

ISRAEL

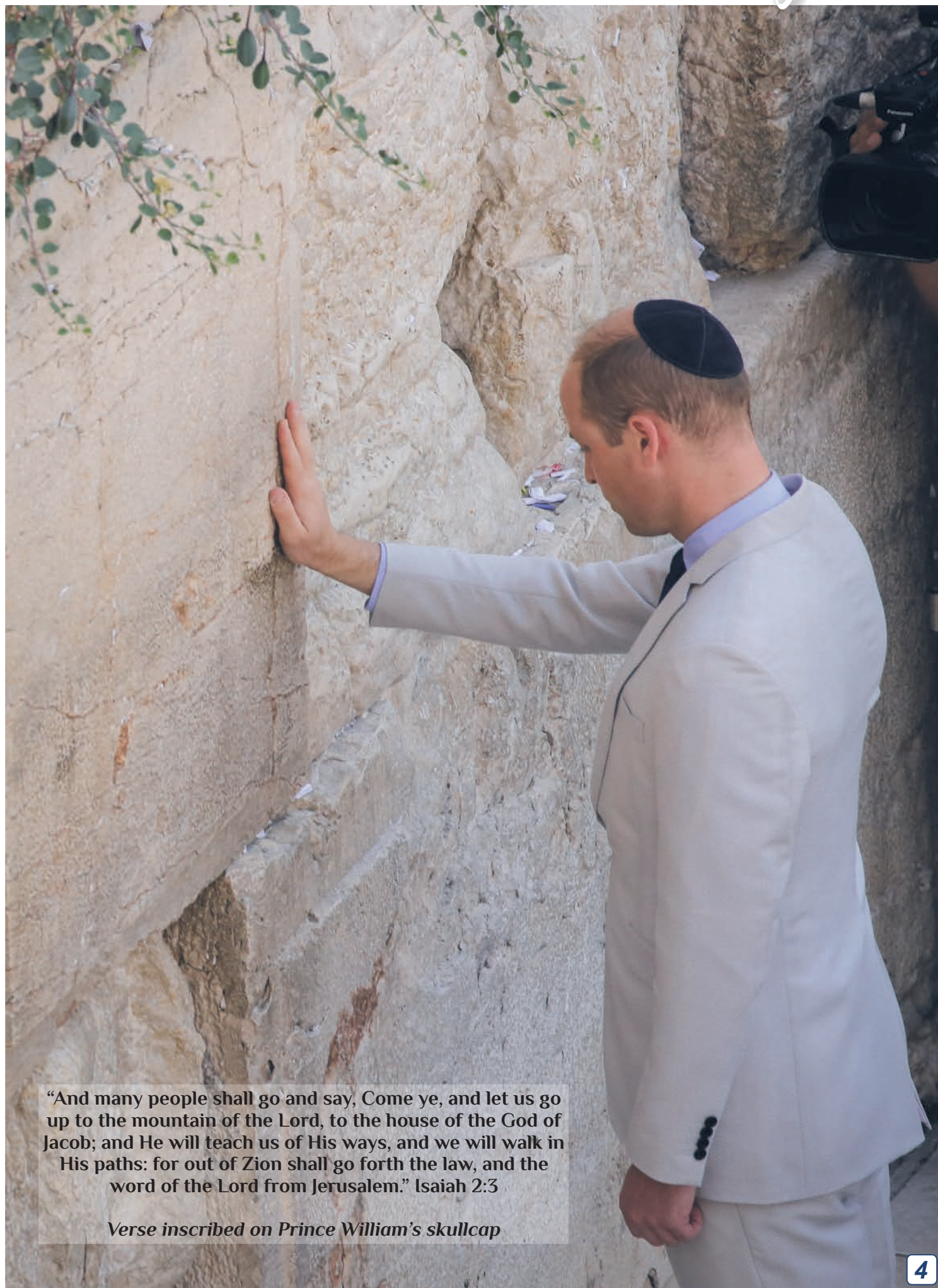
& Christians Today

INTERNATIONAL

August 2018

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CHRISTIANS FOR
ISRAEL
INTERNATIONAL



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

Prayer Points



By Pieter Bénard
Christians for
Israel Prayer
Coordinator

ISRAEL

• Ezekiel 36 contains a wonderful prophecy about Israel. Verses 1-15 are about the restoration of the land. Verses 16-38 are about the restoration of the people. The physical restoration precedes the spiritual restoration. Give thanks that this is clearly visible. The Lord fulfils His Word.

