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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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The Principal Allied Powers of World War I at the San Remo Conference 25 April 1920. | Photo: Alamy

San Remo Centenary April 1920-April 2020

How the Zionist Vision Became International Law

■ Dr Cynthia D Wallace

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

It is widely believed that the State of Israel was born as a result of United Nations Resolution 181 of 1947 (the UN Partition Plan). The truth is that the legal rights of the Jewish people and Israel as a nation find their foundations solidly embedded in international law well before the very existence of the United Nations. This dates back to international legal instruments agreed by the Principal Allied Powers of World War I, meeting at Villa Devachan in San Remo, Italy, from 18 to 26 April 1920, as a follow-up to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.

It was at this place and time that the *historical* claim to a 'Jewish national home', as set out in the Declaration of Lord Balfour, became '*essentially legal in character*.' The transformation of a British political document into an international legal instrument was given impetus through its incorporation into the submission of the World Zionist Council to the Paris Peace talks. The issues regarding the break-up of the Ottoman Empire being too complex to resolve at the Peace Conference itself, an extension of the peace talks was arranged at San Remo for the Supreme

Council of the Principal Allied Powers (Britain, France, Italy and Japan, with the newly-appointed, non-interventionist United States as an observer). One of the primary aims of the four members of the Supreme Council — who had the power of disposition over the territories that made up the defeated Turkish Ottoman Empire — was to consider the submissions of the claimants at Paris and to deliberate and make decisions on the legal recognition of each claim.

This conference resulted in the codification of the Balfour Declaration in two binding international legal instruments, the San Remo Resolution of 24 April 1920 and the Mandate for Palestine, as unanimously adopted on 24 July 1922 by the Council of the League of Nations, whose 51 Member States represented the international community of nations at the time. The Mandate actually went *beyond* the Balfour Declaration of 1917 by adding the concept of *reconstitution* of the Jewish national home. The Mandate system had been set up under Article 22 of the Covenant of the newly formed League of Nations that had arisen out of the Paris peace process to deal with such post-war emerging territories. At San Remo, the Mandate for Palestine was entrusted to Great Britain as a

'sacred trust of civilisation', and the language of the Balfour Declaration was enshrined in both the San Remo Resolution and the League Mandate, which stand on their own as valid international legal instruments with the full force of treaty law.

The League of Nations proved largely ineffective, and with its dissolution in 1946, the provisions of all League Mandates were explicitly protected under Article 80 of the Charter of the newly formed United Nations. Accordingly, the UN General Assembly in 1947 passed Resolution 181, recommending the termination of the British Mandate and its replacement by a Jewish and an Arab State. The Resolution, *inter alia*, would have made Jerusalem a *corpus separatum* under a UN-administered 'special international regime'.

Nonetheless, as Resolution 181 represented the first official proposal of a State of Israel, the Zionists accepted the Resolution. The Arabs did not, desiring rather the whole of the territory and responding almost immediately with an armed attack against the Jewish population, thus rendering the Partition Resolution a 'dead letter'.

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Walk Through the Land



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Colophon

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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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Our Citizenship

■ Andrew Tucker
International Editor | Christians for Israel

The Coronavirus is dominating the news at the moment. Israeli PM Netanyahu has stated: “We are in the midst of a global event unlike anything else in the history of the state’s existence,” comparing the situation to the 1918 Spanish Flu, which infected some 500 million people and killed between 17 and 50 million people.

Crisis follows crisis. More and more problems are arising that are greater than our capacity to solve. On page 5, Rev Willem Glashouwer helps us to understand these developments in light of God’s prophetic plan with the world.

In Israel, a political crisis is unfolding that (many argue) threatens the character of Israel as a democracy serving all its people. The Parliament (Knesset), Executive (i.e. Prime Minister Netanyahu and his supporters) and Judiciary (High Court) are engaged in a fierce battle. Yochanan Visser (page 3) explores this further. Johannes Gerloff (page 6) discusses the additional complexities caused by the success of the anti-Zionist Arab political parties (Joint List) in the last elections.

There is little doubt that these crises are part of the ‘birth pangs’ leading to the birth of the new Kingdom – the ‘Kingdom of heaven’ - when Christ returns.

Another symptom of these birth pangs is the increasing hostility towards the Jewish State of Israel. As God continues His miraculous work of bringing His people home, the nations are faced with a choice: whether to support or oppose this modern miracle. In this edition, we reflect on the significance of the San Remo conference exactly 100 years ago. There, in the tiny Italian town, the leaders of the most powerful nations in the world at that time decided to reconstitute the Jewish homeland in Palestine. This decision was approved by the whole League of Nations, and implemented in the Mandate for Palestine - which



| Photo: Shutterstock

recognised the unique connection between the Jewish people and the land, and guaranteed the right of Jews to return to the land and ‘settle’ in it.

In this edition, international lawyer Cynthia Wallace explains the significance of the ‘San Remo Resolution’ in 1920 for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

‘Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.’ (Psalm 91)

Today, it is argued that it is illegal for Jews to live in the Old City of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Instead, a Palestinian State is to be recognised on that territory – a State that, almost by definition, will be judenrein. How is it possible that the nations of the world can reverse the decision they made only 100 years ago? Is this just politics, or is there a spiritual dimension to this? This is the subject of an article on page 12 by C4I International leaders Dr Leon Meijer and Rev Cornelis Kant.

This 40-day period before Easter is a good time for us as Christians to reflect on what is happening in the world. In these

days, we remember Jesus fasting and praying in the desert, tempted by the devil (*Luke 4:1-13*). The forty days refers back to the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert before they could enter the Promised Land. We too are in the desert, waiting the true heavenly Promised Land: the kingdom of heaven, that will come when Jesus returns. Our calling is a heavenly calling; we are to be looking for and expecting our Saviour to return, who will transform our earthy bodies into the likeness of His resurrection body (*Philippians 3:20-21*).

As a church, we are a people called out of the Gentile nations (who are not part of the ‘commonwealth of Israel’: *Ephesians 2, King James version*) - in order to become, through Jesus Christ, ‘fellow citizens with God’s people’, and thus a blessing back into our nations.

Therefore, in addition to prayers for ourselves and our nations, let us pray, especially at this time for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. May the Lord protect all who live in the land – Jew and Gentile - and use this crisis to reveal His glory in and through them as He continues to bring the Jewish people home.

‘Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.’ (*Psalm 91*)

Prayer Points

By Pieter Bénard

Israel

- New elections were held in Israel on 2 March. Pray that a new government can be formed which can effectively govern Israel. Above all, pray that the government trusts in God and knows that God watches over Israel and builds Israel.
- ‘Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings’ (*Psalm 17:8*). Following the release of Trump’s peace plan, there has been unrest in Israel. There have already been several attacks by Palestinian terrorists. Pray for peace and protection for Israel.
- Pray for the Arab Christians in Israel. They are facing all kinds of challenges. Pray that the Arab Christians will be a blessing to the people around them and that they may be encouraged in their faith.
- ‘He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. He provides rain for the earth; he sends water to the countryside’ (*Job 5:9-10*). Give thanks for all the rain that has already fallen in Israel this winter. It was quite dry in the fall, but water levels have now mostly been replenished by the winter rains.

Israel & the Nations

- Israel has for many years generously welcomed home Jewish people from around the world. There are many

elderly and vulnerable olim who have ‘come home’ only to face the current coronavirus crisis. Let us pray for the protection of these vulnerable people and for Israel who have brought so many blessings to the world.

- Trump’s peace plan contains a number of favourable provisions for Israel. For instance, Jerusalem is to be the undivided capital of Israel. As was to be expected, this has been strongly criticised by mainly Islamic countries, but also by European countries. The Palestinians immediately rejected the peace plan right away. Pray for peace for Jerusalem.

Christians for Israel

- ‘Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone’ (*Colossians 4:6*). Pray for all the speakers of Christians for Israel. That they can convey the message of God’s faithfulness to Israel to many and that people will understand God’s plans and purposes with Israel and the Jewish people.
- Much of the work of Christians for Israel is done through the internet. Pray for protection against cyber-attacks, and pray that there will be no technical problems.

For daily Prayer Points, go to our website www.c4israel.org

Short News

Ancient Roman Square Reopens



A square from the Roman era, located beneath today's Damascus Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem, was recently reopened. The Old City is sometimes like a layer cake, and each layer shows different periods of history. This place underneath the Damascus Gate is 2,000 years old; you can still see the bases of the arches that were once here and Roman inscriptions. The Ottomans built today's Damascus Gate in the 16th century. | Photo: Flash90

Al Jazeera: Israel Successful Project

You wouldn't expect it, but an Arab television host of Al Jazeera called Israel the most successful project in the 20th and 21st century. Faisal al-Qassem also tweeted: "All of the Arabs' projects, especially that of Arab nationalism, failed. So... before you use the term 'Zionist' as a curse, you must first come somewhat closer to what Zionism has accomplished and then we will talk."

Drinking Water in Gaza



Palestinians in Gaza tap drinking water from a machine developed by the Israeli company Watergen. The device can condense water from the air with the aid of solar energy and convert it into drinking water. Each day the machine can produce some eight hundred litres of water. Gaza is coping with a drinking-water problem because the underground water has been pumped too intensively in the past few years, and now it is reported that there is salinisation of the underground water. In association with some Israeli and Palestinian organisations, Watergen supplied one of its machines that was installed in the Abasan Al-Kabira district. | Photo: Damour For Community Development

Solving Eye-Problems

Recovery from a damaged or infected cornea is often quite difficult, and transplantation can be required. An Israeli invention has made it possible to be donor-independent. By implementing an instrument that looks like a contact lens, the swelling in the eye can be reduced, improving visibility.



Israelis count the remaining ballots of Israelis under home quarantine after returning from Coronavirus infected zones. | Photo: Flash90

Political Stalemate in Israel Continues After Third Election

■ Yochanan Visser

Christians for Israel Correspondent | Israel

The political stalemate in Israel continues unabated after the latest election which took place on 2 March despite an unprecedented crisis caused by the coronavirus that has sent the country into lockdown.

After the official election results were published, no political bloc appeared to be able to form a majority government except for the centre-left bloc that suddenly opened up to the idea of establishing a minority government with outside support from the Joint Arab List that won a record 15 seats in the new Knesset.

Blue and White, which lost the election to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party by a margin of three seats, decided to break an election promise that it would form a Jewish or Zionist coalition and, instead, opened negotiations with the Arab parties.

