the lie that they had been killed in an Israeli strike.

And what of Shiri?



The vigil took place in Te Komititanga Square (Britomart), Auckland. | Photos: Perry Trotter

The forensics team confirmed that she did not die in an Israeli airstrike as Hamas had previously claimed.

The forensic scientist stated:

“We were met with depths of evil and malice that could not be conceived”.

The tragedy that befell the Bibas family has brought into sharp relief the difference between those who cherish life and protect the vulnerable and those who glorify death and sacrifice their own children on the altar of Jew hatred.

Where we as a society stand on these issues is a litmus test for decency and humanity. Will the world continue to shield and protect terrorists, or stand with a nation that values life?

And yet amidst the terror and trauma of the past 16 months, there have been glimmers of light and hope.

We witnessed last week one of the remarkable strengths of the Israeli society. As people poured out onto the streets to farewell the Bibas boys and their Mother, we saw the power of unity and love. We saw the people of Israel as one vast extended family.

Ben Gurion stated, “to be a realist in Israel, you must believe in miracles”.

We've just heard the testimony of Eli Sharabi who came home after 491 days in Hamas captivity. He stated that he was aware that there was something watching over him in the tunnels and though not a religious man he would say the *shema* prayer every day.

The remarkable young woman, Agam Berger, who was released after 482 days, stated:

“I chose the path of faith and with the path of faith I have returned”

It says in the *Tehillim*, “He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”

That doesn't mean there won't be war, death, pain and suffering, but we know that Israel will survive, as she has for more than 3½ millennia. The Jewish people have a miraculous history, a heritage and a moral code that has stood the test of time. Her enemies, among them great empires, have come and gone and yet the people of Israel are still here. They will continue.

The people of Israel live!

Am Y'Israel chai!



Dr Sheree Trotter addresses the gathering.



A solemn reminder of those who remain in captivity.



C41 Executive Director Bryce Turner and his wife Eleanor.



Free Speech or Double Standards?

■ Yana Greenman

The recent controversy surrounding a safety campaign on Dunedin buses highlights troubling issues of free speech and Jewish rights in the face of intolerance. Complaints were raised over a student's *keffiyeh* and a necklace that delineated the borders of Israel, prompting a critical discussion over the implications of cultural symbols and expressions of identity.

The new safety campaign by the Otago Regional Council (ORC), aimed to promote tolerance among teens by featuring groups of diverse teenagers standing together. Standing out was a girl wearing a *hijab*, a *keffiyeh* on her shoulders, and a large Israel-silhouette necklace. This image comes when Jewish students often feel the need to hide their identity, while others freely and openly propagate the wish to erase the Jewish state replacing it with a Muslim one. This contrast underscores the complexities of identity, the limits of free speech, and the double standards that have lately become a day-to-day reality—frustrating and disheartening Jews, Israelis and Christians.

The said necklace, visually embodying the phrase “From the river to the sea: Palestine will be free (of Jews)” is not just a

cultural statement; it is a denial of Israel’s existence and a promotion of a narrative that threatens Jewish identity and its indigenous land. It is alarming that a delegitimisation expression is regarded as acceptable by governmental organisations such as ORC, while symbols associated with Jewish or Israeli identity often provoke backlash.

The ORC has asserted that this issue is rooted in free speech. Yet, when asked whether they would permit volunteers to wear a Chinese necklace including the Cook Islands or a Russian necklace incorporating Ukrainian territory, they dodged a direct response. This inconsistency raises serious questions about where the boundaries of free speech lie. If anti-Israel sentiments expressed through ‘cultural’ symbols in a government-financed campaign are tolerated, what prevents symbols associated with hate; such as a swastika or a white pointy hat from being similarly accepted?

While the concerns of individuals embracing diverse cultural identities should be respected, the double standard is glaring. When anti-Jewish expressions or symbols cause discomfort to the Jewish community, they are often ignored; however, any anti-Islamic or anti-LGBTQ+ or any other minority expressions usually raise enormous backlash.

Ignominious End?

Hon. Philip Goff had an illustrious career rising from a poor Auckland family to put himself through university and gain distinction in various post-graduate degrees. From a union rep position he joined the Labour Party and entered Parliament rising in the ranks to become a Minister of various portfolios and subsequently leader. He was never PM. From 2016-2022 Phil Goff was Mayor of Auckland before retiring, later being appointed High Commissioner to the UK (2023-March 2025); a plum position for an ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His love affair with the Palestinian cause is less well-known. Goff was photographed with Yasser Arafat in 2003. On 6 March 2025 Hon Winston Peter sacked Goff for his off-script remarks on Trump’s comprehension of history in contravention of NZ government policy and not the first time he shunned an American leader’s stance. Was God’s mercy up, meaning judgment time for Goff? (*Gen 12.3*)

Waving the Flag

■ Dr Simon Smelt

Retired Economist

Every day pictures of angry mobs waving the Palestinian flag are broadcast by media. Demonstrators may believe it is a flag of resistance. Its history tells a different story.

During World War I, British agents worked with Arab leaders encouraging them to revolt against the rule of the Ottoman Empire which had sided with Germany against Britain. The most well known of these British agents was TE Lawrence—inaccurately depicted in David Lean’s famous film *Lawrence of Arabia*. Another—a rival of Lawrence’s— was Colonel Sir Tatton Benvenuto Mark Sykes, heir to a vast estate in Yorkshire, England, where he bred horses and held court to the locals.

Sykes had become the principal British expert on Turkish affairs to the British War Cabinet. In this role he had dealings with Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca, and leader of one of the main tribal confederations in Arabia. The British were hoping to persuade Hussein to lead an Arab revolt against the Ottomans and made grand promises to him about the territory he would rule. In June 1916 Hussein declared the Great Arab Revolt and himself King of the Hejaz (the western portion of the Arabian Peninsula).

With British assistance, Hussein’s force drove Ottoman forces from most of Arabia. On the first anniversary of the revolt, called Arab Renaissance Day, a flag was unveiled: the flag of the Arab Revolt. Banners had long been used as symbols and in battle in Islam, but not in the form of a European type flag, such as the French tri-colour. It is believed that the idea of the flag was prompted by Sykes as a counter to the French flag flown over their colonies in the Middle East. The Arab tri-colour flag combined European design with the sacred colours of Islam:

- black for the banner colour used by Mohammed, Islam’s founder, and banner of the Abbasids, the second dynasty of Muslim rulers;

- white for purity and the banner of the *Umayyids*, the first dynasty of Arab rulers;
- green for the tradition that Mohammed’s family wore that colour, and the banner of the *Fatimids*, the third dynasty of Muslim rulers.



Flag of Arab Revolt

These colours would, of course, be well understood by Hussein, who made the addition of a fourth colour: a red triangle representing the banner of his own, *Hashemite*, family. Thus the flag of the Great Arab Revolt was a co-production between Sykes, British agent, and Hussein, King of the Hejaz.

Sykes went on to negotiate the Sykes— Picot agreement with France, betraying the promises made by Britain to Hussein. Hussein subsequently lost control of Arabia to the Saud family (hence Saudi Arabia) but his family, the Hashemites, continue to rule Jordan.



Flag of Jordan

Various Arab countries have, at times, adopted a version of the Arab Revolt flag as their national flag. Today, only two retain it in something close to its original form of the three colours plus a red triangle: Jordan (no surprise) and Palestine.

So, what does the flag represent in this form? It represents three Muslim dynasties (only the first of which—the *Umayyids*—was Arab) that ruled Palestine as a small part of a great empire. None of them permitted local rule. It represents the Hashemite family who rule Jordan today—though not native to it—and for a time (1948-1967) ruled Judea and Samaria, treating it as one with Jordan. And it represents cooperation between a Western colonial power and an Arab King who was betrayed by that power.



Flag of Palestine

In short the flag of Palestine represents imperialism, colonialism, foreign rule, and betrayal: an appropriate flag to wave by the misguided and the foolish.

By contrast, the Israeli flag represents the *tallit* (*Numbers 15:37-41*) and the star or shield of David.

Key Source: Podeh, Ellie (2011) *The symbolism of the Arab flag in modern Arab states: Between commonality and uniqueness*.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230308624_The_symbolism_of_the_Arab_flag_in_modern_Arab_states_Between_commonality_and_uniqueness

| Photos: Shutterstock

From Tel Aviv

By Yosef Livne, Former Israeli
Ambassador to New Zealand



A Day of Pain and Mourning

On 20 February the people of Israel marked 500 days since 7 October. Most of us, are united by the cry

to the liberate all the remaining people who were kidnapped by Hamas. Indeed, under the understandings reached with the help of the mediators, numerous hostages were liberated recently after lengthy captivity in the dungeons of Hamas. On Thursday 20 February, Israel wept at the sight of the coffins containing the mortal remains of hostages killed while in captivity.

In just two weeks Hamas has given further evidence to its beastly, hateful and antisemitic nature. Anyone with a minimum grain of humanity was surely aghast at the sight of the three men liberated after over 400 days in captivity. They resembled survivors of the Holocaust. Today, Hamas staged another horror show before handing over the remains of an elderly man who had dedicated his life to promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.

The collective heart of this nation is heavy with grief and mourning. We know that our friends as well as decent people around the globe share our feelings. The coming days will be painted with dark tones of mourning. On Saturday, we expect to welcome six more hostages who shall emerge from the dungeons of Gaza into the light of freedom.

The saga is far from over. There are dozens of hostages still languishing in captivity and others who have perished at the hands of Hamas. Our goal is clear bring them all back and then, once they are all here the time of reckoning shall arrive.

27 February 2025, is a day which forever will be etched in the memory of Israel. A young mother and her two little children, who were cruelly kidnapped and later murdered by Hamas, were laid to rest. For over a year this nation hoped that those beastly Hamas terrorists would spare the lives of the Bibas family. But it was not to be. They were slaughtered.

Unfortunately, the parade of tears and broken hearts has not ended. As I write this, four more victims of the Hamas viciousness have been identified. Israel's cup of pain and tears has not yet run over, and more tears will be shed. We, as a nation, shall overcome and rise from the ashes and mourning.

Welcome, Ambassador Roth-Snir

This year we welcomed a new Ambassador of Israel to New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue, His Excellency Mr Alon Roth-Snir.

Mr Roth continues a long career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. Prior to his appointment in New Zealand, he held a range of global positions, including Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires at the Israeli Embassies to the European Union, Jordan, and the United Kingdom. His most recent role was as the Ambassador of Israel to Norway. In Israel he served as deputy Director General both in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the Ministry of Education.

An accomplished professional, Mr Roth holds a Degree in Geodesy and Cartography from Tel Aviv University, a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and a Master's Degree in Political Science from Haifa University.

In a formal ceremony at Government House in Auckland, Mr Roth presented his credentials to the Governor-General of New Zealand, Her Excellency the Rt Hon Dame Cindy Kiro. Following the



His Excellency Mr Alon Roth-Snir, Ambassador of Israel to NZ, presenting his credentials to Her Excellency the Rt Hon Dame Cindy Kiro, Governor-General of NZ. | Photo: Embassy of Israel in NZ

ceremony, he travelled north to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds for this year's official commemoration of signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, widely regarded as New Zealand's founding document.

The name 'Alon', translates to 'oak tree' in Hebrew, symbolising strength and stability. The name 'Snir' is another name for Mount Hermon in northern Israel, as

well as to the Snir Stream (Hebrew: *Nahal Snir*), one of the three main tributaries of the Jordan River, both of which hold significant biblical importance.

With his extensive experience and warm welcome, Ambassador Roth-Snir is poised to deepen the already strong ties between Israel and New Zealand in various fields.

Islamic Scholar Declares Israel Must Return to God

■ **Barry Rodgers OAM**
President of Beersheba Vision

Renowned author, Islamic scholar and political advisor to many governments, Professor Ed Husain, recently gave an astonishing speech on J-TV. It was an address of profound significance. Husain is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), focused on US foreign policy towards the Middle East. His mission generally and specifically deals with the intersection of Arab/Israeli relations after the Abraham Accords. The following article has been transcribed from his speech.