• Pray for the Jewish members of the Knesset. They are confronted daily with Arabic Knesset members who speak hate against Israel in the parliament and want to drive Jews out of the country.

• Psalm 121 is a special psalm to read as you pray for Israel. This psalm mentions the Lord as the Keeper of Israel three times and says that He will keep them three times.

INTERCESSION

• Acts 1:4-12. Give thanks that the Lord is bringing His people home so that when the Saviour comes, and His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, they will meet Him. We have the privilege to help the Jewish people in the diaspora return to Zion and to look for the coming of the Messiah together with them.

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL

• The following sentence is from an invitation for a preachers' seminar: "Theology needs a renovation. How do we relate to the reality of Israel?" Pray that theologians will discover the reality of Israel in their study of the Bible.

• Pray that government leaders and nations will choose Jerusalem and not Babylon. (Isaiah 60:1-3, 12) Pray that they will learn to base their thoughts and actions on the Biblical Jerusalem and break the habit of basing their thoughts and actions on heathen Babylon.

• Please pray for your own congregation today. Pray that the Lord Jesus will be the focal point and that there will be a love for God's Word. This is the foundation for loving and understanding Israel. Anything else that we do for God's people stems from love for His Son and His Word.

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

Peace and Security?

By Andrew Tucker, International Editor, Christians for Israel International

Almost 25 years ago to the day, in September 1993, Israel's President Yitzhak Rabin shook hands on the lawns of the White House with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, under the beaming face of US President Bill Clinton, to seal the first Oslo Agreement.

The 'Oslo' agreements between Israel and the PLO were expected to usher in a new era of peace in the Middle East - the thinking being that an Israeli/Palestinian settlement would satisfy the Arab demands for its resolution as key to peace in the region.

Who could have imagined that a quarter of a century later, Israeli/Palestinian peace would be as far away as ever, and the region would be engulfed in tensions that threaten to spin out of control?

One thing is for sure - the conflict with the Arab Palestinians is neither the cause of conflict in the region nor is it the most dangerous threat to Israel's existence or safety today.

As the article by Jonathan Spyer indicates (page 3), the situation in Syria is getting worse rather than better. It is explosive, posing an existential threat to Israel's security, and involving - in addition to Israel and Syria - many major powers: Russia, USA, Iran and Turkey in particular. Some argue that we are witnessing the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39.

On the southern border, Hamas continues to fight a war of attrition against Israel. For weeks since it launched the 'March of Return' earlier this year, thousands of incendiary helium balloons and kites have been launched, destroying hectares of land and threatening lives (see further page 11). More recently, Palestinian terror groups have fired repeated salvos of rockets and mortar shells into southern Israel. Israel has responded by attacking targets in the Gaza Strip in the most extensive assault since 2014's Operation Protective Edge, resulting in several Palestinian deaths. "The focus of the attack is a wide-scale strike on the Hamas Battalion HQ in Beit Lahia, which includes urban warfare training facilities, weapon storage warehouse, training compounds, command centres, offices and more," the IDF said in a statement issued mid-July.

Meanwhile, relations between Israel and the PLO and PA under the leadership of Fatah have reached an all-time low, and there is no sign of improvement. There are increasing concerns about the willingness and ability of the Palestinians to make any concessions to their ambit claims to have their 'State of Palestine' based on the so-called '1967 borders' with 'East Jerusalem' as the capital. To make matters worse, PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (who is also President of the Palestinian Authority) is now 82 years old, in bad health and there is no apparent successor. No elections have been held since 2005.