This happened after Blue and White leader, Benny Gantz, quickly gave in to all the demands of Yisrael Beiteinu leader, Avigdor Liberman, who demanded all sorts of legislation that would effectively end the delicate status quo in relations between the religious sector and the state of Israel.

The status quo has existed since the founding of the State of Israel in May 1948, but that did not prevent Blue and White from reaching a deal that would enlist Yisrael Beiteinu, a right-wing party, into Gantz's minority coalition and promising Liberman to introduce legislation to draft all ultra-orthodox yeshiva students into the IDF.

The Joint Arab List is a merger of four anti-Zionist parties which often behave like Israel's enemy and have political views similar to the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Likud calls the members of the Joint List 'terror supporters'. A look at the political platform of the Arab coalition shows that the party (Likud), that won the latest election with 36 mandates, is right.

The Joint Arab List want a peace process with the Palestinian Arabs that must be based on the so-called Two-State-Solution and what the Arabs call the 1967 borders, the indefensible 1948 armistice lines.

Jerusalem must be re-divided, and the eastern part of the city should become the capital of a Palestinian state if the Joint Arab List has its way.

If nothing changes soon, Israel could be heading to a fourth election...

Israel must also annul the so-called Nation-State law, that defined Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, according to the Arab parties.

Israel must also announce the annulment of the Kaminitz Law, a 2017 amendment to the Planning and Building Law, which was aimed at strengthening 'enforcement and penalisation of planning and building offences.'

The amendment of the law was meant to end rampant illegal building in the Israeli Arab sector, but the Joint List claims the law is discriminatory.

Blue and White will have to break another pre-election promise, namely applying sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, if it wants the Arab parties' support for Gantz's government from the outside.

The Arab parties also demand an end to the 'occupation of all Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories captured in 1967' and also demand Israel 'uproot all the settlements and the racist partition fence' a reference to the security fence Israel built to stop the wave of suicide bombings at the beginning of this century.

Israel must also free all 'political prisoners' meaning Palestinian terrorists who are serving sentences in Israeli jails.

The Joint List calls Palestinian terror a 'struggle for freedom' and rejects US President Trump's new plan for resolving

the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As for Gaza, the Joint List demands Israel ends the non-existent land blockade of the Hamas-run enclave, and also demands Israel stop reacting with military retaliation to terror emanating from the Gaza Strip.

It is those virulent anti-Israel views that caused Tzvi Hauser and Yoaz Hendel, two Blue and White MK's, to voice their opposition against the idea of a minority coalition with Arab support.

Hauser and Hendel later got support from Orly Levy-Abecassis, the leader of the Gesher faction, in the left-wing merger with Labor and Meretz.

Levy Abecassis says she is no longer bound to cooperate with the far-left Meretz party and claims that Labor leader, Amir Peretz, forced this cooperation upon her.

Without the three rebel MK's, Gantz would not be able to form a coalition since the other (right-wing) parties in the new Knesset are in favour of forming a Netanyahu-led government.

Political leaders, including Liberman and Netanyahu, then started to call for setting aside political and personal differences in order to form a national unity - or a national emergency government after which Likud and the Blue and White negotiation teams met several times and even reached some understanding about a rotation of the Premiership. Two Blue and White leaders Moshe 'Boogie Ya'alon, a former IDF Chief of Staff and Defense Minister, as well as Yair Lapid a former TV-host, however, weren't able to overcome their hatred for Netanyahu. They said that their number one priority remains dethroning Netanyahu, not the coronavirus or the political crisis. As things stand now the negotiations about a unity - or emergency government are stuck, and if nothing changes soon, Israel could be heading to a fourth election that is going to strengthen Likud even further according to the latest polls. Gantz will now have to decide if he will be the true leader of the Blue and Whites and stand up against Ya'alon and Lapid in order to save Israel from a new disaster.



Palestinians protest against the US Middle East peace plan, in Gaza City on 18 February 2020. | Photo: Flash90

Actions Speak Louder than Words

■ Dr Emilie Noteboom

Director of Outreach, European Coalition for Israel

There is a thought-provoking parable recorded in *Matthew 21:28-32*. It speaks of a father who asks his two sons to do work for him that day. The first answers that he will not do the work, but later changes his mind and goes to work after all. The second son answers that he will do the work, but then never does. To Jesus' question as to who of the two sons did what the father wanted, the answer is the first one. The actions of both sons, not their words, determine the essence of their response to their father's request. Actions speak louder than words.

Applying the principle that actions speak louder than words has a really straightforward way of bringing into focus what people and situations are really like. It removes the noise of rhetoric and the distraction of mere intentions.

Listening to actions more than words results in interesting conclusions when we look at Israel. Take, for example, the recent demonstrations by Arab citizens of Israel shortly after President Trump's 'Peace through Prosperity' Plan was revealed. Thousands of Arab Israelis living in what is called the Triangle took to the street to protest the Peace Plan's proposal that their communities become part of the State of Palestine. The protesting action of these Israeli Palestinians clearly contradicts rhetoric that suggests that all Palestinians clamour to live under Palestinian as opposed to Israeli rule.

Or consider the initial responses to the Peace Plan. While

leading Israeli politicians and leaders of neighbouring Arab nations were present at the unveiling of the Peace Plan in Washington DC, thus signalling their willingness to at the very least consider the plan, Palestinian leadership refused to attend altogether. Even before the content of President Trump's Peace Plan was made public, let alone any negotiations had started, the actions of Palestinian leadership spoke loud and clear that there is no interest to discuss any plan or any peace.

The Peace Plan includes a \$50 billion stimulus to build the Palestinian economy and state-infrastructure. Palestinian leadership, however, is not willing to even explore having their people benefit from such an enormous sum. Just how shocking this refusal is, is brought home by imagining the response of the Kurdish or Yazidi communities, two groups whose claims and grievances could be argued to show similarities to those of the Palestinians, if even a fraction of this mind-boggling amount were offered to them to build their respective economies and state-infrastructure. The malicious actions of Palestinian leadership towards their people speak louder than any of their supposedly good intentions.

The track record of elections, or lack thereof, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip speaks volumes as well. Whereas Israel's two million Arab citizens have been able to exercise the right to vote in general elections three times in the last year, and every four years since 1949, the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have not had free elections since 2006, and can only remember

voting once before, in 1996.

Not only the true feelings of Arab Israelis towards Israel or the true face of Palestinian leaders are demonstrated by a study of their actions over their words, so do those of Western nations, betraying a certain schizophrenia.

The European Union is a case in point. While, on the one hand, hate speech and incitement to violence are not compatible with European values, the EU has nonetheless for decades financed textbooks that expose Palestinian schoolchildren to violent depictions, hatred — especially towards Jews — and the glorification of jihad and martyrdom across all subjects. Here, too, actions speak louder than words, even if, thankfully, the EU voted in October 2018 to freeze its €15 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority until such incitement and hatred is removed from school books. Similarly, the EU has not applauded the condition made in the Trump Peace Plan that terrorist groups like Hamas and Fatah disarm and cease their aggressive and terrorist activities.

Perhaps it is easier to see the splinter in another's eye than the plank in my own. Applying the concept of 'actions speak louder than words' as a prism to bring into focus what I am really like is not easy medicine. What do my actions, divorced from the good intentions of my words, *really* say — in general, and specifically with regard to Israel? If support for Israel were made illegal, for instance, would there be enough hard evidence found to convict me? What about *you*?

San Remo Centenary April 1920–April 2020 How the Zionist Vision Became International Law *Continued from page 1*

Actually, the separation of Jerusalem from the proposed Jewish state would have been a breach of the Mandate and therefore of international law. Under the final Mandate instrument, *all but only* the territory called 'Palestine' west of the Jordan River was designated for the Jewish national home. This was reconfirmed by Churchill immediately following the British Colonial Office's Middle East Conference in Cairo in 1921, where the unilateral decision was made to 'partition Palestine' at the Jordan River, despite the Zionist claim at Paris, which clearly and unambiguously included that part of *Eretz Yisrael* on the east bank of the Jordan, historically inhabited by ancient Israeli tribes, as generally understood at San Remo.

Following the failure of Resolution 181, Britain announced to the United Nations that it would be terminating its role as Mandatory Power, and

accordingly, on 14 May 1948, evacuated the territory. The same day, David Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel, to take effect at midnight.

The following day, the armies of five surrounding Arab nations attacked the new Jewish State (the 'Arab-Israeli War'). The Arabs met defeat, though Jordan illegally occupied and afterwards annexed Judea and Samaria, renaming them the 'West Bank' (including the eastern part of Jerusalem, the historic 'Old City'), to convey the sense of contiguity with Jordan's east bank. The annexation was never recognised by any government other than that of Great Britain, Iraq and Pakistan—not even by the Arab League itself. Nonetheless, it was nearly twenty years before Israel gained full control over her legally mandated territory, in a war of self-defence (the 1967 'Six-Day War'), again involving her surrounding Arab neighbours. Israel once again prevailed, with a swift and decisive victory, at last enabling her to exercise full sovereignty over those parts of the Jewish national home that had been captured in 1948/1949 in an illegal

war of aggression.

To sum up: the primary foundations in international law for the 'legal' claim based on 'historic rights' or 'historic title' of the Jewish people in respect of Palestine remain the *Covenant of the League of Nations of 28 April 1919 (Art. 22)*, the *San Remo Resolution of 24 April 1920*, and the *Mandate for Palestine of 24 July 1922*. And despite the fulfilment in May 1948 of one of the Mandate's fundamental objectives, namely, the 'reconstituting' of the Jewish national home, ultimately as a 'self-governing' political entity — i.e., a sovereign state — the Mandate's relevant provisions remain valid and legally binding to this day.

Dr. Wallace is an international lawyer with a Ph.D. from Cambridge University. She has held various posts in academia as well as in various international agencies of the United Nations, including the top diplomatic post for an American in the UN Economic Commission for Europe, as Senior Adviser to the Executive Secretary.

She is the author of Foundations of the International Legal Rights of the Jewish People and the State of Israel and the forthcoming book: Israel in the Crosshairs: Legitimacy under Fire. (cdwallace@bluewin.ch)

Short News

Gilad Shalit Engaged



The Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was captured by Hamas in Gaza from 2006 till 2011. Almost daily there was something in the news about him because Israel unitedly demanded his release, and all kinds of diplomatic and political means were deployed to achieve it. Ultimately over one thousand Palestinian terrorists were exchanged to bring Gilad home again.