"We cannot have the justification for Israel based merely on archaeological evidence, even though that evidence undeniably confirms that there has been 3,500 years of a Jewish presence in the land. The real reason for the State of Israel to be there is because God guided Moses and Joshua out of the land of Egypt from the tyranny of Pharaoh to worship freely in the land of Jacob. That is the first component, the Israelis must recognise that their 'land certificate' comes from God. There is no other way around it. The Israelis need to return to God to justify their existence, prosperity and

the many miracles that surround them, for example when Iran recently fired rockets against them. Once Jews and Israelis genuinely recognise that Israel is a country founded in faith and scripture, then they will have a language that will speak to the rest of the region. When they have that language, the Muslim world will realise these are the children of Israel, these are the children of Jacob, and these are children who are coming home, and they are welcome back."

The professor also in his speech quoted from the *Koran* 5:20.21 showing that even from an Islamic viewpoint God has clearly given the land of Israel to the Jews. That verse also reveals a warning in that Israel must not turn its back on God. No doubt the exhortation coming from this Islamic scholar for Israel to turn back to God, was based on that Koranic passage. If you want to see the whole speech then google "Muslim scholar teaches Jews how to succeed in the Middle East".

The unchanging history of an unchanging God

Importantly many Jewish religious leaders are acknowledging this also. Orthodox Rabbi, Jeremy Gimpel agrees, "the only path forward is for

Israel to return to God, and begin to speak in a Godly language. It is as if our enemies in surrounding us have been programmed and set up to force us to recognise God and return to Him. When you read the stories in the Bible in Joshua and Judges, you realise that every enemy sparks a return of *Teshuva* (repentance). It's hard to imagine in 2025, but nothing has changed." In other words, the unchanging history of an unchanging God.

The importance of God Talk

Rabbi Yishai Flieser also agrees that the speech of Professor Husain shows us how to talk to our region. Our region, the Rabbi declares, respects "God talk." Talking about what the UN says, what the Geneva convention says and what the Paris protocols say, or what any other international agreement says, is not what does it for our Arab neighbours. It doesn't speak to them. What gives Israel legitimacy in the region is our faith in God, rooted in the Bible."

Over the years many inspiring speeches are given by a multitude of people, but very few are as profoundly significant as that given by this Islamic scholar, may it be spread far and wide.



The Lie of Moral Equivalence

■ Ilse Strauss

Bridges for Peace

They were thrust into the spotlight overnight—for the most heartbreaking reason imaginable. Before 7 October 2023, few knew the names Shiri, Ariel and Kfir Bibas. After that dark day, few will forget.

Hamas captured some of the last images of Shiri and her two little boys. They show Shiri, 32, her face a mask of terror, frantically clutching 4-year-old Ariel and 9-month-old Kfir as if holding them close could somehow shield them from the unfolding nightmare. The boys' fiery red curls peek from beneath the white blanket Shiri wrapped around them in one final, futile act of protection.

Their father, Yarden (34) was captured and dragged to Gaza separately, while Shiri and the two boys—named to embody strength and courage (*Ariel* means 'Lion of God', while *Kfir* means 'Lion Cub'), were marched by a baying mob of masked terrorists through the destruction of Kibbutz Nir Oz to a deadly fate in Gaza.

The images captured hearts around the world and turned Shiri, Ariel and Kfir into the symbols of innocent hostages, clutched in the face of unimaginable evil.

For more than 500 days, Israel waited. Hoped. Prayed. Kfir's first birthday and Ariel's fifth came and went in captivity. Throughout the war, Hamas claimed that Shiri and her sons had been killed in Israeli airstrikes. Yet, Hamas are masters of psychological warfare, known for their cruel manipulations. They had lied about the fate of hostages before, even staging deaths on film, as they did with Daniella Gilboa. And so Israel hoped...

Throughout the first stage of the hostage release agreement, that hope began to fray. Every week, a group of Israelis were released—until Yarden himself came home. But Shiri, Ariel and Kfir remained missing.

Then, in late February, Hamas announced that the bodies of Oded Lifshitz (85) and the Bibas family would be handed over to Israel—all supposedly killed in Israeli airstrikes.

A macabre spectacle

Hamas has turned every hostage release into a grotesque performance. Yet, these twisted rituals reached a horrific climax for the handover of the remains. Israelis called it "the saddest day since 7 October." For Hamas, it was a fun affair for the whole family.

Thousands of Gazans gathered to witness the grim display. Men lounged in plastic chairs, mothers cradled babies while children packed the bleachers



Pictures of late Israeli hostages Shiri, Ariel and Kfir Bibas in Kibbutz Nir Oz, near the Israeli-Gaza border, in southern Israel, 25 February 2025. | Photo: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90

erected the day before. Large loudspeakers blasted lively music, adding to the festive atmosphere as the crowd clapped and cheered.

Masked terrorists strutted proudly, posing for pictures with children, alongside a table on which an automatic weapon, ammunition anti-tank mines were on display for the future generation of Gazans to marvel. On stage loomed a mural crudely depicting Israel's prime minister as a blood-sucking vampire, with a message in Hebrew, Arabic and English: "These hostages died in Israeli air strikes, we bear no responsibility for their demise, Israel's fault, not ours."

And between the crowd and the stage, four black coffins, each with a name, photo and inscription: "Date of arrest: 7 October 2023."

Later, Israeli journalist Rachel O'Donoghue wrote: "It wasn't just the presence of the four coffins that made the spectacle an echo of the savagery of 7 October. It was the festive atmosphere—the casual, almost celebratory way a community gathered to watch a terrorist group display the bodies of murdered Jews. A society so desensitised to terroristic violence that even the sight of coffins holding two dead babies did not shock. Did not horrify. Quite the opposite. It was a cause for celebration. The mothers and fathers of Gaza brought their children to watch. To gawk. To clap. At the sight of dead Jews."

Hamas wasn't done with the psychological torture. The group handed over the coffins—locked—and then provided the wrong keys. Then, in a supposed accident, they sent back the wrong body, returning the remains of a Palestinian woman instead of Shiri.

A day later, the truth emerged. Hamas had lied—again. Shiri, Ariel and Kfir had not died in airstrikes. Rather, they had been strangled shortly after being taken hostage. Then, Hamas mutilated their bodies to mimic the injuries of a missile strike.

Moral equivalence?

Many condemned Hamas outright. Yet the predictable anti-Israel rhetoric came quickly: "How are the Bibas brothers different from the Palestinian children who died in Gaza? Why condemn Hamas without mentioning the children who died in Israeli airstrikes?"

The argument is morally misplaced. Every innocent civilian death in war is tragic. But *Proverbs 29:2* warns: "When the wicked rules, the people groan." And when an evil leader drags his people into war by attacking his neighbour and then uses his own civilians as human shields, the suffering of the evil leader's people is his fault, not his neighbour's.

The argument that Hamas rebelled against Israeli oppression is equally skewed. In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in a 'land-for-peace' effort, a type of test run that would potentially lead to the creation of the one thing the Palestinians claimed they wanted in exchange for peace with the Israelis: a state of their own. The international community poured billions into prospering Gaza, and with open borders to Israel and Egypt, Hamas had every opportunity to turn the area into a paradise.

Instead, Hamas pocketed the billions, built a war machine, fired rockets at Israeli civilians, dug terror tunnels, incited uprisings in the Sinai Peninsula and turned Gaza into a fortress of destruction. The result? Both Israel and Egypt

imposed partial blockades to limit access to materials used by Hamas for war—with the restrictions on the Egyptian side even tighter than on Israel's.

Neither the Bibas boys nor the Gazan children deserved suffering. But the difference is clear: Hamas kidnapped Ariel and Kfir to serve as human shields, just as they use their own civilians as shields. Hamas held them hostage to prevent Israel from responding to the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. The Bibas brothers were in Gaza because Hamas wanted to exterminate Jews without suffering the consequences.

Lebanese-Canadian professor Gad Saad put it best: "A non-targeted baby that dies in an airstrike is a tragedy. A baby that dies at the hands of his captors by being beaten to death is a violation of human decency. Both babies died, both are innocent, both deaths are tragic, but there is zero moral equivalence between the two realities."

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness," the prophet Isaiah warned (5:20a).

The story of the Bibas family is not just a tragedy—it is a moral reckoning. It forces the world to confront an uncomfortable truth: there can be no equivalence between those who seek peace and those who glorify terror.

History will remember who stood for truth—and who enabled a lie.

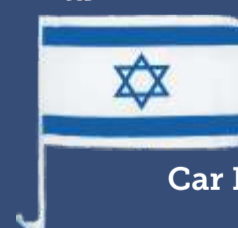
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Coming into Passover

Understanding Passover and Its Importance for Christians

■ Jan Wade

Heart For Israel NZ | Horowhenua

As Passover approaches, it's important to prepare by getting *Matzah* and horseradish, the correct glasses, and making sure we have everything we need. However, Heart for Israel (HFINZ) in the Horowhenua, needs to think about when and where we celebrate and how we encourage the local church to participate and learn about this Biblical feast which has such a deep connection to Jesus. Each year we share the *Passover Seder* with a number of those on our contact list, but for many Christians it appears that *Passover* is just the time when Easter is celebrated.

Passover is a divine plan by God, carefully designed so that future generations will recognise the Jewish Messiah...

We plan to hold a *pre-Passover* 'teaching time' with an interactive display and encourage questions, using a cartoon about Jacob and his lamb, Clarence. Some may question using cartoons during this special time, but we want to engage with the body of Christ, and especially the younger generation in understanding *Passover's* importance.

Once we understand how God set up this feast to show His Son as the *Passover* Lamb, surely we would expect a

good turnout for the celebration? Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where the lambs for temple worship were raised, and He followed the same path as the lambs during His triumphal entry. The requirement for lambs to be without blemish matches the fact that Jesus was sinless. The lamb for the first *Passover* had to be kept for four days to ensure it was qualified, similar to how Jesus was questioned for four days in the temple about His identity as the *Messiah*.

Will attendees be surprised by these insights? Think about the unleavened bread: leaven represents sin, and *Matzah* is not only unleavened but also pierced, striped, and bruised. Before *Passover*, all

leaven had to be removed from homes, just like Jesus cleansed His Father's house (*Matthew 21:12*).

The *Passover* meal is very significant. Attendees will be interested to learn that the four promises God made to the Israelites at Sinai are represented by the four cups of wine at the *Passover* meal, with the third cup symbolising redemption. This is the cup Jesus raised during *Passover*, saying, "This is my blood, given for you." He then took the



A family in *seder* celebrating *Passover*. | Photo: Shutterstock

fourth cup, the cup of praise, and said He would not drink it again until He drinks it with us in the Kingdom of God.

On that day, the high priest in the temple blows the shofar and declares '*Tetelestai*,' meaning 'It is finished' or 'Paid in full'—the same words spoken by Jesus.

Passover is a divine plan by God, carefully designed so that future generations will recognise the Jewish *Messiah*, the Lamb of God acknowledged by John the Baptist. The ceremony Jesus started, known as 'communion,' was part

of a larger plan. After three days and three nights, He rose on the *Feast of First Fruits*, another key part of God's plan.

The early church even left a sign for future generations by adding a *matzah* bag to the *Passover* tradition, which still confuses the Jewish community today. Therefore, when people come to our teaching sessions, we want to share these amazing insights and reveal the mystery of the *matzah* bag. Do you know what it means?

Hebraic Prayer Secrets—Part 1: Exalting God

■ Ps Enoch Lavender

Director | Olive Tree Ministries

In *Acts chapter 4*, the disciples gathered to pray after receiving multiple venomous threats from the priestly authorities. The power of their prayer was such that when they had finished praying, the place where they gathered was shaken and they were all filled afresh with the Holy Spirit and with boldness.

It is easy for us to visualise this prayer meeting in terms of the styles and methods of prayer to which we are accustomed. But what would it have looked like in the Jewish context of the day and what lessons can we glean for our own prayer life?

Hebraic prayer starts with exalting God

"Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them..." *Acts 4:24 NKJV*

In response to repeated and stern threats from the leaders of Jewish community, Peter and John gathered the disciples together for an earnest time of prayer. Surprisingly, the disciples did not start their prayer by addressing the threats of persecution staring them

straight in the face.

Instead, they followed the traditional Jewish approach to prayer by always, first exalting the Lord as the Almighty Creator.

We see a similar pattern in the Lord's prayer: "*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*" (*Matt. 6:9, emphasis added*).

This is a classic feature of Hebraic prayer where most if not all prayers begin by blessing God and proclaiming His greatness and power, often particularly focusing on Him as the all-powerful Creator of all.