Worse, the Palestinians are unlikely to abandon their culture of dependency and dysfunctionality. As Alex Joffe wrote in an article recently published by BESA, the



Hamas's March of Return
Photo: Getty Images

'pseudo-stability' under Abbas is likely to end soon. "That pseudo-stability takes this form: the Israeli security apparatus keeps Hamas at bay in the West Bank, allowing Abbas to crack down on his rivals; and in exchange, the PA does not support a full-fledged uprising, only terrorism by individuals. The probability of chaos, in the form of Hamas efforts to take over the West Bank or factional warfare between 'security services,' is very real." (see www.besacenter.org)

For months, the United States has promised to come with a Peace Plan, but so far this has not eventuated, and even if it does so there are serious doubts whether such a plan will have any traction. Instead, in the meantime, the PA and the Arab States, continue their campaign to 'internationalise' the conflict through the United Nations institutions such as the General Assembly, Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council and UNESCO. A campaign which the EU willingly supports, although there are increasing signs that a number of EU member states - including the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Austria - are not happy with the EU's one-sided support of the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, opponents of the 'occupation' continue to campaign for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The BDS movement is predicated on the idea that Israel's 'occupation' is illegal. In line with this thinking, Ireland's Senate has approved a law criminalising "trade with and economic support for illegal settlements in territories deemed occupied under international law". Effectively, this law would make it illegal to import products produced in Israeli settlements. As Michael Freund has argued, this legislation (which still has to be approved by the Lower House) effectively discriminates against Jewish producers.

The recent adoption of the 'Jewish Nation State' law highlights the tension between the concept of a Jewish state, on the one hand, and the principle of democracy and equal treatment of all citizens, on the other. That tension is, however, not unique to Israel. Every state that purports to have a particular identity must wrestle with the same issue, whether it be a Christian, Muslim or any other identity. There is nothing inherently contradictory between being a Jewish and democratic state. Nevertheless, the State of Israel is faced with a huge challenge. With the rise of anti-Semitism (see page 6), the state will increasingly need to provide a refuge for

Jews from around the world. Let us continue to pray that the Lord will give Israel's leaders wisdom as they seek to develop a society based on principles of justice and righteousness. It is important that the government treat non-Jewish communities with respect. But this equally requires these communities to accept the Jewish character of the State and respect the authorities. Pray for mutual sensitivity and understanding between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Israel. Above all, let us pray that the Lord will fulfil His promise soon to pour out His 'spirit of grace and supplications' upon 'the House of David and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (Zechariah 12:10).

Christians for Israel
Mission Statement

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.

Jewish Festivals

Rosh Hashana - The Jewish New Year
10-11 September 2018

Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement
19 September 2018

Sukkot - Feast of Tabernacles
24-30 September 2018

Tzom Gedaliah - Feast of the Seventh Month, commemorates the assassination of the Jewish governor of Judah
12 September 2018

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& Christians Today

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Is Southern Syria Heading for 'Lebanonisation'?

By Dr Jonathan Spyer, Senior Research Fellow at the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, and a Fellow at the Middle East Forum
This is an abridged version of an article published in Jerusalem Post, 13 July 2018

The recent raid on the T4 base at Tiya in southern Syria was, according to global media reports, the third such action by Israeli air power against this facility in the course of 2018. It is part of an apparently ongoing campaign to prevent the entrenchment and consolidation (*these are the words favoured by Israeli officials*) of the Iranian military infrastructure in Syria.

Meanwhile, the Assad regime is moving into the final stages of its offensive against the rebellion in Deraa Province. Evidence has emerged of the presence of Iran-supported Shia militias among the forces operating on behalf of the regime in Deraa. The two forces whose commanders were photographed in the area are Liwa al-Zulfiqar and the Abu Fadl al-Abbas Brigade.

Haidar al Jubouri, Zulfiqar's commander, was photographed in the operations room of the Syrian Arab Army's 4th Division in Deraa. Commanders of the Abu Fadl al-Abbas brigade, meanwhile, were seen in the area of Tafas. Notably, the latter individuals were pictured in Syrian army uniform, and in conversation with Russian officers.