How did it go for Gilad? Israel mostly left him in peace so that he could lead a normal life. But last month his picture again showed up on social media, and many people were delighted to hear that Gilad has found a new life and is now engaged to be married. | Photo: Instagram

Israel’s Borders

Where exactly did the Israeli borders lie in Biblical times? A short while ago, in the northernmost part of Israel near Abel Beth-Maacah, an inscription was discovered on broken pots in a building from the Iron Age. A restorer studied the inscription and believes that one part is the word ‘*lebenayau*’, which means ‘property of Benayau’. The last part of the word, ‘*yahu*’, points at the God of the Israelites. If further investigations show that the inscribed pot really comes from this place and this era, it will help prove that this remote city was part of the kingdom of Israel.

Dead Sea in Bloom



It rarely happens, but when it does happen, it is extraordinary. The abundant rain of the last couple of months made the coast along the Dead Sea, usually a barren and dead landscape, bloom again. Wildflower seeds that can wait years for rain, germinated and gave colour to the otherwise barren slopes and plains. | Photo: Avner Rinot

Fire-Fighting at Night

Until now fire fighters couldn’t deploy fire-fighting aircraft at night. In order to take careful aim, these planes need to fly low, and that has not been possible during the night because of security considerations. Now, Israeli company Elbit has developed a system that enables water to be aimed at a fire accurately from high altitudes, and thus also during the night.

Why Covid-19?



People pray in enclosed areas allowing prayers of ten people in a time, at the Western Wall, in the Old City of Jerusalem, March 15, 2020. | Photo: Flash90

■ Rev Willem Glashouwer
President | Christians for Israel
International

Suddenly it hit us all: COVID -19 (coronavirus disease 2019). It disrupted our lives, crashed the economy and caused thousands of people to die around the world. Fear gripped us all. “Why did this happen?” many people asked themselves. And religious people asked themselves: is God involved in this? Does the Bible speak about these things? And actually, yes, it does.

The Bible speaks about the ‘Signs of the Times’. Jesus expects us to understand these ‘Signs of the Times’. In *Matthew 16:2-3* he compares them with the weather forecast: “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times?”

One day his friends ask Him: “Please help us to understand these ‘Signs of the Times.’” What follows is one of the longest teachings of Jesus that we have in the Bible. We find it in *Matthew 24-25*, *Mark 13* and *Luke 17 and 21*. It is about the end times. About the climax of the end times. He mentions many signs – most of them not very pleasant ones. Among them: contagious diseases.

Luke 21:11 “Then He continued by saying to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues [in Dutch translation: contagious diseases] and famines; and

there will be terrors and great signs from Heaven.”

Also, the *Book of Revelation* probably speaks about contagious diseases. In *Revelation 6:8*, we read: “When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come.’ I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death, and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

Who are these ‘wild beasts’? The pale /ashen colour ‘*chloros*’ is also translated as green, the colour of grass. The pale colour has to do with leprosy (see *Leviticus 13:49 and 14:32*). A very contagious disease indeed. And the rider on this apocalyptic horse has a name: ‘Death’, and death and the realm of the dead (Hades) follow him. The four apocalyptic horsemen ride out one after the other but also alongside each other. And these last three horsemen are given the power to afflict a quarter of the earth with death, war, hunger, pestilence, infectious diseases and the wild beasts of the earth.

War leaves a trail of destruction behind it. War is followed by hunger as its first effect, followed by infectious diseases. One can, therefore, think of these ‘wild beasts of the earth’ as microscopically tiny ‘beasts’ like germs, bacteria, viruses and other ‘living’ causes of disease - the smallest living ‘wild’ animals.

Earthquakes scourge planet earth. The statistics of the ‘killer-quakes’ – earthquakes and tsunamis that take

thousands of lives - are steeply on the rise. Weapons of mass-destruction, the so-called ‘ABC’ weapons: Atomic, Bacteriological, Chemical – are being produced even by smaller nations and are ready to be used as weapons of war. Terrorist groups are trying to get hold of them. Radical Islam is globally on the rise. Faith in a personal God is rapidly declining in the Western world. Anxiety and fear for the future are increasingly laming the lives of many, in a deadly stranglehold. Is planet earth heading for an all-devastating World War III?

The world economy is stagnating. Diminishing sources of energy, pollution of water and air, shrinking areas of fertile lands to grow crops, expanding arid regions and deserts, and the average temperature on planet earth increasingly on the rise resulting in global warming; are just some of the problems facing the world today. More and more species of animals and plants are becoming extinct. Is mankind on its way to destroy herself?

Jesus’ teaching about the Signs of the Times tells us that the situation is not getting out of His hands. We know the Kingdom is coming soon because the Jews are coming back to the Promised Land of Israel and Jerusalem, as He promised.

Although the birth pangs will be increasingly painful, the end result will be the birth of the baby. Right through baffling and bewildering end-times events, He will ultimately reach His goal: the Kingdom of peace and righteousness and the renewal of all things. Surely Jesus is coming to make all things forever new.



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Should the Arab Joint List be Included?

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

Seek, and you shall find. This is true also for those who enjoy accusing the Jewish state of Israel of racism. And the political drama that has blessed the Israeli people with three parliamentary elections within twelve months provides ammunition in abundance.

Yes, there is racism in Israeli society. This can never be excused, covered up or ‘put into perspective’ by inappropriate comparisons.

But not everything is racism that is described as such in heated political debates in Israel. A close look is crucial if one does not wish to become a victim of oriental emotions or fairy tales of the Arabian nights.

Jews and Gentiles in the Land

First, let us consider what the Bible says. Scripture paints an astonishingly nuanced picture of the Promised Land in which non-Israelites and the chosen people lived side by side and even in harmony with each other. Abraham’s calling is inconceivable without Gentiles. After all, God’s basic mission for Abraham is to be a blessing to ‘all families on the earth’ (*Genesis 12:2-3*).

Abraham exemplified this. He sets standards with his life, for example, through the close relationship with the brothers Eshkol, Mamre, and Aner in which one was willing to risk his life for the other (*Genesis 14:13,24*). Abraham knew and respected the spiritual and human authorities that he found in the land, as we can see, for example, in his relating to Melchizedek (*Genesis 14:20*). All of Israel’s ancient law, the Torah, is designed so that Israelites and Gentiles live together in the Land of Israel.

The vision of the Creator in his dealings with and through the people of Israel is a coexistence of Jews and Gentiles. Together God promises them a future. It is only one aspect that the prophet Isaiah sees in Jerusalem a ‘house of prayer for all nations’ (*Isaiah 56:7*). However, this applies to both Israelites and non-Israelites alike: only he has a future in the Land of Israel who asks for the

will of the one and only, true, living God and then also practices it (*Leviticus 18: 24-30*).

But does this require the government of the Jewish State of Israel to cooperate with those who deny its legitimacy as a nation-state of the Jewish people – and even want to dismantle it? I don’t think so.

Pro and Contra Netanyahu

In the power struggle within the Knesset, two camps face each other. On one side there are the followers Benjamin Netanyahu, who is undoubtedly not only the longest-serving head of government but also the most popular prime minister the Jewish state has ever had. Netanyahu’s admirers include quite a few Arab citizens of Israel and even Palestinians.

Netanyahu is also Israel’s most hated head of government of all times. The face of Netanyahu’s opponent is Benny Gantz.

The big winner of the March 2020 election is the Joint List of Arab parties. With 15 seats, it is the third-largest party in the 23rd Knesset.

What distinguishes the MKs of the Joint List is their decidedly anti-Israeli stance. The Joint List demands that Israel give up the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and uproot all Jewish settlers in these areas. As a condition for his support of a Gantz government, Joint List chairman Ayman Oude demands that Jews will from now on be prohibited from visiting the Temple Mount. Non-Muslims are already banned from praying there.

The Joint List demands that all ‘political prisoners’ be released, including mass murderers such as Abdullah Barghouti, who killed 67, and Abbas A-Sayed, who killed 29 Israelis. A number of statements in the programme of the Joint List cannot be understood other than to support Palestinian terror against Israel.

Ahmad Tibi, one of the most distinguished members of the Joint List, has praised the well-known terrorist Marwan Barghouti and described the state of Israel as ‘colonialist’. Tibi sees firing rockets at Israeli civilians as



Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds a press conference at the Prime Minister’s office in Jerusalem in March, 2020. | Photo: Flash90

legitimate resistance. At the same time, the Joint List demands that Israel abolishes its nuclear arsenal.

Two days after the election in a speech to his own right-wing block, Benjamin Netanyahu once again accused Gantz of wanting to form a government with the help of those who ‘do not recognise the State of Israel’ and ‘attack our soldiers’. Such people, according to Netanyahu, cannot be part of the political equation. Foreign Minister Israel Katz went on to describe the Joint List as ‘terrorists in suits’. The Joint List answered that “the Likud were losers with ties.”

Jewish MK Ofer Shelah (Blue-and-White) countered on Facebook that Netanyahu had declared war on Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. After all, the founding fathers of the Jewish state had imagined a country in which Arabs and other non-Zionists were citizens with equal rights.

Shelah is right to point out that labelling all Arabs as ‘terrorists’ or anti-Israel is wrong and unfair.

But this does not mean that the government should be compelled to allow those who seek to destroy the Jewish nation to join the government. That is not racism, just common sense.

Covid-19 from a Jewish Perspective

■ **Shmuel Aharon Brodman**
Chief Rabbi of Munich and Bavaria | Savyon Center, Israel

Everyone recognises that this period is special. After all, there is hardly any person in the world whose lives have not changed in some way because of the Covid-19 epidemic. The results of this medical crisis are still unknown, and so the fight against the virus is being waged in various forms.

Many people feel helpless. They only now begin to realise that the world is ruled by the Creator. He shows us right now that he is the true ruler of our lives.

What message does he want to teach us? We do not know the accounts of heaven. We do not know how and why we got this epidemic which is so frightening and undermines all the normalcy of the world. But one thing is clear: although the modern world is so technologically successful and scientifically soaring, the world of medicine and science is also almost helpless and we have nothing left to do now but to refer our hearts and eyes in prayer to God.

This is an opportunity to strengthen our confidence in the Creator of the world, who is sending us a clear message that everything that happens to us is in his hand. Let us also note that this is a rare opportunity: all the energies of all countries are devoted to the war against one common enemy. This has hardly happened in recent years: the whole world is united against the Covid-19. This unity has important lessons and messages.

The world can, if only there is a will, work together.

There are disagreements, but there are no differences at heart.

Beyond that, there is a clear message here that our fate is hardly in our hands. There is a supreme leader in the world who is the Almighty. So let us not trust too much in the ‘power and might of my own hand that made all this plenty for me’ because everything is in the hands of heaven.