When we approach God in prayer, we need to remind ourselves of His awesome power and majesty. We need to be reminded that we are in the presence of the God who created all things and upholds all things by the Word of His power (*Heb. 1:3*). By beginning their petitions this way, the Hebrews remind themselves that no matter how great a challenge lies before them, God is infinitely greater and well able to deal with any problem they are facing.

Some years ago I was facing pressing personal challenges,

and set aside time to 'pray through' the problems. However, by the end of my extended prayer time I felt more drained, more confused and more troubled about the problem than I did when I first started praying! Why? Because I simply just kept re-iterating the problem before God in prayer and the more I have talked about the problem, the 'bigger' it has become.

As we focus excessively on the challenges and struggles, unbelief and fear can creep in and the problems can seem even greater than God's ability to move in our lives. But as we instead exalt the Lord God of Creation first and focus on His power and might, faith grows in our hearts that God indeed can and will move on our behalf. From Hebraic prayer we therefore learn to begin our prayers by lifting our eyes up to the One who is so much greater than any challenge. And as we do, our perspective is corrected to see the situation from the eyes of our loving Heavenly Father who is always in complete control.

In the next part of this series on Hebraic prayer, we are going continue by examining the need to keep our prayers Bible-based.



“Good to be Sitting Together”

Valeria Zakharov

Programme Coordinator | First Home in the Homeland

Around 150 people gathered in the city of Ra’anana mid-February to celebrate *Tu-BiShvat*, the Jewish New Year of the Trees. Among the attendees were First Home in the Homeland programme’s families from different regions. This ceremonial dinner, featuring traditional treats and songs, was organised by the Jewish Agency for Israel and the KKL – Jewish Nation Fund.

In addition to the main celebration, exciting excursions across the northern part of the country were arranged for the *olim* (new immigrants). Children were thrilled to see real sharks in Hadera and large turtles in Nahal Alexander Park. Some families, who had arrived in Israel less than a month ago, had not yet had the chance to fully appreciate its beauty and uniqueness. This was their first big adventure.



First Home *olim* from the kibbutz Merhaviva, Tu BiShvat celebration, 2025. | Photos: First Home in the Homeland

the Jewish people. For new *olim* like me, such attention is very important; it’s deeply moving and helps you feel that



Traditional treats—dried fruits and *Tirosh* (red grape juice).

“How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” Numbers 13:20

“Thank you for this day, for the excursion, and for the opportunity to learn about the traditions of the holiday. I absolutely loved the trip to the park—it was the perfect place for the New Year of the Trees. The beauty of nature and the sea were truly fascinating. Of course, it was wonderful to sing songs in *Hebrew* together, dance, and feel like a part of

you are not alone. There are many of us—a whole country. This kind of care stays in the heart for a long time”.

This message came from a participant of the programme at kibbutz Merhaviva, who made *aliyah* in December. He took the bold step of coming alone and has already started studying at the *Ulpan* (Hebrew language school). This year we

have welcomed many single *olims* and did everything possible to support them and help them not to feel lonely.

Also, many families with children of different ages joined us. It was a real pleasure to see the children—flowers of life, dancing alongside adults and singing in Hebrew to all the songs, clapping their hands. When we ask parents why they weren’t afraid to leave their past life behind and start everything from scratch, everyone answers the same way—“We came for the sake of our children”. These happy children are the best future Israel could have!

Even in dark times, we find light and reasons to be joyful. The most important thing is that we overcome all obstacles together, continue to observe our traditions, and never give up! Your support helps us keep going!

Am Israel Chai!

Valeria is Program Coordinator of the ‘First Home in the Homeland’ Program of Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI)

We welcome your support for families integrating into Israel through First Home in the Homeland.
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Messiah and Fear

■ Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

Spiritual Leader | Beth Melekh International

The phrase “Fear not” appears explicitly in Scripture 143 times. In the majority of those instances, it’s accompanied by the words, “For I am with you”.

Some weaponise the phrase “Fear not”, citing decontextualised passages like 1 John 4:18 (where a specific form of fear, the fear of punishment, is being spoken of). They condemn fellow believers who suffer from fear with the words, “God says ‘Fear not’, therefore, if you’re fearful you’re sinning”.

God doesn’t say “Fear not” because fear in and of itself is sin; if that were true, Yeshua’s fearful responses in Gethsemane would be sin (Matthew 26:36-39). God says, “Fear not” because He knows that in a sin-affected world, all will face fear. He therefore pre-empted the fruit of fear by way of His very existence, and says, “For I am with You”. This is said in the eternal present tense. It’s never the case that God is not with us. We may not feel His presence, but He is ever-present.

God exists before fear, fear being a fruit of the fallen created order. Therefore, as is the case with the Lamb Who is slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), God Himself is the solution that precedes the problem of fear.

He says, “I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Fear will not exist in the world to come, and in the present world, the fear of God puts an end to fear. Not an end to our mental and physiological responses to fear, but an end to the decision of fear.

It’s not a sin to experience fear, but it is a sin to trust in fear. Therefore, when we’re afraid, we choose to trust in God, and the Spirit of Messiah in us strengthens us to “Fear not”.

I’m not speaking of mental and physiological fear responses ceasing; rather, I’m speaking of trusting God even when the mental and physiological fear responses of our earthly bodies don’t align with our decision to trust. Faith is not an emotion or a sensation. To the contrary, faith, along with love and trust, are a decision.

The Father says, “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Often, when we’re fearful, we ask, “What can I do to overcome my fear?” But

Scripture doesn’t task us with working to overcome our fears, rather, it teaches us that God will overcome fear in us through the King Messiah Yeshua.

He says, “I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Our freedom from fear is the receipt of God’s work through the Messiah.

It’s Yeshua who affords us the greatest example of obedience in the face of fear. Matthew 26:36-39 recounts His experience in Gethsemane.

(Matthew 26:36). Gethsemane, the Garden of Olive Pressing, is situated at the base of the Mount of Olives across the Kidron (darkness/mourning) valley, east of Jerusalem. The Gospels tell us that Yeshua went there regularly. The point is that He was not seeking to hide from what was to come. Courage is being afraid and acting in spite of fear.

Yeshua asked His disciples to stay close to Him, He was only going a stone’s throw away; He was unsettled and desired the companionship of His friends.

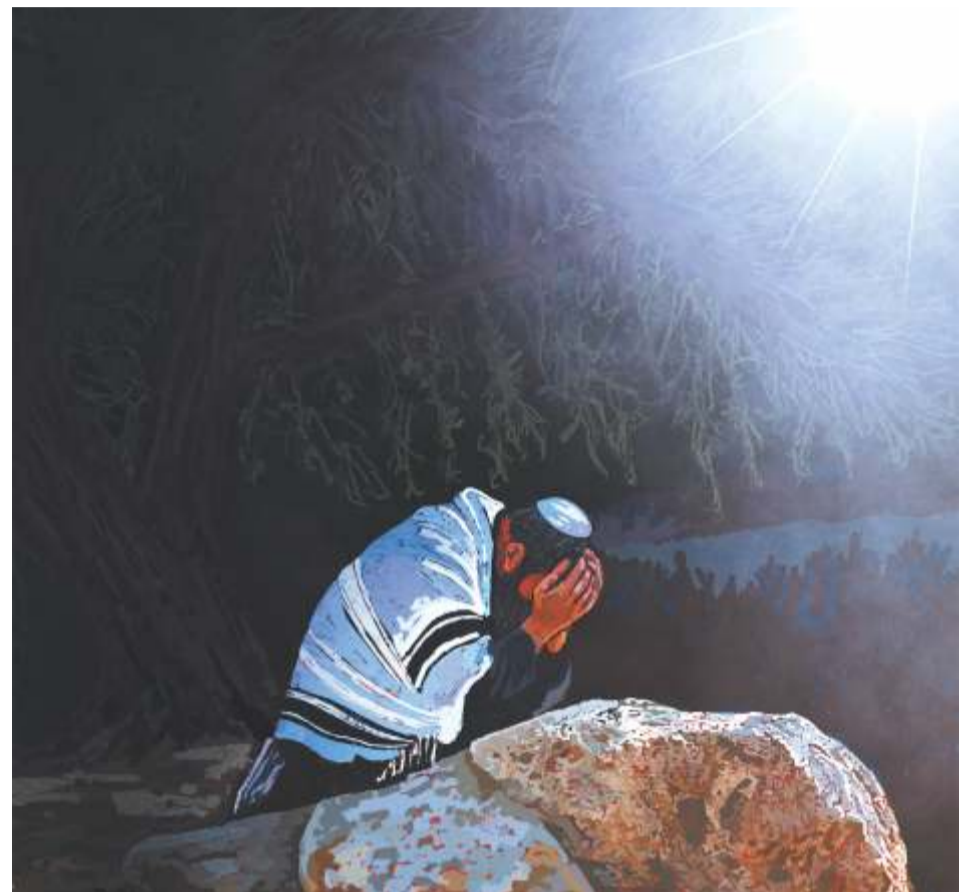
Those who pronounce Bible verses as if they’re magic incantations in order to ward off fear, depression and anxiety have foolishly neglected to consider the very real struggle of Yeshua’s humanity as He pleaded with God the Father in the Garden of Olive Pressing. Matthew describes Yeshua experiencing a panic

attack, borne on a platform of deep mental distress and producing a physiological response.

The meaning of Gethsemane, Olive Press, has obvious connotations. Yeshua is crushed and poured out for us, so that we might partake of the oil of His Spirit, the courage of His testimony.

(Matthew 26:37) The text plainly states that Yeshua became “dejected and sorrowful”. Why, then, do so many criticise those who suffer from anxiety? Surely, anxiety in and of itself cannot be sin. After all, Messiah experienced the same anxious feelings and emotive responses and yet remained sinless (Hebrews 4:14-16). He is, as the prophet says, “a man of sorrow, familiar with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

Yeshua doesn’t accuse us in our weakness. On the contrary, that is Satan’s job. He suffers with us, having known even greater suffering than we could ever imagine— not just mental anguish and physical death but in addition and beyond all other suffering, He took upon Himself the sin of



| Artwork: Yaakov Ben Yehoshua

humanity, a darkness unparalleled.

(Matthew 26:38) In Gethsemane, Yeshua has an overwhelming, physiologically debilitating panic attack and is essentially saying:

“I’m overwhelmed with deep anxiety. I feel like I’m slipping into a black abyss engulfed by darkness; the weight is almost too much to bear, and I really need you to be here for me in case I lose it completely. I physically feel my body failing—sweaty, pallid, weak, nauseous, heart racing, blood pressure rising, on the verge of passing out—Please stay alert so I know I can call on you if it all becomes too much for me.”

Don’t misunderstand, though; He’s fully human, and His experience doesn’t diminish His deity.

The Psalmist prophesies this suffering of the Messiah: “My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me” (Psalm 55:4-5).

(Matthew 26:39). Luke adds: “And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:43-44).

Even after Yeshua is comforted and strengthened by the divine messenger, He is still in agony and prays more earnestly. This is literary evidence of the anxiety Yeshua continued to experience. The decision of His will to trust the Father did not relieve His physiological symptoms of panic and fear. Thus, He began to sweat so profusely that His

sweat dropped to the ground as if from a gushing head wound. Anyone who has experienced a severe panic attack will tell you that this is one of the physiological symptoms.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet is without sin” (Hebrews 4:15)

“Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation.” (Hebrews 5:7-9)

Our response when we see others suffering from fear should not be to condemn them for being fearful or to leave them alone in their hour of need. Rather, our response should be to watch with them through the dark night of the soul. Reminding them that Yeshua has experienced what they’re going through and suffers with them toward victory over fear.

Yeshua, the victorious King, is also the Suffering Messiah. We need not make a false choice between the two. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

“He comforts us in all our suffering so that we will be able to comfort those who suffer in many ways, with the comfort which we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4).



Has Anything Changed?

■ Dennis McLeod

Representative | Christian Friends of Israel NZ

The 1930s experienced a level of antisemitism throughout Europe the world had not seen for many years. As people died forces of evil caused the doors of the Church to shut against the cries of the people, as fear took over from the Word of God. What has changed during the 21st century? Antisemitism is once more on the rise within the Church. The truth of God's Word is being questioned as many are asking that age-old question, what is truth? I have been verbally attacked for supporting Israel by ex-patriate Christians, in Bethlehem, Israel, and fellow Christians here in New Zealand.