The Israeli concern is not primarily with Deraa. Rather, Jerusalem is watching carefully to see which forces will be involved in the regime's advance on Quneitra province, adjoining the Israeli-controlled part of the Golan.

If the Quneitra offensive involves a similar mixing of forces to that in Deraa, this will enable officials to claim that Russian pressure is working, while presumably restating Israel's determination to continue efforts to expel Iran from Syria in its entirety. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said recently that "*the fact Iranian forces are present in Syria at all is unacceptable, and we will act against any Iranian consolidation in the area.*"

PM Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Prior to the meeting, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement reiterating that "*Israel will not tolerate a military presence by Iran or its proxies anywhere in Syria and that Syria must strictly abide by the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement.*"

So Israel makes clear its determination that Iran should quit Syria in its entirety, to act against specific Iranian targets. Syria appears to ignore or downplay those elements of the Iranian presence against which air action would have more limited or problematic application (*such as pro-Iranian units integrated into the Syrian Army*). The Iranians, meanwhile, appear at present to be absorbing the blows with little apparent attempt at response, while maintaining their overall presence in Syria. Where may all this be headed?

First of all, it is important to understand the nature and dimensions of the Iranian project in Syria. Iran's deep alliance with Assad's Syria goes back to the first days of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to Hafez Assad's support of Teheran in the Iran-Iraq War. Over the last seven years of civil war, however, the nature of the relationship has changed. Iranian provision of manpower and organisation of paramilitary forces has been essential to the regime's survival. Teheran has invested upwards of \$30 billion in Syria. The IRGC has established bodies within the formal structures of the Syrian state (*the National Defence Forces*), recruited young Syrians into locally based IRGC-associated paramilitary groups, (*Quwaat al-Ridha, 313 battalion*), and of course brought its paramilitary proxies onto Syrian soil, along with IRGC personnel.

This is a major, far-reaching process, resembling in its key particulars parallel projects in Lebanon and Iraq. The intention is to establish political-military structures which will serve to enable the projection of Iranian power over the long term. The Iranian expertise in this area is without parallel in the region. As a result of this approach, Teheran now dominates Lebanon and has the upper hand in Iraq. Assad's Syria, which has an openly dictatorial system, is a different political context to these, of course. But the evidence suggests that the Iranians are digging in to stay.

Will the Russians act as the lever for the removal of this Iranian project? This appears to be the hope of Israeli policy-makers. But the facts would appear to



The likely emergent picture in Syria, as in Lebanon, is therefore the ongoing consolidation of another IRGC project.
Photo: Middle East Forum

indicate that Russia has neither the will nor even the ability, to achieve this objective. The Iranian pro-regime media is full of fear and speculation at the prospect of Russian betrayal. The Russian agenda in Syria does not directly parallel that of the Iranians (*Moscow seeks good relations with all interested parties, the better to make itself the essential arbiter*). But Moscow also has no interest in seeing the Iranians humiliated or their project reversed, particularly because they remain essential to the viability of Assad's regime.

In any case, the Russian intervention in Syria has been predicated on a modest ground presence. It is thus not clear by which mechanism Russia could seek to induce such a withdrawal, even if it wished to.

So the Iranian project in Syria is likely to continue, and Iranian-associated forces in one guise or another are likely in the period ahead to be operating close to the border with Israel. Israel, meanwhile, is likely to maintain its intelligence domination across Syria and to continue periodically to strike at Iranian and Iranian associated targets, in order to build deterrence and prevent the consolidation of weapons systems and deployments.

Does this sound familiar? It ought to. It is in its essentials the situation that pertains in south Lebanon, and (*in a far less*

threatening way) the Gaza Strip.

What we see here is a contest between two systems with entirely different areas of expertise. The Iranians excel in establishing and utilising political and paramilitary clients to build power within regional spaces. They are however sharply deficient in conventional military skills. Israel, meanwhile, is outstanding in the fields of air warfare and intelligence and seeks to avoid being sucked into involvement in the complex and cutthroat world of proxy warfare within Arab societies (*the now soon to be abandoned cooperation with the rebels of Quneitra represented only a partial exception to this rule*).