Each community and its culture treat this issue differently. As believers, we know that whenever we have questions we must turn to our sacred teachings. As always, we find different clues.

In the Bible we find that there was an epidemic while Korach and his men were rebelling against Moshe and Aaron. The plague stopped only after Aaron offered the incense. That is why some people have adopted the custom to recite the biblical verses concerning the incense to combat Covid-19.

During the reign of King David in Jerusalem there was an epidemic in which a hundred people died. King David then enacted the law that everyone should bless God with a hundred blessings per day and thus the epidemic was stopped. Therefore some have begun to observe the 100 blessings a day programme.

Others strengthened the charity for the poor. It is also known that *Psalms 91* has the power to help against an epidemic. The great scholar Rabbi Chaim Kaniewsky from Bnei Brak encourages everyone to recite *Psalms 70* before going to sleep every evening.

As always, it is very easy to find points to correct in others, but it is much more difficult for any individual to make their own account. Everyone should think carefully about what he needs to improve in his own behavior, what he could improve. When we do this we show that we have understood the wake-up-call from God. Then God will hopefully take the virus away from us.

Rabbis all over the world call to obey all instructions of the authorities. They also called out to continue to keep the commandments alongside these instructions. The study of Torah takes place by means of a joint study without human gatherings. Also weddings are held only at private houses with the minimum amount of people present.

150 years ago the famous Rabbi Chaim Palagi lived in Turkey. He writes that in times of an epidemic there are three important rules: Be optimistic! Don’t be sad! Don’t get angry! When we do all this, please God we will be strong enough to overcome these difficult times.

I bless all of us that we should be strengthened by uniting in the love of one another, and by improving our actions in all spheres. When all of this will pass we shall be much stronger and better people, in a much better world

I take this opportunity to thank Christians for Israel for their financial support for so many years and their ongoing support and the love and brotherhood they show to the Jewish people in Israel and in the Ukraine. We appreciate and cherish your friendship.

God’s Plan for Israel Heard in Uganda



Jos van Westing meeting with Bishop Oyet.



Attendees at the Israel Conference in Kampala.

Jos van Westing
Development & Special Projects | Christians for Israel International

For the fifth year Christians for Israel Uganda, under the leadership of the Pastors Sarah, Asher and Victor invited me to teach at their annual Israel Conference for nine full days for 5 – 6 hours a day.

Again it was a great joy to see how the participants, including many pastors and church leaders (275 during the daytime, up to 600 at night and on Saturday and Sunday) absorbed the message about God’s plan for Israel, the Church and the Nations like a sponge until it dripped out

to bless their congregations in turn. For the first time, even 11 pastors from Kenya joined the conference, returning home with a heavy loaded package of knowledge.

God is at work; also in Africa! The people are hungry for the Word and the truth, casting out replacement theology and prosperity teaching.

One benefit of repeating this Israel Conference every year in January, has been to raise curiosity among other pastors and church leaders in Uganda.

Last year a bishop, overseeing 200 Pentecostal churches and founder of a private university, sent two people for three days, to see and hear what was going on here.

This year he got in contact with us, inviting two of us for an audience in his office for 15 minutes. That became an interesting and spontaneous conversation of one hour and 20 minutes. As a result we will work together in the future, organising Israel conferences for larger crowds and lectures on a university level. The meeting was so well received, that the bishop invited us the next day to teach for two hours at night as an introduction, addressing 75 quickly gathered pastors.

So, God willing, next year a big Israel conference will be organised in a central place in Kampala to learn, and to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

C4I Holds 8th Asian Conference in India



Attendees at the 8th Asia Pacific Training & Leadership Conference in India



Students from the Servanthood Bible College

Cornelis Kant
Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

Have you ever heard of Nagaland? Until a year ago I hadn’t. A pastor from Nagaland – a state in the north-eastern part of India – attended our Christians for Israel regional conference in Nepal in 2019. He was touched by the message and invited us to come to his country and organised a pastors’ conference about Israel in the city of Dimapur in Nagaland, India. Over 180 pastors attended the 3-day conference.

Rev Willem Glashouwer, Rev Conrado Lumahan, and Christians for Israel Regional Director Wilson Ng and I taught about Israel from a biblical and historical

perspective. India is a predominantly a Hindu country, but over 90% of the population is Christian in Nagaland.

Nevertheless, for most of the pastors, the message about Israel was totally new, and a real revelation. One of the church leaders, who closed the second day of the conference with a prayer, expressed his feelings in his prayer as follows: ‘Lord, I used to read the Bible, but this truth I could not understand, even though it was in the Bible. I ask you, God, to create an open mind and heart within me so that I can understand it fully’. We were all deeply impressed by this prayer. Another pastor told us: ‘It is a very challenging conference for us; it breaks my mind. I should have honestly interpreted the Bible in my ministry’.

After the conference, a pastor told us that we should come back for at least a full week of solid teaching and Bible study in order to achieve a deep and more complete understanding about Israel in our faith.

On Saturday, we were privileged to share about Israel in a Bible school. Over 180 young students attended three hours teaching about Israel. On Sunday we were all invited to preach in four different churches in Dimapur.

They were wonderful blessed days in Dimapur. We pray that the Lord will bless and guide the Nagaland pastors in the coming days.



A photo of our Australian tour group at Ein Gedi springs in the wilderness near the Dead Sea where David had his encounter with King Saul as we read in 1 Samuel 24

C4I Australia Tour to Israel

■ **Mandy Worby**
Christians for Israel Australia

We’ve just completed our latest tour to the Holy Land, and despite the coronavirus threat, it was an outrageous success. Twenty-nine of us travelling through Israel and Jordan, with a smaller contingent continuing to Greece, to walk the land of the Bible, learn about the mission of the Jewish people, and the Messiah who would come to the world through them and then the outgoing spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world.

Two really significant take-home lessons became evident from our tour: firstly, God’s Word is true! God laid out very clearly what His plans are regarding the redemption of fallen humanity, and that His plans would come to fruition through a particular people group. That people group is the Jewish people, and we learned about their beginning, their calling, their struggles, their punishments and how they’ve been a light to the nations despite their short failings over the past four millennia.

From this people, we have God’s unfailing Word, the prophets, the patriarchs, the Holy Spirit, the Messiah Himself, and His apostles who then took the Good News to the rest of the world. We are the beneficiaries of all this, blessed to be grafted into God’s family as a result.

Secondly, context and the cultural environment is essential to understanding the Word of God. We’re so used to interpreting the Word of God through the 21st century, a post-modern filter that we all too often misunderstand and therefore, misinterpret what the Bible actually says. Standing in the places where Biblical events unfolded, learning about the society at that time, and understanding the definition of words that were spoken can often lead to very different understandings. It was enlightening, to say the least.

Who would have thought that understanding Greek mythology would bring greater clarity to events detailed in the book of Acts? It’s true. The Apostles, all Jews, spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an overtly pagan and

idolatrous Gentile world, bringing the truth of monotheism to them, shining the light of God’s truth into their darkness and exposing their vain belief in gods invented in their own imaginations.

We are the beneficiaries of all this, blessed to be grafted into God’s family as a result.

In doing so, they paid with their lives. Again, we are the beneficiaries, because the Gospel has spread to the uttermost parts of the world, where we live.

Our time in Israel, Jordan and Greece were fantastic and our desire to understand the Word of God, delivered in and through the cultures of the ancient world, is more real and significant to us now than it was before we left our Aussie shores. And...we beat coronavirus every step of the way. God was so incredibly good to us.

Kiwi’s Returned Home

■ **Bryce Turner**
New Zealand Executive Director

Reaching virtually every corner of the world, all countries are facing their own struggles with the coronavirus. Strangely unifying, the virus seems to be completely blind to race, colour or creed. Mankind faces a timely reminder of its own frailty as the pandemic spreads exponentially, fast. Christians for Israel New Zealand recently came face-to-face with this on its Israel Study Tour 2020. Departing New Zealand – where, at the time, people were only just starting to learn what the virus was – the group transited overnight in Seoul, Korea, where there was no sign whatsoever of any travel warnings or restrictions. Departing the following day for Tel Aviv – again, no sign of any travel warnings or restrictions – the group excitedly looked forward to setting foot in the Holy Land.

How quickly things can change. Somewhere past half-way through the flight, the world learned of some Korean travellers who had just returned from Israel – and tested positive for the virus. Immediately the Israeli borders were closed to our aircraft. So close, but so far away! After a few hours stranded on the tarmac, our aircraft was refuelled, resupplied, and sent back to Korea. After a



Passengers aboard a Korean Air Boeing 777 were denied deplaning due to coronavirus fears. | Photo: Getty Images

brief hour in Korea, the tour group found itself on another flight back to New Zealand, tour over.

An amazing group of people, the kiwis, took the bitter disappointment in their stride. We pray that safe travel will resume soon and that we may be able to take our intrepid

explorers to reach the Holy Land in 2021 finally.

As the whole world faces isolation and quarantine – New Zealand is now in a state of emergency, full lockdown – it is a great time to make sure we are right with the only reliable, dependable thing in the whole universe; God is in control.

The Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast



Angus Buchan

The Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast (JPB) is a prayer movement initiated and chaired by the former Knesset Member Robert Ilatov and co-chaired by the former US Congresswoman Michele Bachmann. It started with the

approval of Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin, who received the founders of the movement in his residence on the Jubilee of the reunification of Jerusalem. Each year the JPB brings together government leaders and influential Christian leaders from all walks of society for a gathering in Israel’s capital city to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

JPB Director Albert Veksler is originally from Estonia. In addition to being the founding Director of the JPB movement, Veksler is also Director of Global Aliyah, an organisation helping olim from Eastern Europe come home to Israel. As the Founding CEO of JPBM Consulting, Albert writes and advises on Israeli lobbying policies and is currently enrolled as a PhD student in Public Policy at the Technological University Dublin.

Veksler: “The JPB is a global mobilisation of the Church, gathering the nations to align themselves in prayer with God’s purposes for Israel and Jerusalem. The movement was commenced in 2016, to answer God’s command and the Knesset’s call to the nations to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the prosperity of Israel.”

“With the increasing discussion and tension regarding the power and control over the city of Jerusalem, prayer for this capital of capital cities is appropriate, urgent, and, even more importantly, Biblical. Those who are aware that this stumbling block for the nations will prove to be

a cornerstone for the world, are standing up together as one to take a stand in prayer.”

The inaugural Prayer Breakfast in 2017, was attended by 570 delegates, representing 58 countries. In 2019, there were over 650 representatives attended from 64 nations.