Sadly, antisemitism is not only coming from all quarters of society but also from the Church. Satan has the Church by the throat, and we are waving the white flag of surrender. The Bible has largely been removed from society. The Church is questioning the relevance of the Bible in the 21st century and is compromising its calling to suit society rather than seeking to change society to align with the unchangeable Word of God. With the coming of the Lord fast approaching it is not the time to question the Word of God, but instead to embrace it. God covenanted that Israel would once more flourish with Jewish people of all ages again sitting in their parks, enjoying life. (*Zechariah 8:4*) When you travel through Israel you can see the truth of God's Word being revealed. If the truth of God's Word is not true for Israel, then it is not true for us, and we are forever lost.

After WWII many in the Church stood with the enemies of God, helping war criminals escape to South America instead of facing up to their crimes. Instead, they put them in a position where their punishment would be much worse with no chance of forgiveness as they face the Great Judge and eternal punishment. Today the Church is doing the same. The state of Israel is being condemned for every move they make, while those who attack it, trying to wipe it from the face of the earth, are being hailed as doing God's work. I recently learned from a German gentleman, that not one church which collaborated with the Nazis, was ever prosecuted.

God gave His Son to show His love for people. It is time for people to return that love by accepting His Word as written. There are two commandments *Yeshua* emphasised—to love God with all that it entails, and to love our neighbour. *Yeshua* was asked the question “Who is our neighbour?” That question still needs to be asked today. Time does not change God, His promises, or His plans for all people on the earth, starting with Israel and the Jewish people.

Mention the name of Israel in many Church circles, causes people to be contentious. We need to stand with the purposes of God. The Church seems to have forgotten the infamous three no's, **NO peace with Israel! NO recognition of Israel! NO negotiations with Israel!** These infamous three 'noes' have only recently been relaxed as a result of the Abrahamic Accords. Today in New Zealand, we have an organisation that is calling for the hunting down of Israelis visiting our shores to 'tell' them to leave. Have we learnt nothing from history?

Churches all over the world are seeking to boycott trading with Jewish people living within the so-called West Bank. Such a boycott would damage the livelihood of the very lives they say they are trying to help, namely the Arab people. Many businesses in the West Bank employ Arabs to produce their products, with them earning over ten times more than those working for Arab industries. Plus, they receive holiday pay and retirement plans. One business of Dead Sea Products was employing over twenty people, Arabs. After the BDS people had finished with them, all the Arabs were unemployed.

History has shown when the people of God follow the world, things of God grow strangely dim. How can we



| Photo: Shutterstock

possible say we love God if we do not love our neighbour, no matter who they are or where they live? Israel is the wife of God, (*Isaiah 54:4*). If we fight against the Word of God and try to remove Israel from God's plan, are we not trying to divorce God from His wife? We know what God thinks of divorce. (*Malachi 2:16*) What God has joined let no man put asunder. (*Mark 10:9*) Are we not separating ourselves from the plans of God which are being activated by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Israel is here to stay; of course, they are not perfect, but neither are we. Israel and the Jewish people need to embrace the God of Israel as do the Arab people. The Church in many areas is turning back to the 1930s and siding with those who would see Israel destroyed. If that ever did happen where would that put our salvation? It would change the truth of God's Word, and we could never be sure of our salvation. Let us stand firm on the Word and remember God is not a man that He should lie nor son of man that He should change His mind. (*Numbers 23:19*) The 1930s antisemitism and all that is occurring now, should be confined to history, before we repeat the past.

C4I Projects Say Thank You

Projects supported by Christians for Israel have shared heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable donations. In each issue, we'll highlight their messages of appreciation, reminding us of the meaningful difference we're making together.

■ Ps Naim Khoury & Elvira

First Baptist Church in Bethlehem

Greetings to you from the City of David where our saviour and Lord Jesus Christ was born.

We want to thank you greatly for your kindness, faithfulness and generosity to support the ministry for His glory. We really appreciate your love, your sacrifice and help to make this possible. We want to thank you for the year 2023 gifts and all that you do to bless His work. We thank the Lord for your commitment to partner with us, stand by us and share His blessings as we serve the Lord.

We are thankful for your concern for us and for your

partnership with us! We appreciate all those who have a heart for us, to support the projects we have in the ministry and to stand by us as we endeavour to labour in His field doing our best to serve the Lord.

We send our deep gratitude to our friends from Australia, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands for their part in the ministry. Words are not enough to express our gratitude to you for being our friends and for uplifting us. Your generosity fills the gap toward the urgent need we have. What a blessing it is from above, for which we give thanks to the Lord.

We know and sense, that whatever you can do, it comes deeply from the heart, and it is much appreciated. This is love in action and we are very grateful to have friends like you. We thank the Lord for all those who stand by us, as we work for His kingdom. We are grateful to you for your love manifested in action.

Again, thank you, we pray that the Lord will bless all your efforts, work you do and sacrifice toward this

ministry we have in His city. We pray too, for God's blessings upon you, for your willingness to share your blessing with others in any way you can and what a testimony it is.

What a divine arrangement from above to put you in our path to stand by us and uplift us, as we face the challenge to keep this work going for His glory. He is in control and knows what's best. He is the good Shepherd who cares for His flock, and He will never fail us. His truth will shine forever, for He is the triumphant King and the anointed saviour.

We give thanks to the Lord for connecting us with Roger Van Oordt, Project Director, Christians for Israel, who introduced us to you through God's divine plan of care.

Shalom and Salam to you all, for we need His real peace in this world, as we live day by day in this difficult and challenging time. Thanks for blessing our ministry for His Kingdom. Amen



Modern Israel is Still Biblical Israel—Part 3

■ Ps Nigel Woodley

For the Protection of Zion I Speak Up |
New Zealand

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

The relevance scripture gives Israel in the New Testament

The focus of the New Testament changes from that of the Old Testament. Israel is no longer playing the main support role; her *Messiah* is. A new covenant is introduced which is not reserved exclusively for Israel, but for all who will trust in Israel's *Messiah*. Surprisingly, the majority of Israel rejects the Christ they had been waiting for, but the Gentiles flock to him as if they were now the chosen people. Adding insult to injury, the *Messiah* does not bring the expected national resurgence of a Messianic Kingdom as was hoped, but he does prophesy judgment upon that generation of Israel who failed to recognise the time of their visitation from God (*Luke 19:41-44*, *Matt. 23:36-39*).

Acknowledging the above, it is still important to keep everything in perspective. Otherwise, we could become like those who say that Israel is finished as far as a covenant partner with God is concerned. We could then mistakenly claim, as some do, that the Church is now the new Israel. So, acknowledging that the *Messiah* becomes the main actor in the New Testament and the Gentile world is offered an important covenant place with God, along with believing Israel, here follows some perspective.

...if you are a Jewish believer, then act like a Jewish believer, and if you are a Gentile believer, then don't try and pretend you are a Jewish believer.

The New Testament begins in *Matthew 1:1* with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, "This is the genealogy of Jesus the *Messiah* the son of David, the son of Abraham". From the very beginning, we are reminded that Jesus is a Jew—of the lineage of Israel. Later in his teachings, to combat those who were declaring that the Church had replaced Israel, Paul would state to Gentile believers "You do not support the root, but the root supports you" (*Romans 11:18*). The olive root Paul referred to is Israel and the covenant promises and blessings given to the Jewish people which are now shared in Christ with believing Gentiles. Noticeable in Matthew's gospel is the attention given to the fulfilment of Scripture, proving that Jesus is who

the Hebrew prophets said he would be.

More perspective: the twelve apostles of the Lamb were Jewish. The early Church began as a Jewish assembly of believers. All the writers of the New Testament were Jewish, except perhaps for Luke (who also wrote Acts). Whilst the Jewish believers were living in Jerusalem, the temple was still an important focal point for their worship and fellowship: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple" (*Acts 2:46*).

Although Paul, as a Jew, wrote to the Gentiles warning them against trying to take on Jewish rituals like circumcision and the keeping of the Law (*Galatians*), yet he himself did not forsake his 'Jewishness' or his Jewish customs. An example of this was when he was racing back to Jerusalem for the second of the three great annual Jewish biblical feasts—Pentecost (*Acts 20:16*). Another is when he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow (*Acts 18:18*). This was to follow the instructions of the Law (*Numbers 6:1-21*). He was also encouraged by the apostle James in Jerusalem to do the same there (*Acts 21:17-25*).

Paul defended Gentiles when they were being coerced by the Judaizers to take on the customs of the Jewish Law. He told them not to be enslaved by it because they had been justified through faith in Christ. Yet he defended Jewish believers who were both believing and holding to those customs. He encouraged Timothy to be circumcised because his mother was a Jewess, yet his father was a Greek. He did this to remove any hindrance to the Gospel being preached in areas where the Jewish communities knew

Timothy and his background. What is interesting about the passage in *Acts 16:1-4* is that at the same time Paul was delivering the decisions reached by the apostles in *Acts 15* to the Gentile believers, stating that they were not compelled to be circumcised nor to follow the Law of Moses, Paul was also circumcising Timothy because he was a Jew. This is not a contradiction. It is a distinction between Jewish believers' response to Jewish customs and laws and Gentile believers' response to those same issues. Yet when these Jewish customary laws began to infringe upon the liberty of the Gentile brethren, Paul would defend his Gentile brethren as he did before Peter in *Galatians 2:11-14*.

A pivotal chapter in the book of Acts is



| Photo: Unsplash

chapter 15, where Gentiles are told that they do not have to try and be like Jewish believers, and at the same time, no obligation is placed upon the Jewish believers to be like their Gentile brethren. My summation—if you are a Jewish believer, then act like a Jewish believer, and if you are a Gentile believer, then don't try and pretend you are a Jewish believer. Although in the spirit there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, nevertheless in the flesh there seems to be a distinction between what is acceptable for Jewish believers and what is permissible for Gentile brethren.

A brief overview of Israel in the New Testament

A concise outline of Israel in the New Testament follows. No elaboration on these points is given, but it offers a good outline for study:

- Jesus came as Israel's promised *Messiah*. He was born "King of the Jews" (*Matthew 2:2*).
- He came to the Land of the Jews, to "the house of Israel" (*Matthew 15:24*).
- "He came unto his own", i.e. to the Jewish people (*John 1:11*).
- Jesus promised his twelve disciples that they would eventually be with him in a restored Kingdom, overseeing the Twelve Tribes of Israel (*Matthew 19:28*).
- Jesus will judge the gentile nations on their treatment of His Jewish brethren (*Matthew 25: 31-46*).
- Jesus predicted another scattering of Israel and then their ultimate return (*Luke 21:24*).
- The fig tree in Jesus' teaching alludes to Israel: an unfruitful fig tree in *Luke 13:1-9*, a withered fig tree in *Mark 11:12-21*, a revived fig tree in *Matthew 24:32-35*.
- Jesus died as "The King of the Jews" (*Matthew 27:37*).

- The disciples' final question to Jesus before his ascension indicated that they who had sat under his teaching for three years believed in a restored kingdom to Israel—an idea Jesus did not negate (*Acts 1:6-7*).

- The founding New Testament Church was Jewish and led the Gospel ministry from Jerusalem. They had apostolic authority over the leading Gentile Church in Antioch (e.g. *Acts 11:19-30*).

- They had apostolic authority over the Samaritans who were turning to the Lord (*Acts 8:4-25*).

- Christ's second coming will not take place until the restoration "of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets" (*Acts 3:20-21*). This must include the countless Old Testament prophecies regarding a final restoration of Israel in the last days (e.g. *Jeremiah 30, 31, Hosea 3: 4-5, Ezekiel 36, 37, Joel 3:1-2*).

The twelve tribes were still distinguishable in New Testament times: Levi in *Luke 1:5*; Asher in *Luke 2:36*; Benjamin in *Romans 11:1*; the twelve tribes in *Acts 26:7* and *James 1:1*; and obviously the tribe of Judah predominant in Judea and Samaria in New Testament times.

The apostle Paul exhorted the Church not to be ignorant of Israel's historical past in *1 Corinthians 10*. He exhorted the Church not to be ignorant, or arrogant, of Israel's prophetic future in *Romans 11*. Jesus is still the Lion of the tribe of Judah (*Revelation 5:5*). The twelve gates into the New Jerusalem are named after each of the twelve tribes of Israel (*Revelation 21:12*). The foundations of the wall around the New Jerusalem are named after the twelve Jewish apostles of the Lamb (*Revelation 21:14*).

Upon reflection, the New Testament does not reject Israel's place in the Kingdom, but affirms it!