The likely emergent picture in Syria, as in Lebanon, is therefore the ongoing consolidation of another IRGC project, in the framework of a weakened and truncated Arab state, along with an ongoing Israeli effort to deter the masters of this project from acts of aggression, or to confine such acts to the realm of rhetoric. Such a state of affairs is by its nature precarious, and potentially combustible. At the same time, the Israeli system has shown considerable skill in recent years precisely in the management of comparable situations.

Israeli Knesset Passes 'Jewish Nation-State Law'

On 18th July, the Israeli parliament (Knesset) passed a law declaring Israel to be 'the national home of the Jewish people'.

The bill was adopted by 62 votes in favour, with 55 votes against and two abstentions. The law is a Basic law, which means it is more difficult to repeal than ordinary laws.

For months this controversial law was the subject of much debate in Israel and abroad. It raises the question whether the Jewish character of the State of Israel conflicts with democratic principles. Critics argue that the law effectively discriminates against Israel's Arab and other non-Jewish minorities. It's proponents, such as Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister of Education

Bennett, argue that the law simply reflects and acknowledges the fact that the State of Israel is an expression of Jewish self-determination. Netanyahu praised the new law as "*a pivotal moment in the annals of Zionism and the State of Israel*". He continued: "*We enshrined in law the basic principle of our existence. Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people which respects the individual rights of all its*

citizens. This is our state – the Jewish state. In recent years there have been some who have attempted to put this in doubt, to undercut the core of our being. Today we made it law: This is our nation, language and flag".

The 'Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-state of the Jewish people' contains the following provisions:

...continued on page 4

...continued from page 3

1. Basic Principles

- A. The land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established.
- B. The State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfils its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination.
- C. The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.

2. The Symbols of the State

- A. The name of the state is 'Israel.'
- B. The state flag is white with two blue stripes near the edges and a blue Star of David in the centre.
- C. The state emblem is a seven-branched menorah with olive leaves on both sides and the word 'Israel' beneath it.
- D. The state anthem is 'Hatikvah.'
- E. Details regarding state symbols will be determined by the law.

3. The Capital of the State

Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.

4. Language

- A. The state's language is Hebrew.
- B. The Arabic language has a special status in the state; Regulating the use of Arabic in state institutions or by them will be set in law.
- C. This clause does not harm the status given to the Arabic language before this law came into effect.

5. Ingathering of the Exiles

The state will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of exiles.

6. Connection to the Jewish People

- A. The state will strive to ensure the safety of the members of the Jewish people in trouble or in captivity due to the fact of their Jewishness or their citizenship.
- B. The state shall act within the Diaspora to strengthen the affinity between the state and members of the Jewish people.
- C. The state shall act to preserve the cultural, historical and religious heritage of the Jewish people among Jews in the Diaspora.

7. Jewish Settlement

- A. The state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its



Coalition members standing together after the nation-state bill passed on July 19, 2018.

establishment and consolidation.

8. Official Calendar

The Hebrew calendar is the official calendar of the state, and alongside it, the Gregorian calendar will be used as an official calendar. Use of the Hebrew calendar and the Gregorian calendar will be determined by law.

9. Independence Day and Memorial Days

- A. Independence Day is the official national holiday of the state.
- B. Memorial Day for the Fallen in Israel's

Wars and Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day are official memorial days of the State.

10. Days of Rest and Sabbath

The Sabbath and the festivals of Israel are the established days of rest in the state; Non-Jews have a right to maintain days of rest on their Sabbaths and festivals; Details of this issue will be determined by law.

11. Immutability

This Basic Law shall not be amended unless by another Basic Law passed by a majority of Knesset members.

Royal Visit a Sign of Things to Come

By James Patrick, Christians for Israel UK National Representative

Israel has effectively been boycotted by Britain for its entire history, delegitimised by royal avoidance, on the pretence of security concerns.