In 2019 President Trump praised the Prayer Breakfast as an expression of ‘our greatest hope for peace.’ According to President Trump, “Jerusalem is not just the heart of three great religions, but it is now the heart of one of the most successful democracies in the world. Over the past seven decades, the Israeli people have built a country where Jews, Muslims, and Christians, and people of all faiths are free to worship according to their conscience and beliefs.”

JPB gatherings are also held in other strategic cities throughout the world. So far, JPB events have been held in London; Accra, Ghana; Singapore; Orlando, FL; Basel; San Antonio, TX; Kampala, Uganda; The Hague; Helsinki; Canberra; and Bloemfontein, South Africa. These national events help Christian and secular leaders of these countries to recognise the Biblical and historical significance of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to consider moving their embassies there.

The next JPB event in Jerusalem will take place on 2-4 June 2020.

JPB in Australia for First Time



From left: Major General Sitiveni Rabuka MP (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of the Republic of Fiji), John Kuku MP (Parliament of the Solomon Islands), Sisilia Kennedy, Rabbi Moshe Gutnick (Senior Dayan – Sydney Beth Din), Albert Veksler (Director, Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast)



Attendees at the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast which was held in Australia for the first time.

Matthew Thorn Christians for Israel Australia

Hosted by the Hon. Senator Eric Abetz, the inaugural Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast (‘JPB’) in Canberra, held on 25-26 February 2020, was a significant opportunity for a broad range of Christian leaders representing various parts of Australasia, to come together with Jewish representatives and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Over 200 people gathered in Canberra’s Old Parliament House for worship, networking, breaking bread in fellowship, and prayer. Some sessions were held in the current Parliament House.

We prayed for Jerusalem, Israel, and the Jewish People – and discussed current issues affecting Israel including Aliyah, 100 years since the San Remo Conference and its implications: anti-Zionism/anti-Semitism, innovation and trade.

The JPB was the brainchild of Robert Ilatov when he was a member of the Knesset and chairman of the Christian Allies Caucus, and Albert Veksler, an influential Christian Zionist and long-time resident in Israel – who both came

to Australia especially for the event.

The local organising committee was led by Jane O’Neill and Jamie Pryor. Attendees included numerous members of Parliament including Senator Eric Abetz, Minister Stuart Robert, Assistant Minister Zed Seselja and Julian Lesser. There were also state politicians from Queensland, NSW and Victoria. Especially welcomed were leaders from New Zealand, indigenous communities and Pacific Islands including Fiji, the Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands.

Israel’s Deputy Ambassador Ron Gerstenfeld participated on behalf of the State of Israel. The Zionist Federation of Australia was represented by Dr Ron Weiser. ZFA President Jeremy Leibler was unable to attend but sent a letter of support.

“Your outpouring of love, support and prayers over many years for Israel and the Jewish people is profoundly moving and deeply appreciated”, Mr Leibler wrote. “As you know, Israel often feels that it has few friends among the nations. It is attacked on its borders and in the UN.

“Anti-Semitism is rising around the world. Synagogues

are being attacked, and many Jews in Europe are no longer displaying outward signs of their Jewishness.

“In these times, the rock-solid support of Christian Zionists in Australia and around the world is a genuine source of comfort for Israel and its supporters. I thank you for your sincerity and friendship.”

There was a wonderful spirit of support and friendship for Israel emanating from the event. The Jewish community can derive great strength and comfort from these strong friends of Israel and the Jewish people. The JPB has been running for a couple of years in Israel and has also been held outside of Jerusalem including in London and Seoul.

The organisers describe the JPB as follows: “*The Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast Canberra gathers Christian leaders from Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific and SE Asian nations in solidarity with Jerusalem and Israel and their eternal destinies. Destinies that are founded on the covenants Hashem has made with the Land and the Jewish people. We meet in Canberra to honour the Jewish people, the nation of Israel and her eternal undivided capital Jerusalem.*”

Jewish Festivals

Pesach

Passover, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread

8 - 16 April 2020

Passover (*Hebrew: Pesach*) commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar, which is in spring in the Northern Hemisphere, and is celebrated for seven or eight days. It is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays. *Pesach begins at sundown on Wednesday 8 April 2020.*

Yom Hashoah

Holocaust Memorial Day

21 April 2020

Yom Hashoah, is observed as Israel's day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews and five million others who perished in the Holocaust as a result of the actions carried out by Nazi Germany and its accessories, and for the Jewish resistance in that period. In Israel, it is a national memorial day and public holiday. It was inaugurated on 1953, anchored by a law signed by the Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion and the President of Israel Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. It is held on the 27th of Nisan (April/May), unless the 27th would be adjacent to Shabbat, in which case the date is shifted by a day. *Yom Hashoah begins at sundown on Monday, 20 April 2020.*

Yom Hazikaron

Israeli Memorial Day

28 April 2020

Yom Hazikaron is Israel's official remembrance day, enacted into law in 1963. While Yom Hazikaron has been traditionally dedicated to fallen soldiers, commemoration has also been extended to civilian victims of terrorism. *Yom Hazikaron begins at sundown on Monday, 27 April 2020.*

Yom Ha'atzmaut

Israel Independence Day

29 April 2020

Israeli Independence Day commemorates the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948. *Yom Ha'atzmaut begins at sundown on Tuesday, 28 April 2020.*

Yom Yerushalayim

Jerusalem Day

22 May 2020

Yom Yerushalayim is an Israeli national holiday commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem and the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City in June 1967. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared Jerusalem Day a minor religious holiday to thank God for victory in the Six-Day War and for answering the 2,000-year-old prayer of 'Next Year in Jerusalem'. *Yom Yerushalayim begins at sundown on Thursday, 21 May 2020.*



Israeli soldiers salute at the graves of IDF soldiers for Yom Hazikaron. | Photo: Flash90

Sorrow Followed by Joy

■ Marie-Louise Weissenböck

Christians for Israel Austria

Yom Hazikaron is Israel's official day of remembrance for fallen soldiers of Israel and victims of terrorism. It falls exactly one week after Holocaust Remembrance Day. As casualties are very close to home in this small country, the day is extremely solemn.

Commemoration ceremonies are held across Israel and TV and radio are devoted to the commemoration of those who have fallen. Flags throughout the country are lowered to half-mast. Public transport for

those going to military cemeteries is free of charge.

Two sirens sound during the 24-hour period when people respectfully come to a standstill in honour of those who died in order to gain and preserve the freedom of the nation. It is not a public holiday but has been an official Remembrance Day since it was enacted into law in 1963.

In a way which is unique to Israel, Remembrance Day flows straight into Yom Ha'atzmaut, which commemorates the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948. As is often customary in Judaism,

Jews remember the heartbreak together with the joy.

An official ceremony is held every year on Mount Herzl, Jerusalem on the evening of Independence Day. It includes the ceremonial lighting of twelve torches, one for each of the Tribes of Israel. Many cities hold outdoor performances in city squares featuring leading Israeli singers and fireworks displays.

This year Yom Hazikaron begins on the evening of 27 April and ends on the evening of 28 April when Yom Ha'atzmaut begins. It ends on the evening of 29 April 2020.

Two Sirens

Yom Hazikaron begins at sundown (8.00pm) when a siren is sounded across the country for one minute. Everybody stops what they are doing, including cars driving on the highway, and observes the silence to show their respect and remember the fallen. The following day, a siren sounds for two minutes, at 11.00am and again the country stops to remember. Following this, memorial ceremonies take place across the country – either public or private, to remember the country's fallen. | Photo: Flash90



The Fruit of the Vine

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

In the night in which the Lord was betrayed, He took bread (*1 Corinthians 11:23*). The gospels tell that Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples that night. The Passover meal is celebrated according to a specific order (*Hebrew: seder*). Therefore, in Jewish tradition, it is also called the *seder* meal. Although the order has undergone many changes and elaborations during the centuries, the basic structure goes back to the time of the second temple. It is no surprise, then, that we find reflections of that order in

the accounts of Jesus' last supper. Most notably, the celebration is opened with a cup of wine, and another three cups of wine will follow in the course of the celebration. Matzah, unleavened bread, is broken and eaten. And the celebration concludes with a 'hymn' – in two parts: *Psalms 113* and *114* are sung before the grace after the meal and *Psalms 115-118* and *136* after the grace.

So even on the last evening before His trial, Jesus consciously and fully participated in the Jewish life of His time. Even Jesus' words to His disciples at the table hint to His Jewish practice, e.g. when He says to them: "I will not drink of this

fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." Why does He say: fruit of the vine, and not simply: wine? We find the answer in the traditional Jewish blessing over the wine: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine." Wine is the essential beverage in ancient Israel, a symbol of joy and blessing and therefore receives a special blessing.

When we celebrate the Lord's supper, we should bear this in mind. Wine and bread not only unite us with the Lord but also connect us to His people, Israel.

How is it Written in the Bible?

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

“They are not all Israel...”? (*Romans 9:6*)

When you are searching the New Testament for what it says about the position of Israel, very soon you will arrive at the *chapters 9-11* of Paul’s letter to the *Romans*. Nowhere else, is ‘Israel’ such an important theme as in those chapters. First and foremost, the first five verses of *Romans 9* are well known, and speak about the ‘privileges’ of Israel. As a matter of fact, I think that we better speak of the calling or the task of Israel here. Paul has mentioned the privilege, or ‘benefit’, of Israel already in *Romans 3:2*: “First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

Now, in ‘Israel circles’, we often tend to immediately jump from *verse 5* of *Romans 9* to *chapter 11*, the chapter that has both the metaphor of the olive tree and the expectation of the future salvation of all Israel. That is what we can get by in our Israel theology. *Verse 6* of *chapter 9*, and especially the second sentence, is a lot harder: “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.” Critics of our Israel theology immediately say: “You see? Paul is not concerned with ‘national Israel’.” From now on, ‘Israel’ in fact, means ‘those who believe in Jesus’, whether they are Jews or gentiles.”

When read in this way, however, the sentence is awkward, and the logic of Paul’s argument is distorted. For in the following verses (7-13) Paul uses precisely the genealogy of Israel to show what we have to understand by the true Israel. Israel is the nation that originates from the line Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Paul lays all emphasis on the fact that this has all to do with God’s choice and with His



| Photo: unsplash

promise, rather than the choice or the action of humans (“*the children of the flesh*”: *Ishmael and Esau*, *verse 8*). Further on, in *Romans 10*, it will appear that, though Israel has fallen short in its calling to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom that has come in Jesus to the nations, the Lord holds fast to His promise and all Israel – the twelve tribes – will be saved by the coming of the Deliverer.