Preserving Our Past Matters More Than Ever

Jewish Lives New Zealand was born out of a deep commitment to preserving the past while embracing the present.

Around seven years ago, the trustees of the Jewish Museum of New Zealand Charitable Trust took stewardship of a remarkable resource, an online collection of carefully researched stories documenting the rich history of Jewish life in *Aotearoa*. Originally known as *The Jewish Online Museum*, this website was a treasure trove of historical insight, but it lacked a connection to the present, an evolving space where both Jewish and non-Jewish communities could engage with the contemporary realities shaping Jewish life today.

Recognising this need, the trustees reimagined the platform as Jewish Lives New Zealand (www.jewishlives.nz), a place not only to safeguard history but to spark conversation, deepen understanding, and highlight the stories that continue to shape Jewish identity in New Zealand.

Stories that must be told

The website showcases the lives of Jewish New Zealanders who have left their mark on art, philanthropy, industry, and beyond. It also offers a Jewish Heritage Walk, an app-guided tour of 21 significant Auckland locations, from the Old Jewish Cemetery on Karangahape Road to Achilles House on Customs Street. For those interested in joining a guided walk, please contact spencer@jewishlives.nz

The Jewish Museum Trust is also committed to preserving the archives of the Jewish community, ensuring future generations can access these invaluable records.

Celebrating resilience and standing against hate

The horrific events of 7 October 2023, shook the world. The brutal attack by Hamas on innocent civilians in Israel left deep scars, not only for the Israeli people but for families across the globe. Among the victims were people of many nationalities including Arab, Thai, American, British, each life senselessly stolen. In the wake of this tragedy, there has been a deeply troubling rise in antisemitism, leaving Jewish communities feeling vulnerable and afraid. Jewish Lives NZ was created, in part, to push back against this growing tide of hatred. Through stories of resilience, kindness, and achievement, we hope to foster understanding and unity in a time when they are needed most.

Events that bring us together

Jewish Lives NZ, in collaboration with other organisations, hosts events that inform and inspire. Recently, we partnered with the Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem to welcome speakers Professor Wayne Horowitz and Lilach Horowitz.

Professor Horowitz explored the ancient Jewish presence in Israel, while Lilach, a trauma counsellor, shared her experience working with families affected by the 7 October attacks. These events create space for connection, education, and remembrance.

Become a Friend of Jewish Lives

The Jewish Museum of New Zealand Charitable Trust exists to preserve and share the rich tapestry of Jewish life in *Aotearoa*, but we can't do it alone. As a registered charity, we rely on those who believe in the power of history, storytelling, and community.

To strengthen this vital work, we are setting up Friends



Princes Street Synagogue, 1885. | Photo: Te Papa Collection, Reference Burton Brothers studio C.010946.

of Jewish Lives—a special group for those who want to be more involved. As a Friend, you'll receive exclusive updates, access to select archival materials, and invitations to events where we celebrate and reflect on the Jewish experience in New Zealand.

If you'd like to be part of this journey, please contact spencer@jewishlives.nz. Together, we can ensure these stories, and the people behind them, are never forgotten.

How you can support

Your generosity helps keep Jewish Lives New Zealand thriving. The Jewish Museum of New Zealand Charitable Trust is a registered charity with donee status (CC58419), and donations can be made via the support page on Jewish Lives or through online banking: Westpac. Account Number: 03 0162 0072648 00

Because when we stop telling our stories, who will?



The Battle for History

■ Todd & Julia Vincent

ICEJ Northland

Since 7 October there has been an all-out assault to eliminate the Jewish state.

Most of us are profoundly aware of threats against Israel. Israel has been facing a war on seven fronts. As Christians we are also aware that behind the physical battles there is a spiritual battle. In *Psalm 83:2-5*, we are given an understanding as to who the battle is ultimately against.

“For behold, Your enemies make an uproar, And those who hate You have exalted themselves. They make shrewd plans against Your people, And conspire together against Your treasured ones. They have said, “Come, and let’s wipe them out as a nation, so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered.” For they have conspired together with one mind; They make a covenant against You...” NASB

In this Psalm we read that God's enemies are raging in hatred against Him. The outworking of this hatred against God, is focused against God's people, Israel. Not only do they want Israel gone, but they also want Israel's name to no longer be remembered. The physical attack is against Israel; spiritually however they are aligning themselves against God Himself.

While this Psalm relates to a group of nations aligned against the God of Israel, we can see the same spirit

displayed by many anti-Israel activists today. What is it about Israel that really gets under their skin? What fills them with such anger, such hatred? If it is the number of people who have supposedly died in the war, then why the indifference to other conflicts such as the one in the Sudan where an estimated 150,000 civilians have died since 2023?¹

What is it about the Jewish state that makes so many toxic with rage?

In our day, God is revealing what really lies in people's hearts. Recently, conservative commentator Douglas Murray said, “Antisemitism is a mirror for the failings of individuals, social structures and state systems. Tell me what you accuse the Jews of, and I'll tell you what you are guilty of.”²

The Jewish state is also in a sense a mirror reflecting the nature of people's hearts. How you reflect on Israel will mirror back something about you. God is using Israel to bring attitudes to the surface.

Israel sits at the centre of the world broadcasting that the God of Israel is faithful to His promises. He promised to bring them back to their own land; He promised to make them a nation again.

In *Jeremiah 29:11* we read “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.

God has a good plan for Israel. You are either for or against His good plan. The consequence of being against God's plan for Israel is that you are against God.

A growing number today are against God's plan for Israel. In *Psalm 83* it says, “Come, and let's wipe them out as a nation, so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered.”

You could say that calling Israel, Palestine, is an attempt to wipe them out as a nation. It is calling for the name of Israel to be remembered no more. There's a push today to strip Israel of its historic identity.

“From the river to the sea Palestine will be free” is the chant from anti-Israel activists. What they are saying is no more Israel.

The name Palestine originated with Emperor Hadrian around 135AD. Most scholars agree that Roman Emperor Hadrian changed the name to Syria-Palestina (which later became known as Palestine) as a way of erasing the Jewish connection to the land.³

But God will have the final say. The truth is, the story of Israel, is ultimately connected to His-story.

¹Disaster by the Numbers: The Crisis in Sudan—The New York Times

²Gavin Suss on LinkedIn: Douglas Murray Reveals What Hides Behind Antisemitism

³A Short History of Palestine - Christians for Israel International



Bringing Hope to a Gloomy City

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

Three years into the Russian war in Ukraine, which has already lasted longer than the German occupation during World War II, the Christians for Israel team continues to bring hope and help to Ukraine's broken-hearted Holocaust Survivors and needy elderly, whose lives were shattered a second time. Going to Nikolayev is not an easy decision to make as the city is very close to the battlefield, getting shelled daily. And yet, imagining the joy in the eyes of the lonely prevails. None of the practical supplies are nearly as important to the elderly as the sheer fact that someone comes to see them in their time of need.

Lately, our visits to the Jewish communities in Ukraine always have two parts. We have come to realise that loneliness is now the number one worst disease for the survivors, so we try to find a halfway safe location to invite all those who are able to come and feast at our table. Get the good dress out of the wardrobe, do up the hair, put the lipstick on and sit next to friends for a few hours as in the good old days, listening to a word from the rabbi and to our greetings from Christian supporters from all over the world, enjoying a little concert while indulging in a lovingly prepared meal and walking home with a small gift.

Once we mix with and bring joy to everyone who is still mobile enough to go out, we visit all those who are no longer able to walk down the steps from their fifth floor apartment without an elevator, where they spend years imprisoned in their four walls.

Who brought the flowers?

At our recent gathering at Nikolayev's historic synagogue, where we spent a happy afternoon of fellowship to the sound of violins, someone had placed a bouquet of flowers at the table by the entrance. We asked around and couldn't believe our ears. For us? From Alla? Alla the Holocaust Survivor? We placed Alla first on our list of visits for the next day.

Nikolayev used to be a prosperous city because of the famous Soviet shipyard. Now we are wondering how anyone can still live here. We drive past many houses with missing windows, sometimes entire pieces torn out of tall buildings.

Alla's tears

We sit down at Alla's kitchen table. We don't have to ask about her story—it flows automatically from her trembling lips. Alla has gone completely blind, but she can see the memories clearly in her mind's eye.

"Mom was Ukrainian, Dad was from the Karaim, the Crimean Jews. Like all the other men, he had to go to the front. We were sent to the concentration camp with Mom. They moved us from one camp to another. One day, they started deporting the young women to Germany for forced labour. The guards were just about to load them onto the trucks, when my brother saw my mother calling for us from the back of the truck.

"He came running to me: 'Alla, they're taking Mom away! Come quickly!' We ran after them, me crying in despair and screaming for my mother. A soldier got annoyed and shot at me. I had several bullets in my thigh, a bullet in my stomach and three broken ribs. So my brother carried me into some barn."

Now the two children had to fend for themselves. Tears run down Alla's cheeks as she remembers the agony.

Alone—over and over again

"We had to hide—one day in the sewers, another in cellars and attics and ruins. Mom was put on a train to Germany with the other women. In Poland, the partisans attacked the train. Mom was able to escape. She found us. How? She searched the hiding places where we had been hiding before. Mom's return was such a relief for us. Now she was able to take care of us again."

The family survived the war, but the post-war period didn't bring much comfort.

"Dad was seriously wounded at the front," Alla continues. "He was sent to a military hospital in Tashkent. He met another woman there. He never returned to us. We lived in such poverty after the



Our visit at this dark time means more to Alla than words can say. | Photos: C4I



However painful it may be to remember, Alla feels she needs to share what she went through—from her childhood to today. Alla fights back tears as she remembers seeing her mother deported for forced labour.

war. Mom had to support us on her own. And then my brother died shortly after the war, in 1947. They had taken a lot of blood from him in the concentration camp. They did that with a lot of Jewish children—blood reserves for the Wehrmacht. Then I was alone with my mother. She gave everything for us."

Even after the war, 'Jew' remained a dirty word in Alla's environment. Little has changed for her to this day. "I asked my household helper not to call me by my proper father's name—Alla Isaakovna. I changed my name to Alla Ivanovna. I don't want the neighbours to know that I have Jewish roots. There are so many people who are now suddenly jealous that the Jews are getting help, especially the Holocaust survivors. This is dangerous."

A precious crown

There is one more thing that hurts Alla—perhaps most of all. "I've been called a Jew my whole life; I've suffered so much for my Jewish roots. And I'm not considered Jewish by the Jewish community because only my father was Jewish. I don't need

any help; that's not my point. But for the orthodox community, I don't belong. That's very bitter."

All the more reason for Alla's blind, tear-filled eyes to shine as she hears how important she is to us; how important she is to God her Maker as we read these words from the scriptures to her: "You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand." (Isaiah 62:3)

"I am so moved that you are visiting me! I so much enjoyed our gathering yesterday! The violins reminded me of when I buried my mother. It made me cry. It was such a beautiful concert. Before we left the house, I said to my helper, 'Yelena, we have special guests coming. We have to welcome them properly!' That's why I bought flowers for you."

Kindly join us in supporting the many Holocaust survivors and Jewish elderly in Ukraine in the time to come.

**Will you help?
Any amount helps.**



The impact of the war can be seen everywhere in Nikolayev.

Israel's Message Well Received in Ivory Coast and Rwanda

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Former Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

“When will you come back again?” his heartfelt question echoed from both Ivory Coast and Rwanda after our previous conferences for pastors in these nations. The impact of those events had been profound, and the desire for more was clear.

Ivory Coast

After much reflection and preparation, I travelled to Ivory Coast in January, accompanied by Rev Frank Heikoop, Chairman of Christians for Israel Netherlands. Together, we hosted two impactful pastors' meetings in Bonoua and Saioua, with the latter drawing an impressive 500 attendees. We presented two key resources to the pastors: 'Why Israel?' and 'Land Without Borders' (both translated into French). 'Land Without Borders', written by theologian Johannes Gerloff, provides a detailed history of Israel's political landscape over the last 120 years, offering a compelling case that Israel is not an illegal occupier but a legitimate state with a right to its land. During our time in Abidjan, the largest city and former capital of Ivory Coast, we were honoured to meet with the Israeli ambassador. She graciously invited us to an introductory meeting and a Holocaust commemoration.