How can this be? We noted that Paul started by summarising the calling of Israel. And then, somebody has an objection: “Yes, but that is past. They ignore

Jesus.” Then Paul says: “As if the word of God has failed. Definitely not!” “For – and here we have it: – are not all Israel who are descended from Israel?” We have to understand this sentence as a rhetorical question. That is possible, for the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament do not have punctuation. We have to add them ourselves. As a rhetorical question, this sentence forms a logical transition from the preceding to the next part of the argument. In that way, God’s word is affirmed. And Israel is – and remains – Israel.

Do Gentiles Have to Become Jews to be Saved? *Part 1*

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

After Pentecost, the early years of the church saw very rapid growth and the first believers were Jewish. When Peter preached the Gospel in Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost, all those who repented that day were Jews. In the Temple, the people who came to faith when they heard the preaching of the Gospel were all Jews. The community of faith (almost exclusively Jewish) continued to grow exponentially and spread, especially after persecution erupted with the murder of Stephen (*Acts 2-7*).

Eight years after Pentecost, Gentiles began believing the Gospel. Among them, was Cornelius, the centurion. When he came to faith, it took a supernatural visitation with a message to Peter, that he was no longer to regard as unclean, any object that God had now called clean. That was the purpose behind the vision he saw of a sheet, filled with unclean animals, being no longer treated as unclean. It was an allegory about Gentiles, not food. That understanding only came after he saw the vision three times, making it clear to Peter that the Gospel was for Jews and Gentiles alike. (*Acts 10*)

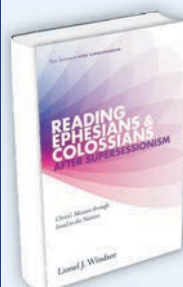
The mind set of Jewish people 2000 years ago is really important to understand. Their history is marked by repeatedly ignoring God’s commands and embracing Gentile ways, followed by judgment. The importance of remaining faithful to God’s Laws was a hard-learned lesson.

One such law was circumcision. God commanded Abraham and all the males of his line to be circumcised. Jumping forward to Moses who was circumcised as an infant, but on his returning to Egypt to confront Pharaoh, Moses had not circumcised his own son born in Midian. God almost killed him over it (*Ex 4*). Remember, God told Abraham that the males in his family were to be circumcised; no exceptions.

So it is important to understand that circumcision, the sign of God’s covenant with the Jewish people in their physical bodies, was absolutely non-negotiable. In fact, God warned His people that if a male among them wasn’t circumcised, that man would be cut from his national people because he had broken God’s covenant with them. (*Gen 17:14*) Circumcision was that serious and that non-negotiable.

Book Review

Reading Ephesians & Colossians After Supersessionism by Gerald McDermott



“Ephesians and Colossians explicitly locate themselves and their readers within the ongoing dynamic of Paul’s divinely appointed apostolic mission to preach Christ to ‘the gentiles.’” This is how Windsor introduces his recent study of these two letters of Paul. The core of the book is the connection between Paul’s mission and the relationship between Israel and the nations. There is no preaching of the gospel without taking this relationship in stock.

The book is theologically strong meat. On the other hand, it makes a pleasant read, because of the explicit treatment of passages in the letters, and through the introductions at the beginning and the short summaries at the end of every chapter.

Windsor emphasises the strong connection to the promises to Israel and the dynamic from ‘us’ (Israel) to ‘you’ (the gentile nations) through the preaching of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel is crucial to Christ’s work of reconciliation between Israel and the nations. Believers from the nations may now come ‘near’ in Christ, who is our peace and gave himself as a sacrifice.

In this way now, the nations, too, may be built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Windsor then shows that *Eph. 4-6* is, in fact, a ‘halakha for the believers from the nations’ (halakha is the instructions for the practice of life in Judaism). In this way, gentile believers give expression to their unity with the early Jewish apostolic community from which the gospel has come to the nations. That unity is fundamental, at the same time leaving much room for diversity.

Windsor applies his findings of *Ephesians* to a number of passages in the letter to the *Colossians* to give a different and consistent interpretation of texts that have often been explained in a negative sense with regard to Jews and the law of Moses, like circumcision (*2:11*) or ‘the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us’ (*2:14*).

In short, this commentary is an inspiring study, that for many will throw new light on often well-known Scriptures, pointing at new ways beyond supersessionism.

Robert Bezemer is a member of the Jules Isaac Foundation, www.julesisaacstichting.org. Lionel J. Windsor, *Reading Ephesians & Colossians after Supersessionism. Christ’s Mission through Israel to the Nations*. Wipf & Stock publ. 2017. ISBN 978-1- 4982-1906-8 (paperback). Also available as hardcover and e-book.

By Robert Bezemer



Panoramic view of Jerusalem | Photo: Shutterstock

Condemnation of Israel - A Call to Solidarity

■ Dr Leon Meijer and
Rev Cornelis Kant
Christians for Israel International

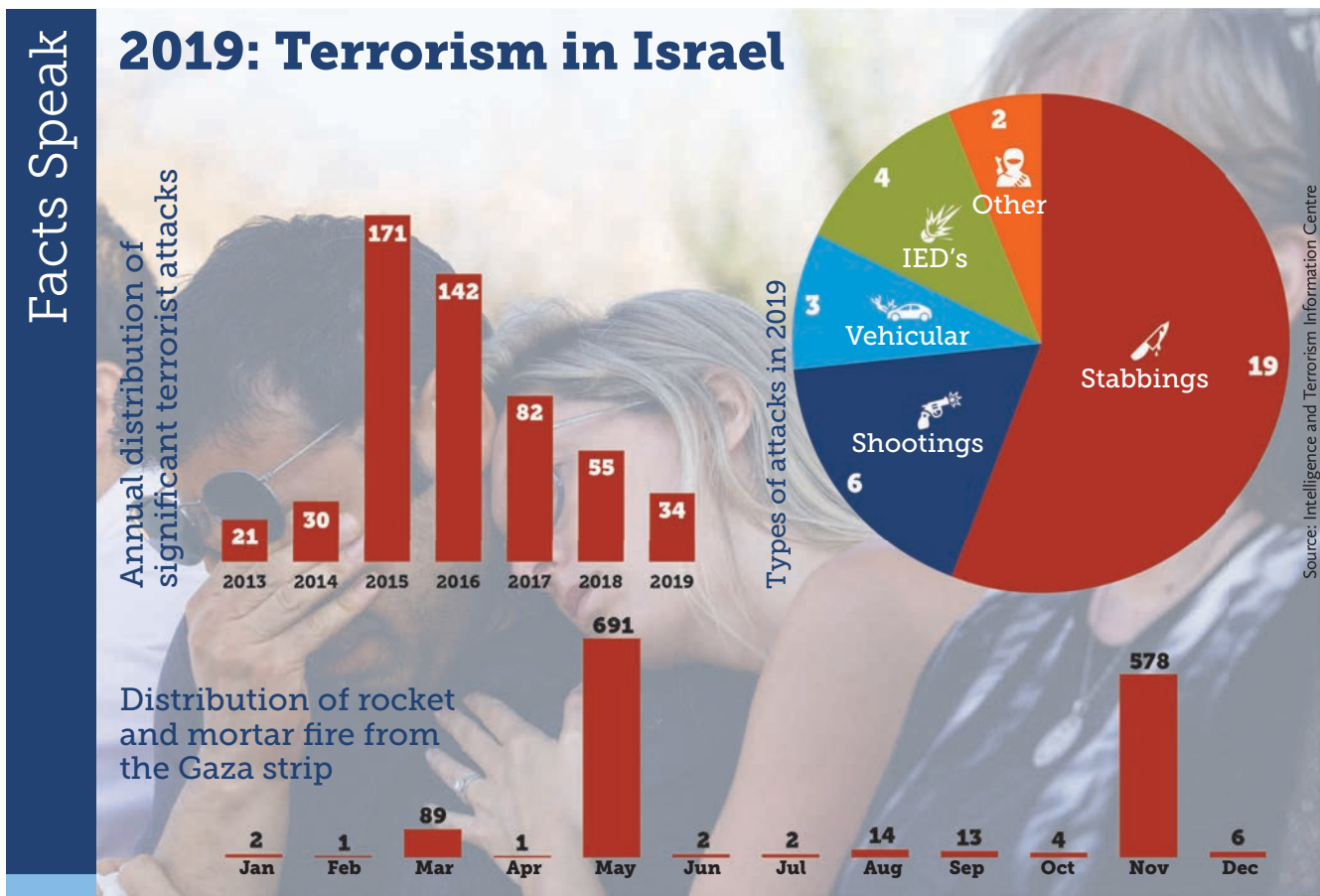
In the first decades of its existence, Israel was treated with enthusiasm and respect by both Church and State. But in recent decades, we have seen a tendency to denigrate the State of Israel, and even deny its legitimacy. A few weeks ago, Ms Bensouda, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), announced her intention to investigate the commission of war crimes by Israeli and Palestinian leaders ‘in Palestine’. In her opinion, Palestine is a ‘state’ for the purposes of the ICC Statute; ‘Palestine’ consists of the whole ‘West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza’; and there are ‘reasonable grounds to believe’ that Israeli leaders have committed war crimes by enabling settlements to be built ‘in Palestine’. The matter is currently being examined by three judges of the ICC. This means that the mere fact that Jews are allowed to live in their historic homeland is considered to be a heinous crime worthy of international condemnation and prosecution.

For decades, the United Nations institutions have become a platform where Israel has continuously been criticised and condemned. For example, in the last few years, UNESCO has effectively denied the Jews’ historical connection with the Temple Mount. While mentioning that Jerusalem and its Old City walls are holy to all three religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity), the Temple Mount is referred to in these resolutions exclusively by its Arabic name ‘Al-Haram Al-Sharif’ (meaning ‘the Noble Sanctuary’). Countless UN resolutions portray Israel solely as a perpetrator of crimes that are an obstacle to Palestinian self-determination. Much reporting about the Israel-Palestine conflict makes a caricature of Israel and even demonises this sovereign nation. The global Boycott, Divestment and Sanction campaign (BDS) has, fortunately, in some countries been recognised for what it is: anti-Semitism. The endless criticism of Israel that manifests itself as ‘anti-Zionism’, is in practice nothing less than a form of anti-Semitism. It denies Jews any place in the land that God has promised to them.