Our Israel & Christians Today newspaper is offered to the Israeli Ambassador in Ivory Coast, Mrs Rony Yedidia Clein. | Photos: C4I

Rwanda

In February, I travelled to Rwanda alongside Johannes Gerloff, a theologian, journalist, and longtime resident of Israel. With his deep understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Johannes provided a perspective rarely heard in mainstream media, captivating the Rwandan audience. In Kigali, we had the privilege of meeting all 130 pastors from the national Presbyterian Church. Together, we spent a day engaging in Bible study, sharing insights from Israel, and answering thought-provoking questions.

The board expressed strong interest in partnering with us.

Furthermore, we had the opportunity to speak with 60 students from the Protestant University of Rwanda. The university board also attended, and our discussions were both insightful and promising. The board expressed strong interest in partnering with us on future educational initiatives for their students.

Looking back, we are deeply grateful for these richly blessed and fruitful meetings in both Ivory Coast and Rwanda. The connections made, the lives impacted, and the doors opened have been truly humbling. We look forward to the next steps of our ministry in these nations.



500 people, from whom over 150 pastors, attended our conference in Saioua, in the inlands of Ivory Coast. Rev Frank Heikoop is speaking.



130 pastors of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda together in Kigali for a full day conference about Israel.



60 students of the Protestant University of Rwanda listening to our speaker Johannes Gerloff from Israel.

The Lord's Prayer

By Kees de Vreugd

Your Will Be Done

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

Most English versions translate the third supplication as "(May) Your will be done". That is also how this prayer has traditionally been interpreted in Christian interpretation. Then it almost sounds as if it depends on our obedience. It is obvious that man should be obedient to God. But there is more to this prayer than that, in my opinion.

In Hebrew and Aramaic, this prayer reads: "May it be Your will." The verb 'be' is rendered in Greek with

a verb that means both 'be done' and 'come to pass'. This is also how you can often translate the Hebrew verb. In Jewish prayers, the fixed wording would literally translate as follows: "May it be the will from before Your Countenance".

In the Psalms, we encounter man who longs to do God's will, e.g. in Psalm 40: "I desire to do Your will, My God; Your law is within my heart." The word 'will' has to do with favour and good will (Luke 2:14). God's will is explained in the psalm as God's Torah, which the psalmist cherishes deep inside. Jesus prays the same words of the Lord's Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42).

God's will must come to pass on earth as it is in heaven. The Orthodox rabbi Eliyahu Tzvi Soloveitchik in the 19th century wrote an exposition of Matthew's Gospel. He explains: "It is the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, to do only good to His creatures. Only our sins cause that we are not able to receive the good. Therefore, the prayer is: 'let Your will be'. The explanation is: let Your will be on earth as Your will that is in heaven, for there one does not sin."

The three prayers for the sanctification of the Name, God's kingship and God's will belong together. It is about the threefold manifestation of God's presence on earth as it is manifested in heaven.

Recommended Reading

The New Hamas
by Rabbi Itzhak Shapira

Review by Mandy Worby

Since 7 October 2023, Jews and Christians have expressed the belief that *Messiah* is almost here. Both recognise that the times we are living in are literally described on the pages of Scripture. For decades Christians viewed eschatology through a Western Christian lens, with Bible prophecy teachers arguing over whose interpretation is correct.

Will Islam play a role? Will the Vatican play a role? Is the Pope the false prophet? We've read that Jerusalem will be a burdensome stone the whole world contends with, and that the nations will turn their backs on the Jewish State.

I've learned over the past 15 years or so that Christendom, because of Replacement Theology, severed the importance of the Jewish authorship, mindset, customs and interpretative applications and understanding of the Bible. By doing so, we've undermined our own ability to see what Jews see.

I read *'The New Hamas'* because I've known of and heard much of Rabbi Shapira's material, but also because of the title. Hamas had just committed one of modern history's most heinous, barbarous and brutal attacks against Israel, leaving Israel devastated. Then, after the initial shock, the world blamed and condemned Israel as the villain.

We watched the entire world, even Israel's allies, turn on Israel, and betrayed her, leaving her bleeding, broken, and isolated, while demanding she reward Hamas for their devilry. But as she always does, Israel rallied.

But what of the devils in Gaza? Who are they? What is their role in these days before Messiah comes?

'The New Hamas' is unique on this topic, because of Rabbi Shapira's incredible understanding of the Jewish Scriptures, the history of his own people, and his unique interpretation and understanding that comes from his own Jewish heritage and training.

This book is different to other books on this topic, and it should be. If it was just another book on End Times saying the same things with a few little twists here and there—it would be redundant.

I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to delve more deeply into the Jewish understanding and interpretation of Scripture, as well as appreciating the historical writings of Rabbis far more knowledgeable than most Christians are.

Rabbi Shapira goes into great detail unpacking how the Bible itself appears to have predicted the 7 Oct massacre and what preceded it. Sounds shocking doesn't it? Quite frankly, it is shocking and yet, after reading it, quite obvious.

A Spirit of Anesthesia (Stuper or Slumber)



Ancient Roman Writing Instruments | Photo: Shutterstock

■ 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

"What then? What Israel was seeking, it failed to obtain; the elect, however, obtained it. But the rest were hardened." (Romans 11:7)

Those whom God chose have attained that which Israel sought but did not attain. Why? Because God acted!

In the following verses the emphasis lays exclusively on God's sovereign action. There is no talk of human responsibility in this context. The God of Israel intervenes: He hardens His chosen people. The people do not harden themselves!

The verb *'poroo'* (to harden, to become stubborn) comes from *'poros'*, which in Greek is used to define a marble-like limestone. God turns his people 'hard like stone' and thus 'emotionless', 'unreceptive' and 'dull' toward all spiritual moves or speaking of God.

Even if it wanted to, Israel would not be able to react, just as a lifeless stone cannot react.

As it is written, *"The [one, true] God has given them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes to not see, and ears to not hear to this very day." (Romans 11:7-8)*

God has given his people a *'pneuma katanyxeos'*, a 'spirit of anesthesia'.

Luther had originally translated this as an 'embittered spirit'. The King James Bible uses 'the spirit of slumber'. This is the only appearance of the word

'katanyxis' in the New Testament. The *Septuagint*, the ancient Jewish translation of the Old Testament into Greek, uses the word *'katanyxis'* in the same context in *Psalms 60:3*. There, a 'wine of astonishment' or 'wine that makes us stagger' (*oinon katanyxeos*) is mentioned.

The noun *'katanyxis'* originates from the verb *'katanysein'*, which means 'to prick', 'to cause severe pain', 'to torment', but also 'to cause deep sorrow'.

This verb also occurs only once in the New Testament. When Peter had come to an end of his sermon on Pentecost in Jerusalem, it was said about those who had listened to him: *"When they heard this, they were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37)*. The move of the Holy Spirit deeply 'pricked' the hearts of Peter's listeners and caused the desperate outcry: *"Brothers, what shall we do?!"* To which Peter responded, *"Repent, be baptised every one of you in the name of Yeshua, the Messiah, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*.

To help understand the 'spirit of slumber' that Paul is referring to, it is important to note that the 'pricking' causes a reaction which, in the end, leads to salvation. On the first Pentecost after the resurrection three thousand souls were added to the community of believers in *Messiah* in Jerusalem (*Acts 2:41*).

In addition, besides the Greek text of the New Testament, we have the original Hebrew wording of the Old Testament, which talks of a *'ruah tardema'* to explain the *'pneuma katanyxeos'*. Paul refers to the prophet

Isaiah who had written: *"Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind; be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink; for the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep (ruach tardema). He has clogged your eyes, the prophets, and your heads, the seers, He has covered."*

Literally translated, *'ruah tardema'* is a 'spirit of deep sleep', a 'numb spirit' or a 'spirit of paralysis'. In most cases in Scripture, this 'coma' is a kind of 'anesthesia' administered by God in order for Him to cause an event to happen that is according to His plan. Thus, 'a deep sleep from the Lord' fell upon Saul and his men so that David was able to enter Saul's camp and take *"the spear and the water jug near Saul's head" (1 Samuel 26:12)*.

Initially, in *Romans 11*, Paul only states the fact that Israel has been hardened. The Jewish people are numb and unreceptive to what their God does. In another context, Paul wrote: *"Their minds were hardened, for to this very day, that same veil remains upon the reading of the old covenant. It will only be uncovered, when it is taken away in Messiah. But up to this present day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:14-15)*.

Israel's hardening with regard to her Messiah is a fact. In his choice of words, however, Paul indicates that, on the one hand, this blindness is caused and desired by God, and on the other, that it has a deeper meaning, which is founded in God's plan of salvation for all of creation.

Israel at War: An Assessment

■ Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

The invasion by Hamas on 7 October 2023 was Day One of the current war. But we must remember that this was not the ‘beginning of the war’. It is the continuation of a conflict that started from time immemorial. Did it start in 2023? As of 7 October, Israel and Hamas had agreed to a ceasefire, which Hamas broke. But by its very nature, a ceasefire means only a pause in fighting. So when did the war start? 2023? 1987 (when Hamas was created)? 1967? 1948? Or did it start in the Biblical period between Israel and Amalek? The main point is that 7 October was a re-starting—not the start—of the current conflict.

What is the scorecard? Israel is fighting a multi-front, multi-dimensional conflict. In some areas, there have been stunning, impressive victories, while in others, the threat remains. Let us assess each battle front.

Gaza

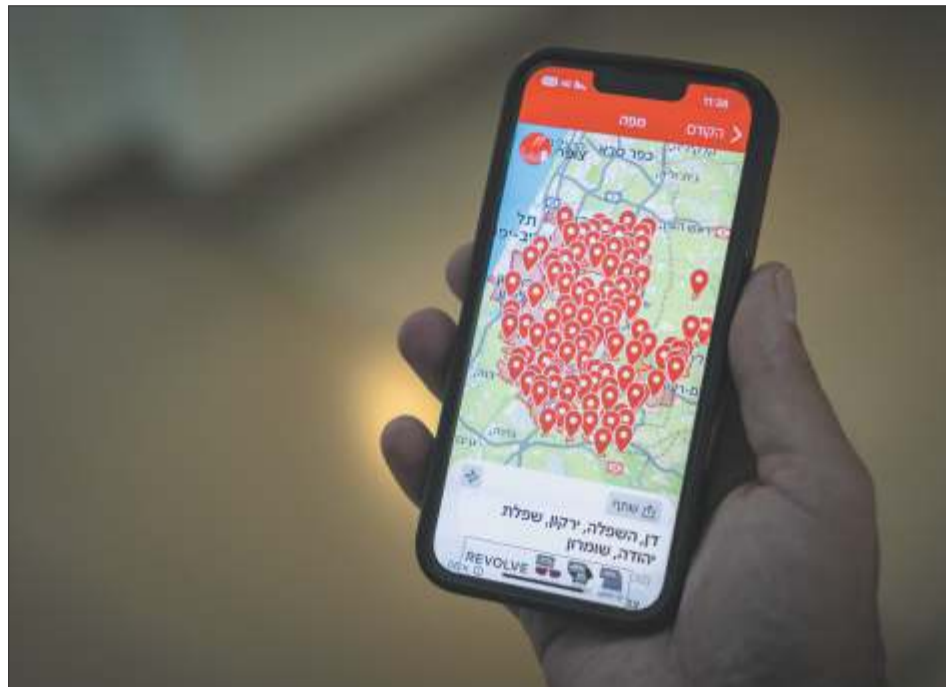
After ruining the celebratory *Simchat Torah* (Rejoicing in the Law) on the black *Sabbath*, Hamas went downhill. Israel pummeled them in Gaza City. The IDF then entered to Rafah and Khan Yunis in the South, despite international opposition. Hamas’ leadership has been decimated, infrastructure damaged, and terror tunnels destroyed. Its one remaining weapon is the Israeli hostages. In exchange for their release, Hamas is demanding the freedom of hundreds of Palestinians in Israeli prisons, some of them convicted of murdering Israelis.

Hamas feels let down by its benefactor Iran and proxy allies such as Hezbollah who had not been as forthcoming with military assistance as they hoped. Apparently neither Iran nor Hezbollah knew in advance about Hamas’ 7 October surprise and were caught off-guard when the war started.

Lebanon

Israel and the Lebanese army are not at war. It is the Shiite militia Hezbollah that actively opposes the Jewish state. Of all of Israel’s enemies, Hezbollah was considered the most formidable. It has discipline, leadership, money and is well-armed with tens of thousands of missiles aimed at Israel. Their involvement in the Hamas-initiated war was meant to create a distraction to Israel’s war effort.