All of this completely ignores the achievements of the State of Israel, including the fact that it is the only country in the Middle East where Christians, Jews and adherents of other religions have freedom of religion and worship. At the same time, Jews in other countries, where they have been living for centuries, are increasingly being threatened and stereotyped as so often has happened in the past - with disastrous results. We see all of this as part of a process wherein, step by step, the history of Israel is ignored and the Biblical and historical connection between the Jewish people and the land, and thereby the legitimacy of the Jewish State, are denied. The very existence of the Jewish people in the land is thereby being threatened, not just by military force but also through international politics and public opinion. The State of Israel and the Jewish people are not perfect. But they are still the apple of God’s eye. In the same way, the Church is not perfect, but despite its faults, it is and remains the body of Christ.

God is faithful to His covenants with His people. He is bringing the Jewish people home to the land of their forefathers, as He promised through the prophets He would. That affects us as Christians. As the body of Christ, we are one with Jesus, who suffered as King of the Jews in Jerusalem, died and rose again for the salvation of His people Israel and the whole world. “Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!” (*Romans 9:4-5*) “As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (*Romans 11:28-29*). Israel needs our support, and we are called as the people of God to give that support. We are convinced that we cannot sit by silently while Israel and the Jewish people are being condemned and attacked. We need to be alert and to speak up in their defence. Above all, we urge you to remember the Jewish people and the State of Israel in your services of worship and in your prayers.

Dr Leon Meijer is Chairman, and Rev Cornelis Kant is Executive Director of Christians for Israel International.





| Photo: Shutterstock

Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

■ **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**
Former Chief Rabbi of England

How can anti-Zionism be the new anti-Semitism? Surely there's no connection between them? Anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews as a people, a race, an ethnic group. Anti-Zionism is an objection to a country, a nation, a state. What's the connection between them?

Anti-Semitism is a virus that mutates so that new anti-Semites can deny they are anti-Semites at all because their hate is different from the old. In the Middle Ages Jews were hated for their religion. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were hated for their race. Today they are hated for their nation-state, Israel.

What then is the connection between Jews as a people, Judaism as a religion, and Israel as a state? The connection between the Jewish people and Israel goes back long before the birth of either Christianity or Islam. Jews created a society there in the days of Joshua, a kingdom in the days of Saul, and a nation with Jerusalem as its capital in the days of King David: all this more than 3,000 years ago.

Jews are the only people who ever created a nation-state there. At all other times in the past 3,000 years, it was merely an administrative district in an empire whose centre was elsewhere: the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Alexandrian, Roman and Byzantine empires, the Crusaders of the Holy Roman Empire, the various Muslim empires such as the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Mamluks and Ottomans, and finally the British. Jews are the only people who have maintained a continuous presence in the land. They are its indigenous, original inhabitants.

The November 1947 United Nations vote to bring Israel into existence was a momentous reversal of imperialism.

It gave back to the Jewish people the home taken from them by empire after empire. Israel was the only non-artificial creation in the Middle East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The rest – among them Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Yemen – were artificial creations that hadn't been states before, which is why most of them still exist in a condition of ethnic, religious and tribal strife. Only Israel had previously existed as a nation-state.

That's the unbreakable connection between Israel and the Jewish people. The connection between Israel and Judaism is equally ancient and fundamental. It is more than just as Robert Frost said, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Read the Hebrew Bible, and you'll see immediately that it isn't about the salvation of the soul. It's about creating in the holy land a society based on the biblical ideas of justice, welfare, the sanctity of life – and caring for the stranger "because you know what it feels like to be a stranger."

Judaism began with two journeys to the land, one by Abraham and Sarah, the other by the Israelites in the days of Moses. At least half of the 613 commandments of the Bible are only applicable to the land of Israel.

And though in the centuries of exile and dispersion Jews lived in almost every land under the sun, Israel has remained a focus of their prayers and the only place where they have been able to do what every other nation takes for granted, construct their own society in the light of their own ideals.

Judaism differs from the other Abrahamic monotheisms, Christianity and Islam, in that it is the only one of the three that never created or sought to create an empire. It was the imperialism of the Roman emperor Hadrian that led him in the 2nd century to change the country's name to Palestine, one of the first, but certainly not the last, deliberate falsifications of history by those who seek to deny the Jewish people's right to their land.

There are 56 Islamic nations and 159 in which Christians form the majority.

There is and only ever has been one Jewish state, tiny and vulnerable though it is and always was.

That is why anti-Zionism, denying Jews the right to their one and only collective home by misrepresenting Judaism, is the new anti-Semitism, every bit as virulent and dangerous as the old.

Definition

Anti-Semitism is the belief or behaviour hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews. Hostility toward Jews dates to the beginning of Jewish history. From the days of the Bible until the Roman Empire, Jews were punished for their efforts to remain a separate religious group — one that refused to adopt the values and the way of life of the non-Jewish societies in which it lived. | Photo: commonwealmagazine

Biblical Names

By Kees de Vreugd

Abraham

Abraham was the first patriarch of Israel. Originally his name was Abram. He received his new name when the Lord made His covenant with him (Genesis 17). A new name indicates a new position. God has taken him into his service. As Abraham, Abram received a new task. This is how God says it: "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."

That is to say that Abraham is appointed a father. He is not a father because he has children. He will have children because he is a father. His new name expresses the essence, the function, the purpose of his life.

First and foremost, of course, is that he will be the progenitor of Israel. The apostle Paul, however, hears in Abraham's name all those who walk in the same faith, too. Abraham is, as the father of a multitude of nations, father of all who believe, who follow in his steps to serve the God of Israel.

The names Abram and Abraham have yet another special meaning. Both names originally mean: the Father exalts. God the Father exalts Abram as the father of a multitude of nations. Multitude in Hebrew is *hamon*. The 'r' is, in fact, superfluous. But rabbinic tradition understands that this indicates that originally, he was only to be the father (*chieftain*) of Aram, where he came from. But now, he will be father of all nations.

Abraham is thus the name that is connected to the covenant the Lord

makes with him. That is how he is referred to throughout the Old Testament. *Psalm 105* sings that God remembers his covenant, which He made with Abraham. This is always for Israel a ground to plead on before God. In *Nehemiah 9*, the Israelites confess their sins and appeal to God: "You gave him the name Abraham... and made a covenant with him" (verses 7-8).

Again and again, God shows mercy to Israel because of the fathers. They remain beloved for the sake of the fathers.

Short News

Thief Returned Ancient Relic Fearing End of World



Coronavirus fears has led an Israeli to return a 2,000-year-old ballista stone taken in Jerusalem 15 years ago. The man explained that the coronavirus crisis made him feel “the end of the world was near” and he wanted to clear his conscience. He explained that he had been a teen when he and some friends toured a display of ballista stones at the Jerusalem Walls National Park in the City of David. The stones were used by the Romans in fierce battles against the besieged residents of Jerusalem around 70 CE – the year of the destruction of Jerusalem. | Photo: Israel21c

Israelis Invent Colour-Blindness Contact Lenses

Two Israeli researchers report that they can correct deuteranomaly, a form of red-green colourblindness, with customisable contact lenses by incorporating ultra-thin optical devices into off-the-shelf contact lenses. Test subjects saw their colour perception improve up to a factor of 10. “Problems with distinguishing red from green interrupt simple daily routines such as deciding whether a banana is ripe,” said Karepov, from the university’s department of physical electronics at Tel Aviv University. The contact lenses use metasurfaces based on nano-metric size gold ellipses to create a customised, compact and durable way to address the deficiencies. This marks the first time tiny optical devices have successfully been fused to curved surfaces.

Magical March Migration



Every spring and autumn, half a billion birds touch down at Agamon Hula Lake in the Upper Galilee nature reserve to rest and refuel. It’s a stunning sight. At least 500 million birds of 300 different species fly across Israel twice yearly on their way to and from Africa, Europe and Asia. Birds such as common cranes are joined by many other feathered friends such as white storks, little egrets, barn swallows and black caps. | Photo: Israel21c

The Plain of Sharon



The ancient aqueduct at Ceasarea built by Herod the Great along the Mediterranean shore. | Photo: Shutterstock

Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

We continue our ‘Walk through the Land’ series (*Genesis 13:17*) with our fourth article. Our goal is to help you understand the Bible better by knowing about the land where the Bible was written and where most of the events recorded in the Bible took place. Just as learning Hebrew and Greek can give more in-depth Scriptural insight, historical geography of the holy land does the same. It will also enhance your next visit to Israel.

In our previous article, we focused on specific areas of the coastal plain, known in Hebrew as *Mishor HaHof*. The plain is divided into three distinctive parts: Philistia (south), Sharon (centre), and Acre (north). In this article, we examine the Plain of Sharon, known as *Ha-Sharon*, ‘the Sharon.’

I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys (*Song of Solomon 2:1*).

Sharon is a Biblical region, though it is only mentioned seven times in Scripture: *1 Chronicles 5:16; 27:29; Song 2:1; Isaiah 33:9; 35:2; 65:10; Acts 9:35*. Rabbinic literature refers to it more frequently.

First, Sharon, the central region of the coastal plain, begins at the Yarkon River in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area in the South to Mount Carmel in the North. Its dimensions are 90 kilometres (56 miles) by 15 kilometres (9.3 miles). Sharon is framed by Tel Aviv (south), the Samaritan hills (east), Carmel (north), and the Mediterranean (west).

For the ancient world, Sharon’s value came from being a key section of the Via Maris (called in *Isaiah 9:1* the ‘way of the sea’) or the international highway that linked Egypt/Africa with Mesopotamia and Eurasia. The same highway that brought trading caravans also made way for conquering armies. As such, the Via Maris was mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions by King Thutmose III (15th century BC). Joshua conquered Sharon’s kings (*Joshua 12:8*). Napoleon (1799) and General Edmund Allenby (1917-18) also invaded Palestine via Sharon.

When we hear the word ‘Sharon,’ it conjures up images of romance, roses, parks and gardens. The Old Testament reality was very different. It was sparsely inhabited and much neglected. Sharon is a flat alluvial plain that is trisected by three parallel North-South kurkar ridges. They prevented river water from flowing to the sea which, when backed up, could cause

swamps, especially during the rainy season. During the Roman period, outlets were cut through the ridges to give water passage to the Mediterranean. Thick ‘haunted’ oak forests called *ya’ar*, and the swamps inhibited agriculture. The Sharon plain was suitable for grazing sheep and cattle (*1 Chronicles 5:16; 27:29*). Small ports along the Sharon included Dor, Apollonia, and Strato’s Tower. The plain lacked proper freshwater, deep ports, and good roads.

Herod the Great & Caesarea

By the New Testament era, Sharon had a massive transformation: it became a capital territory. Today, it is the most densely populated region in Israel. How did all these changes come about?

Herod the Great was the key. He dredged the port at Strato’s Tower, built proper roads, and piped water through Roman Aqueducts from Mount Carmel 20 kilometres away (remnants of this aqueduct are still with us to this day). In addition, he built a magnificent city that resembled a miniature Rome itself, with a palace, theatre, hippodrome, temple, and deep water port. He named this metropolis after his patron: Caesarea-Maritima.

In one stroke, this once lonely and neglected region was transformed into a capital territory, which it remained from 6 to 639 AD. The Roman procurators, like Pilate, Felix, and Festus, had their headquarters in Caesarea. The *Book of Acts* mentions it 15 times: as the residence of Philip the evangelist, who had four prophetic virgin daughters (*Acts 21:8-9*); Cornelius the centurion also lived here and became the first official Gentile convert to the Christian faith, thanks to the preaching of Peter (*Acts 10*). In addition, Gentile Pentecost first happened in heathen Caesarea (*Acts 10:44-46*). King Herod Agrippa I, a fierce enemy of the early church, gave an oration here and was struck down by God (*Acts 12:21-23*). Paul spent over two years in prison (*24:27*) and testified to Herod Agrippa II, whom he almost persuaded to become a Christian (*Acts 26:28*). From here, Paul sailed to Rome and into history (*Acts 27*).

Eusebius (260-340 AD) the church historian became a bishop here, and during the Middle Ages, it was a prominent Crusader city.

Modern Times

Jewish settlement in Palestine in the 20th century put a particular focus on the Plain of Sharon. It’s red sandy soil, called *Hamra*, made it suitable for agriculture, particularly citrus groves. Thus the swamps were drained, and cultivation commenced in earnest, with vegetables, cotton, vineyards and poultry. Therefore, as in the days of the New Testament, the Plain of Sharon became a key region, in fact, the most densely inhabited of the entire country.

Today major cities of Sharon and Israel include parts of greater Tel Aviv, Herzliya, Netanya (the largest city in Sharon), Hadera, and Kfar Saba. ‘Resurrected Caesarea’ has become a technological park, golf course, upmarket residential area, and a renowned archaeological site with remains from the Herodian and Crusader periods.

Rose of Sharon

Back to the Bible, we look at the term ‘the rose of Sharon.’ Though not technically a rose, the term applies to several species of plants in the Hibiscus family. It is known for its tender beauty.

The phrase has been applied metaphorically to Jesus. However, in *Song of Solomon 2:1*, it is Solomon’s bride, the Shulamite woman, not the king, who is called by that name. We know in the New Testament that Jesus is the bridegroom and the Church, the bride. More accurately, it is we as believers who go from being a ‘weed’ to a ‘rose’ by our acceptance of the gospel. When this happens, *Isaiah 35:2* comes to pass: *It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.*

Rev. Kameel Majdali, PhD (Melb) is Director of Teach All Nations (tan.org.au). His MA degree is ‘Historical Geography of the Holy Land’ from the Institute of Holy Land Studies.



Swamp at HaSharon. | Photo: Flash90

Is it Okay to Cry? Letter from Jerusalem

■ **Danielle Mor**
Vice President | Israel & Global Philanthropy |
Jewish Agency for Israel

I recently wrote an update about Aliyah during the outbreak of coronavirus. I wrote with concern and yet with a feeling of strength in being part of the State of Israel - acting responsibly and wisely and with a sense of pride - in being part of The Jewish Agency for Israel, serving our country and people around the globe and continuing to welcome Aliyah.

Indeed the past few weeks have passed in a whirlwind: children at home with no school, new instructions on further isolation coming out almost daily and all the while, one compelling Aliyah story after another. From a single mother arriving on a late-night flight from Ukraine with her two-year-old daughter, all alone; to the family from Brazil, with the six-year-old violin prodigy already proudly learning to play Hatikva, Israel's national anthem, on his violin; to the elderly mother, a cancer patient, arriving recently from Ukraine with her son, desperate to receive lifesaving treatment in Israel, which, despite the

coronavirus, Israel's health ministry has promised she will receive. She made Aliyah at the last minute; the 'green light' received 19 March - the day of her arrival, all in cooperation with Rabbi Mendel Cohen from Mariupol, Christians for Israel Ukraine, and the Jewish Agency. What a beautiful cooperation in saving lives!

All are being warmly welcomed in our Aliyah centres (First Home in the Homeland). From north to south, they are being given shelter in the storm: a safe, fully equipped apartment, in which they will spend the next 14 days of quarantine.

This entire process is led by dedicated people; angels that I am so proud to call my colleagues.

These Aliyah workers leave their own children at home and do everything from preparing the needed paperwork to ensure that the bank account and health insurance are provided, to furnishing the apartment, shopping for food in the supermarket and fully stocking the apartment - they think about every small detail: Is there wifi in the apartment? Are the blankets warm enough? What toys will the two-year-old child play with?

For me, it is now Thursday evening, the 'end' of my work week. After hearing all these stories, talking to the olim, encouraging my colleagues and working on ensuring that they have the financial resources they need at this time; I simply feel like crying.

Is that okay, I wonder? There is sadness over the trials and tribulations faced by the olim, by my colleagues, by all of us; but there is also joy, for simple reason, and without an ounce of cynicism, for the privilege of being in this place, at this time.

At this time, I wish to thank you, our great friends, that despite your own difficulties, have reached out to us and offered help: providing much needed funds for food, toys and equipment for the olim. Funds so that these new olim can soon celebrate Passover - the holiday of freedom - even for the olim in quarantine.

In a recent message, I quoted from the Book of Esther: *For Such a Time as This*. I never prayed for such times, but thank God we have the strength to face them, even if we allow ourselves to shed a tear. Wishing you faith, health and strength.



Hineni Soup Kitchen's Situation

We received this serious and at the same time encouraging letter from Benjamin Philip, Hineni's director. This soup kitchen can provide many poor citizens of Jerusalem with a nutritious meal, thanks to your generosity.

Dear friends of Christians for Israel,

The situation in Israel has become very difficult as a result of the necessary measures the Israeli government took against the coronavirus. Daily life is disrupted because in public establishments and other sites no more than ten persons are allowed to gather, who at the same time also must keep a distance of at least two metres in between.

Events and family celebrations like weddings, engagement parties and circumcisions must be cancelled to the great chagrin of all those involved. The schools are closed, public transport is restricted and visiting elderly people and hospitals is no longer allowed. Visiting a physician is allowed only in case of high fever and emergencies.

In short: it is very difficult for the inhabitants. We at Hineni are also confronted with all kinds of problems.

Problems

Firstly, there are no more than ten people simultaneously allowed in our restaurant, which forces us to pack all meals as take away dishes. Furthermore, all our Dutch volunteers have made their way homeward and most of our employees are unable to come because of lack of childcare, limited public transport and closed districts.

Also, the delivery of goods is problematic, because in Israel people began stocking up food supplies. Resulting in many products being sold out. And as a consequence, especially the elderly and weakest get the short end of the bargain and have a greater need to come to us for meals.

We at Hineni receive cries for help from amongst others the social workers to deliver meals at the homes, for those who are not able to come because of fear, or governmental measures and advice not to travel with public transport. Something that is a tough job because of lack of staff, volunteers and means of transport.

Help

In any event, we will make sure that a group of eighty Holocaust survivors are provided with daily meals at home as long as possible. There are other requests as well, but our few employees are stressed because of having to wear special masks, aprons and head covering, while every visitor has to wash his hands with the means supplied by us.

In spite of all discomforts, I want to thank you, especially now for your support that enables us to help so many affected and anxious people.

Trust

In a period that coincides exactly with the Purim and Pesach feasts, two special events, at which the Jewish people was threatened in her existence and the Eternal One in the face of all nations intervenes to offer salvation. Especially now we must have trust in God and endure these difficult times with full confidence in Him. Knowing that our prophets have already foretold these events to take place before Messiah will come and redeem Israel and the nations.

Therefore, we experience these difficult times as a bridge leading to better times. Many thanks, Benjamin Philip

A hot meal at Hineni costs € 5 or US \$5. Please support Hineni's humanitarian restaurant by completing the coupon on the back page.



Shifting Gears in Ukraine



Koen Carlier
Aliyah Fieldworker | Ukraine

In Ukraine, where Koen Carlier and his team are normally active helping Jews return to Israel, severe restrictions have been imposed because of the coronavirus. The Aliyah work has come to a standstill for now. However, Koen and his team are not waiting around.

In recent years we have built up good relationships with Jewish communities all over Ukraine. In many places, we regularly come with food parcels. But these communities also organise their own food services for the poor, often from small soup kitchens in the synagogues or community centres. As Christians for Israel, we also support them.

Now that corona restrictions forbid opening these soup kitchens, many communities are faced with a challenge: how can they still provide for the poor members of the community – often Holocaust survivors – in these circumstances?

Meals on Wheels
Our team in Ukraine has responded to this need. Now that most of the nine vans of the Aliyah work are not being used, we can just as well use them to help the Jewish community. In various places in Ukraine, food delivery services have started.



Cities in Ukraine where soup kitchens are located that we will be helping in the coming weeks with their meal deliveries.

In Vinnytsia, for example, food has been delivered three times a week to twenty elderly people in the city, but this will be increased to 100 deliveries at the end of March. Everyone receives two pre-packed meals with each delivery. Because it is quiet on the streets, this can be done relatively easily.

Support
It remains to be seen how the measures against the virus will develop, but Koen and his team are creative and will use every opportunity to continue to support the Jewish communities in Ukraine. In the coming two months, our goal is to deliver over 300,000 Meals on Wheels.

For € 5 or US \$5 a nutritious meal will be delivered at the home of an elderly member of the Jewish community in Ukraine. Please support Meals on Wheels by completing the coupon below.



Top photo and above: Ira Carlier delivers two nutritious meals for an elderly lady in Vinnytsia.

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- ☐ Holocaust Survivors - "I'm not Alone"
- ☐ Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

- ☐ One person - € 135 | US \$165
- ☐ One family (5 people) - € 675 | US \$825
- ☐ One busload (25 people) - € 4500 | US \$5000
- ☐ First Home in the Homeland
- ☐ Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - € 900 | US \$1000

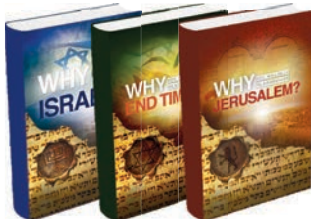
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