During the early part of the war, there were daily exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah along the border, precipitating the removal of 65,000 Israeli citizens from their homes in the



A Home Front Command app alerting of incoming rockets. | Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90

area. Their dislocation lasted for many months.

A turning point was the tragic murder of twelve *Druze* schoolchildren in a Golan playground at Majdal Shams by a Hezbollah rocket. Israel declared war on Hezbollah’s leadership, including its head, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. He and his successors were assassinated, just like Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar. Also, Israel succeeded in destroying most of Hezbollah’s supply of missiles. Israel’s greatest neighbouring foe had all but raised the white flag.

Syria

Officially, Syria is an enemy of Israel, but there have been no wars between them since 1973. Its border with the Jewish state was quiet until the Syrian civil war started in 2011. That conflict, which morphed into a regional war with a lot of international meddling, ended in December 2024, when the rule of Bashar al Assad was overthrown by HTS, supported by Turkey and associated with al-Qaeda and ISIS (though leader Ahmad al-Sharaa disavowed these connections). HTS’s victory means the weapon supply lines from Iran to Hezbollah are severed—which is good for Israel. But HTS’s commitment to Shariah law in Syria could mean the rumblings of a potential new opponent to the Jewish state.

Yemen

The Houthi Shiite rebels, whose patron is Iran, are new to the anti-Israel alliance. They have managed to breach Israeli airspace with their drones and long-range missiles. This means that more than once, Israeli civilians were sent scurrying to their underground bunkers. Remember, Yemen is 1,411 miles or 2,271 kilometres from Israel.

The Houthis have also successfully hindered international shipping in the Red Sea.

Israel’s response has been the bombing of Yemeni ports, which have received Iranian weapons. However, the sophistication of their weaponry may prove to be a future challenge for Israel.

Iran

Of all Israel’s enemies, Iran stands out the most. Its incendiary rhetoric about the destruction of the ‘Zionist entity’, its support for terror groups and militia, and its attempts to undermine Israel and the Arab states make it a destabilising influence in the region. Yet it has suffered some major defeats: the crushing of its proxies Hamas and Hezbollah, the toppling of its Syrian ally Bashar al-Assad, and the failure of its two massive drone and missile attacks against Israel without causing much damage. Israel assassinated Ismail Haniyeh right under Iran’s nose in Tehran. Israel’s fiery response to the Iranian barrage was to bomb it—with impunity. Iran’s vaunted ‘Shiite crescent’ from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea is in tatters. Iran has been weakened because of this war, but that could also make the nuclear-ambitious regime more dangerous.

What’s Next for Israel?

While undoubtedly, Israel has won some impressive victories, its main war goals have yet to be reached: the removal from power in Gaza of Hamas and the release of all Israeli hostages. So the war continues, even with, or especially because of a ceasefire. And could Israel be quietly planning an attack on its greatest nemesis, Iran with the approval of the United States? Watch this space.

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Christians Should Celebrate *Purim* with the Jewish People

Not only was Esther written and canonised within *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit), but the establishment of *Purim* on the Jewish calendar is also done by the work of the *Ruach HaKodesh*.

Esther, for all intents and purposes, should not be in the Bible. It’s a story that takes place outside of Israel after giving of *Torah* at Sinai, between the First and Second Temple period, and the book does not contain God’s name in it.

If I was on the Bible Canonisation Committee Board, I wouldn’t dare put Esther into the Hebrew Bible. The *Ruach HaKodesh* ensured that Esther was in the Hebrew Bible.

At first glance, the Book of Esther seems to be an exclusive Jewish experience and victory. It is quite astounding that Esther remained in the Christian canon. Certain Early Church Fathers and Martin Luther argued to remove Esther from the Bible. It was just too Jewish! How does one explain Esther’s canonisation in Christian Scriptures as well as being invoked by a remnant of Christian brothers and sisters to ‘stand in the gap’ for Israel (*Esther 4:14*)? The *Ruach HaKodesh!*

I humbly believe that Christians should celebrate *Purim* with the Jewish people. Although God’s hand provided the military victory, it was both Jews and non-Jews who were the divine agents to win the war.

Traditionally, *Esther 8:17* has been translated to invoke that a mass conversion to Judaism occurred—“... Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them” (NKJV).

My preferred translation is “Then many of the peoples of the land anchored their destiny with the Jewish people because the remarkable God of the Jews descended upon them.”

Due to the limited scope of this article, I cannot extrapolate the two Hebrew terms in *Esther 8:17*—*Pachad Ha’Yehudim* (traditional translation—‘fear of the Jews’) and *Mit’yi’hadim* (traditional translation—‘became Jews’) to understand how I arrived at my translation. Let’s just say that the traditional translation reflects a late Second Temple period understanding of the verse when a more formalised conversion system was in place. However, a *Esther 8:17* live-stream would show a move of God that took hold of a segment of non-Jews and they recognised Him. This non-Jewish remnant decided to defend His people without a formal conversion to Judaism.

I encourage my Christian brothers and sisters to study Esther today. It is truly a *Ruach HaKodesh* holiday.

Freed to Serve

Passover: Festival of a Twofold Liberation

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

When *Passover* is introduced in the Bible, God tells the Israelites: “On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day” (*Exodus 12:16*). Moreover, in *Deuteronomy 16*, the emphasis is specifically on this seventh day.

It is remarkable that *Passover* is the only Biblical feast in which this occurs. True, there is an eighth day marked following the *Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)*, but this day is completely separate from *Sukkot* itself, certainly in Jewish observance.

The question is: what is going on with these two days? I discussed that question with rabbi Chaim Eisen in Jerusalem. The following is a summary of our discussion.

What is taking place at the time of the exodus itself? “Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of the land of Egypt” (*Exodus 12:17*). This is what God is saying to Moses in the establishment of *Passover*. In *chapter 14*, from *verse 5* the king of Egypt is told that the people have fled, Pharaoh took six thousand chariots, and Egypt pursued the Israelites.

There is a nuance in the Hebrew text that is not evident in most English translations. The Israelites left the land of Egypt! But in all of *Exodus chapter 14*, in describing the pursuit of Israel, it is always Egypt (Hebrew: *Mitzrayim*) pursuing them, and not ‘the Egyptians’ (Hebrew: *Mitzrim*). The Bible specifically refers to that pursuit as being Egypt, not Egyptians. Merely leaving the land of Egypt is explicitly not the end goal of the exodus as God expresses it to Moses: “I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (*Exodus 3:10 and 12*).

It is precisely in this vein that we read in *Deuteronomy*: “This is the Torah Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt” (*Deuteronomy 4:44-45*). The whole goal of the exodus, ultimately, is not merely some geographical movement from the land of Egypt to someplace else, even the Holy Land. There is a prerequisite in order to enter into the land of Israel beyond merely leaving the land of Egypt. They need to leave Egypt! When you leave Egypt, you experience God’s revelation, receive His Word and receive the *Torah*. This is something of permanent significance, of everlasting consequence.

We noticed that there is an anomaly in *Deuteronomy 16*: the only holy congregation explicitly announced there, is the seventh day. Inasmuch as in *verse 1* the whole identity of the holiday was expressed as: God brought you forth out of Egypt, not the land of Egypt, the focus is not going to be on the holiday that commemorates leaving the land of Egypt. Rather, on the seventh day there is to be a solemn assembly to the Lord your God, when everything is brought together to commemorate leaving Egypt, not just the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 16 is the last iteration of the cycle of the



Ultra Orthodox Jews prepare Matza, traditional unleavened bread eaten during the 8-day Jewish holiday of Passover. | Photo: Flashgo

holidays specifically at the end of the forty years in the wilderness, as the prelude for entering into the holy land.

That is the critical bottom-line. Liberation is never only liberation from a place. Ultimately, the essence of liberation is a mental state. Therefore, the rallying cry is not just: “Let My people go”. It is always: “Send My people forth that they may serve Me.” They have a mission, and their mission is to serve God, because

servicing God means serving that which transcends all of the mundane of this world. God represents—not only, but certainly—truth, righteousness, justice, goodness. Serving God means serving these purposes, as opposed to serving some human master. Freedom is not being free to do whatever you please. It is freedom to serve! But it is a different level of service. It is connecting with God. And by this, establishing God’s kingdom on earth.

The Bible Speaks

Jeremiah 32:37-41

I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in My furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be My people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear Me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear Me, so that they will never turn away from Me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all My heart and soul.

The wonderful aspect of this promise from the Lord is that He takes care of everything. He gathers His scattered children back from all the lands where they have been dispersed. He restores them to the land and blesses them. He renews their devotion and love for Him. Through it all, God’s unwavering faithfulness to Israel is evident. Notably, the Bible only mentions once that God does something with all His heart and soul, and you can find it in this very passage— His promise to plant Israel in His land. An olive in the Galilee. | Photo: Flashgo

Short News

Israel Second in List Targeted by Cyberattacks



Israel was the number two target in the world for hackers and malicious actors in 2024 as the country's multifront war with the Hamas terror group and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon spurred a spike in cyberattacks, the annual global threat analysis report by Israeli cybersecurity company, Radware showed. With 1,550 cyberattacks, mostly from pro-Palestinian groups opposing Israel's policies in the Middle East, the Jewish nation was ranked second in the 2024 list of most targeted countries by hacktivist groups after the Ukraine, with 2,052 attacks, and before the United States in third place. Since the outbreak of the Hamas war on 7 October 2023, the intensity of cyberattacks against Israel has tripled, as Iran and its proxies, including Hezbollah, are increasingly joining hacking efforts, according to the Israel National Cyber Directorate.

| Photo: Flash90

Yad Vashem Way

A street in New York City was recently renamed Yad Vashem Way. The street is named after the well-known memorial centre in Israel for all Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem Way is on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, on 67th Street, between 3rd Avenue and 2nd Avenue, near Park East Synagogue. This is the neighbourhood where a large number of Holocaust survivors live. They emigrated to the United States after World War II. According to the head of Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan, the street sign is a powerful symbol to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

Rare Second Temple Era Coin Found

A rare Second Temple period coin was discovered in the Ancient Shiloh archeological site by Juan, a tourist from California visiting the site in the Mateh Binyamin Regional Council area. The coin was handed over to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) for professional cleaning and in-depth analysis to determine its exact date. Both sides bear markings characteristic of coins minted during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, a Hasmonean king.

Yom Hazikaron

■ Dr Ashley Crane

Secretary | Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia (MJAA)

Israel does not have an 'army' designed to attack others. Israel has a Defence Force (IDF) with the purpose of defending Israel from the annihilation that many seek against Israel. Israel was content with the League of Nations' original plan for Israel to have a homeland reflecting an area of the Davidic Kingdom. There would be one Jewish state in a sea of Muslim and Arab states.

All surrounding countries received Statehood in 1923-25; Israel's Statehood was delayed. Israel was willing to accept just 3/10ths of what was originally promised when the League of Nations bowed to Muslim pressure and created 'Jordan' (first 'two-state solution'). Israel was willing to accept the United Nations' 1947 'Partition Plan' giving her only half of the remaining 3/10ths. Israel just wanted her ancient homeland to live in peace, so half of 3/10s was better than nothing! But Israel's neighbours were never happy with any of these plans for Israel to have her own State, regardless of size.

Opposition against Jews returning to their land and the establishment of a State quickly arose, especially from the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem around 1920. There began a series of deadly terrorist attacks against Jewish towns and *Kibbutzim*, that generated the need for citizens to defend themselves. Most were not trained soldiers; many gave their lives to defend their families and communities from terrorist attacks designed to eliminate the Jewish presence and State. When the British Mandate (1920-47) forces did not protect them, Israel formed a *Haganah* 'The Defence' in 1920 to protect her citizens from the many terrorist and riot attacks over the following years. In 1948 the *Haganah* was incorporated into the Israel Defence Force (IDF).

On 14 May 1948 (5th Iyar 5708) Israel's 'Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel' was met by military attacks from all surrounding nations who did not concede Israel's right for a State. These did not accept the United Nations' vote, nor did they consider that there were many Arab States and only one Jewish State. They did not want any Jewish state or Jewish presence in the Middle East. This caused Israel's average citizen to again take up arms to defend themselves alongside the *Haganah* (IDF) in their War of Independence.

Israel's War of Independence went for over ten months, and Israel lost 6,373 lives, about 1% of her population; 4,000 were soldiers in the IDF, the rest were civilians, with 15,000 wounded. The



Soldiers practice an honour guard salute as they prepare for Israel's Memorial Day services. | Photo: Flash90

positive was the new State of Israel kept the UN's Partition Plan area, yet also gained almost 60% of the area proposed for an Arab state (that the Arabs rejected).

In the following two years memorial services were held on Israel's Independence Day to remember the lives of those fallen during the process of Israel re-establishing her ancient homeland, especially those lost during the War of Independence. Then came the move to establish a separate Day of Remembrance, where Israel could mourn the loss of lives and then celebrate their Day of Independence on another day.

In 1951 Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (also Minister of Defence) set up a 'Public Council for Soldiers' Commemoration.' They proposed a 'General Memorial Day for the Heroes of the War of Independence' to be set on 4th of Iyar, the day before Israel's Day of Independence. This is called the 'Remembrance Day for the Fallen Soldiers of the Wars of Israel and Victims of Actions of Terrorism' or *Yom HaZikaron*, 'The Day of Remembrance.'

Today, *Yom HaZikaron* remembers all those fallen fighting for the establishing and survival of the State of Israel, soldiers and civilians, and the many wounded and disabled. In 2023 it was decided to recognise non-Israeli Jewish victims of antisemitic terror attacks outside of Israel, as a way to generate solidarity with the Jewish Diaspora. Many also mourn the senseless loss of lives from those attacking Israel; as Golda Meir said, "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children." Today's remembrance includes those murdered on 7 October 2023, and fallen in the Hamas and Hezbollah war.

The Jewish day starts on the evening, and at 8pm sirens sound for one minute across the land. Everything stops and the nation stands in silence to remember, including traffic where people stand outside their cars. Places of entertainment are closed; TV and radio broadcasts take on a solemn tone. Many TV channels list the names and ranks of every soldier who died for Israel's existence, and list civilian names killed in attacks since 1851. Many wear the Red Everlasting flower (*Dam HaMaccabim*, 'Blood of the Maccabees'). Flags are at half-mast.

At 11am the following morning a two-minute siren sounds, and again all stand in silence and solidarity to remember Israel's fallen. Official memorial services are held at cemeteries where soldiers are buried; many military services are held with surviving families participating. Memorial (*Yahrzeit / Ner Neshama*) candles are lit in homes, Synagogues, and public places, and schools (students wear white and blue). Special prayers are said in Synagogues reading *Psalms 9* and *144*. An official ceremony is held at the Western Wall.

As the day comes to an end at sundown, a final ceremony is held at Mount Herzl (Jerusalem) that also marks the start of Israel's Independence Day. Israel's flags are returned to full mast and celebrations commence. Israel remembers and mourns the loss of lives to enable them to celebrate that *Am Israel Chai* (the People of Israel Lives).

Dr Ashley Crane is a leading scholar/teacher (PhD Murdoch Uni.), ministering in Australia, Asia, the USA, in congregations, conferences, and seminars. Dr Crane has been in ministry since 1979, and has led six cross-cultural congregations. Dr Crane is currently helping plant Tivvat Shalom, a Messianic Jewish congregation in East Bentleigh (Victoria). He is also the Secretary for The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia, and regularly speaks for the MJAA.

We Live in Prophetic Times

■ Benjamin Philip

Director | Hineni Soup Kitchen

As a Bible-believing and practicing Jew, I consider the current events in Israel as signs that we live in prophetic times. From that perspective I find hope, confidence and strength in the many prophecies concerning the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land, where the desert will bloom again.

However, we are being confronted with situations similar to those in Biblical times, as nations behave extremely heartlessly towards Israel. These situations could end in the possible war of Gog and Magog, a war considered in the Jewish prophecies as a final battle between Israel and the nations, as well as between good and evil.

A period of global peace will follow that war, with universal recognition of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, including the rebuilding of the Temple, and a renewed sense of Israel as God's chosen people.

Learning from biblical times

To better understand and deal with the daily events Israel is confronted with, we can often learn from similar situations in Biblical times. In the time of Moses, the Lord hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants as we can read in Exodus 10 so that they would not escape punishment for all that they had done to the Jewish people over a long period.

From *Ex. 4:21, 9:12, 9:16, 10:1* we can draw a strong comparison between Pharaoh and his servants with the modern-day nations and their allies, whose hearts have also been hardened against Israel.

Israel covers only about 22,000 square meters of the total 510,000,000 square kilometers of the earth's surface, with a population of around 9.5 million including 8 million Jews. It is confronted by the United Nations, with its 193 member states, representing about 8 billion inhabitants. Those states have often abused their power against Israel, by adopting about 140 resolutions in favor of Israel's enemies. There have been a series of unjust judgments by the UN International Court of Justice in The Hague. In short, the hearts of the United Nations member states are already so hardened that they did not even condemn the terrible murders, gruesome acts and hostage taking against Israel on 7 October 2023, but instead continue to support Israel's enemies.

Even Israel's so-called allies have regularly limited Israel in its defense and do not adequately protect the Jewish population in their own country from resurgent antisemitism.



| Photo: Shutterstock

Israel's distinct path

In Biblical times Israel was accused of acting radically differently from other nations with their pagan practices. This began with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who refused to participate in the global cultures of idolatry, including child sacrifices.

It often angered the dominant world empires and their subordinates because the Jews worshiped only one God and followed His divine principles. The difference between the Jews and other nations was so significant that the Jews were confronted with oppression, dispossession, expulsion, persecution, rape, kidnapping, murder, for thousands of years, culminating into the Holocaust.

However those same divine principles that made Israel so different throughout history, have ironically become the basis of all major religions, nations and modern ethical thinking. Therefore it is outrageous that these same nations and their allies continue to accuse Israel of immorality, apartheid, genocide, etc. Meanwhile they are witnessing the fulfillment of over 2,000-year-old Biblical prophecies declaring the return of the Jewish people to their promised land.

A return which benefits all nations looking at the important contributions that Israel now makes to the 'modern' world, through its many technological developments, inventions, innovative high-tech sector, progress in science, medicine, agriculture, energy, communication, etc.

A mixed multitude

Despite this, Israel is treated by the nations, as Pharaoh did to Israel in his days causing pain, despair and confusion among many Jewish people in Israel, and Jewish communities worldwide. A confusion fueled by the *Erev rav*, the stranger among them. We read in *Ex.*

12:38 that when the Israelites left Egypt, they were joined by a 'mixed multitude' of people called the *Erev rav*, who continued their idolatries and immoral habits despite the Sinai revelation.

The Bible teaches us that the *Erev rav* incited the multitude to idolatry and sexual immorality, the reasons why God destroyed the world of Noah with water, after which He placed His rainbow as a reminder of His promise never to destroy the world with water again.

Thus, when seeing the rainbow, people should remember God's laws of morality and justice. However, later, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into grave sexual immorality. Abraham pleaded with God for compassion, hoping to find at least ten righteous people. When he failed, God kept His promise and destroyed the cities—not with water, but with fire and brimstone. This demonstrates that there are ultimately consequences when humanity fails to live according to divine principles.

Also in the time of *Nehemiah (13:3)*, after they (Israel) heard the Law, they separated the mixed multitude (The *Erev*) from Israel. Also in *Ezra 10:11*: "Now give glory to the Lord, the God of your forefathers, and separate yourselves from the people of the land and from the foreign women"

In short, throughout history the Jewish people were to keep themselves separate from the foreigners among them. They were to identify and manifest themselves as Jews or as part of Israel. The explicit goal of the *Erev rav* has been to undermine Israel, and divine principles universally, replacing divine principles with those of modern humanism where man decides about life and death, sexual relations, and gender status. So-called morality and righteousness of man is placed above God's laws.

In addition, we learn that from Biblical times until today, the Jewish people, as they did in Egypt, settled as refugees in a host country. There they grew in number and made great contributions to the development and prosperity of their host country, while gaining power and great personal wealth. The result was often the loss of their Jewish traditions, identity, and desire to return to the Promised Land.

Settled periods were often followed by a wave of antisemitism, forcing Jewish people to do some soul searching, inspiring them consciously or unconsciously to choose as to their Jewish identity, return to the Promised Land, purpose in life, and their relationship with God.

Shared prophetic prospect

In *Isaiah. 25:7* we read: "And on this mountain He will destroy the veil that is over the face of all peoples, and the covering that is spread over all nations". Today we can already experience the synergy of Bible-believing people, Jews and Christians worldwide, who stand shoulder to shoulder in the battle between good and evil, between humanism and divine principles. Our task is to inspire our fellow man worldwide, with the divine principles of morality, justice and charity.

Despite differences in origin and divine destiny, we walk together toward a shared prophetic prospect—without Jews becoming Christians or vice versa. Together we can form a small group of Bible believers, who through charity and the practice of morality and righteousness according to God's divine principles, may become a symbolic group of ten people. In the hope that God, because of our symbolic group of ten people, will hasten the coming of the Messiah and limit the suffering of humanity.

In the last days God will remember all nations and people concerning the promise to Abraham: "Whoever blesses you I will bless, and whoever curses you I will curse." Ultimately, many will say: "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths." (*Isaiah 2:3-4*).

Zechariah 8:23 foretells a time when "ten men shall from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."

These prophecies fill me hope, courage, and strength assuring that in the end, all will be good.

Our Projects in 2024 Thank You for Your Generous Support!

Israel in need—Emergency campaign



Aid for those affected by 7 October. | Photos: C4I

Many residents of *kibbutzim* and villages in southern Israel remain in temporary housing, often in other parts of the country. Rebuilding their homes will take time, and after 17 months, the trauma is still deeply felt. Many are uncertain about their future.

In northern Israel, over 60,000 evacuees have been allowed to return, yet a significant number remain hesitant due to ongoing security concerns. Many homes have been destroyed, and vast areas of farmland and forests have been burned.

In partnership with various organisations, Christians for Israel is providing critical assistance where it is most needed, including: trauma therapy, resilience training for school children, support for elderly, educational programmes for children, aid for orphans and widows, food parcels for impoverished families and much more.

Holocaust survivors—“Comfort, comfort My people”



Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine.

For many Holocaust survivors, loneliness adds to their financial struggles. More than half still suffer from the lasting psychological effects of their childhood trauma. The horrific events of 7 October 2023, re-traumatised many, leaving them too afraid to leave their homes.

With the support of the Café Europa in Jerusalem, lonely survivors can meet weekly for coffee and companionship. For many, the Hineni soup kitchen provides their only meal of the day. We were also able to support impoverished Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine—through home visits, food assistance, and essential aid including medicine, glasses, and hearing aids. Your support brings comfort and dignity to those who have endured so much.

First Home in the Homeland—A soft landing

First Home in the Homeland provides young families



Providing a First Home in the Homeland.

with a welcoming and secure place to begin their new lives. Through this programme, they quickly connect with other families, learn Hebrew, and prepare for their future in Israel—both personally and professionally.

Aliyah—A new beginning in Israel



Assistance with Aliyah from various countries.

In 2024 we continued our support of Jewish immigration from Ukraine, Ethiopia, France and other countries. Starting a new life is never easy, which is why we also assist with the integration process in Israel. In 2024, groups teenagers from Ukraine made Aliyah to pursue their dreams and study in Israel. They are determined to complete their education and become active members of Israeli society.

SOS Ukraine—Helping those in need



Food parcels and emergency aid.

Our team in Ukraine continues to provide critical support and your support made this life-saving work possible in 2024. Our dedicated C4I team delivers food parcels to those in desperate need across the country and visits Holocaust survivors to offer comfort and assistance. For those seeking to make Aliyah, we help them to our shelter in western Ukraine and then help them cross the Moldovan border, where they are transported to the consulate and airport in Kishenov to begin their journey to Israel.

The Jaffa Institute—Giving Children Hope



Jaffa Institute, a home for children at risk.

The Jaffa Institute provides vital support for children who have been left without care because their parents can no longer provide for them. Through the Jaffa Institute, they receive not only food and education but also the warmth, guidance, and encouragement they need to build a brighter future.

ADI—Caring for children with disabilities



Help to children with disabilities.

ADI provides a nurturing home for children and young people with disabilities in Jerusalem and the Negev. Jewish, Arab, and Bedouin children receive the care, support, and opportunities they need.

Arab Christians—Support for the community



Help to Arab Christians in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

Thanks to your donations, it was possible to organise a summer camp for the children of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem. Additionally, we provided clothing, food, and small Christmas gifts to families in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

We deeply appreciate your support—every contribution brings hope!