Queen Elizabeth II made an official visit to Jordan in 1984; indeed, she has visited most other Middle Eastern countries during her 66-year reign, and 129 different countries in total. Prince Philip and their sons Charles and Edward each made unofficial visits to Israel, in 1994, 1995 and 2007 respectively. But no member of the Royal family has ever made an official visit to Israel.

Given the Queen's public and devout faith, there can be no doubt that she would have treasured the opportunity to visit the Holy Land, the land where her Lord Jesus lived and ministered and rose again. But monarchs cannot simply travel where and when they please. They must be invited first. But also, they must be allowed to go by those who direct their movements.

British royal visits are ultimately determined by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), because the Queen and her family embody the nation, and symbolise Britain's goodwill to anyone they meet. Aware of this, leaked emails between royal courtiers in 2007 dismissed a possible trip to Israel by Charles, because of the "many ways in which Israel would want HRH (His Royal Highness) to burnish its international image".

But the fresh winds of change were blowing in March 2017, not long after the Brexit vote in June 2016. On a visit to Israel, Boris Johnson, the British Foreign Secretary, approved of President Rivlin's recent invitation for a royal visit to Israel to mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration. In 1917, Britain had been the first nation to commit itself to re-

establish a Jewish homeland in the Ottoman-ruled region of Palestine. The centenary would be a worthy opportunity to reassert Britain's support for the Jewish state. But a Foreign Secretary's opinions do not always reflect those of the career civil servants who run the FCO. On the contrary, ever since the days of the Mandate, most FCO officials have had Arabist sympathies. These are not wrong in themselves, but until recently there has been a resulting concern not to offend Arab rulers and nations by displaying the deep and strong connections openly that Britain continues to maintain privately with Israel.

Yet changing realities in the Middle East are making these concerns more and more irrelevant. The Arab nations themselves are increasingly impatient with the Palestinian cause, given the relative stability that Israel provides, and also with the provocation of Hamas,

At an even deeper level, he also has a treasured family interest in protecting the Jewish people...

seeing them as too closely connected to Iran. Israel has even become a key ally of the Arab League against the threat of Iran. So it seems British foreign policy in the region must start to make changes to keep up with the shifting alliances in the Middle East. Prince William's visit is one reflection of that diplomatic shift, symbolising a new generation with hope for a better future.

For a young man who had just turned 36 years of age, negotiating a trip to one of the most disputed areas of the world without being seen as interfering politically would be nearly impossible, a

Prince William became the first British royal to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories, beginning his trip with a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.
Photo: Shutterstock



task that few apart from the Queen herself could manage. His personal advisers tried very hard to avoid any hint of political favouritism and nearly

succeeded. William slipped up when speaking without notes to Abbas: "I am very glad that our two countries work so closely together" (since Palestine is not officially a 'country'). His press office also described the Old City of Jerusalem as being in 'the occupied Palestinian territories', which is strongly disputed by Israel. Every word William spoke was being scoured for even a hint of political support, so he did a remarkable job of maintaining diplomatic even-handedness, all things considered.

On a personal level, William was clearly moved by his visit to Yad Vashem.

Knowing how sacred the Queen treats her own royal promises, William declared that his generation is now responsible for keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust: "I commit myself to doing this". At an even deeper level, he also has a treasured family interest in protecting the Jewish people from persecution. His cherished grandfather Philip's own beloved mother, the highly unusual Princess Alice, rescued a Jewish family in Greece during World War Two. She is now buried in a monastery on the Mount of Olives. President Rivlin astutely noted, therefore, that "a lot of kings and princes came to Jerusalem during the history... and you are the first one not to come only as a prince but also a pilgrim to the Holy Land and Jerusalem". William stated: "her story is a matter of great pride for my whole family".

Let us pray indeed that William becomes a true pilgrim, sharing the faith of his grandmother and great-grandmother, that he might truly become one of those 'kings' who will come 'to the brightness of your rising' (Isaiah 60:3, 9-12).

Birth and Challenge of Israel

By Edda Fogarollo, Christians for Israel Italy

On Monday 11 June 2018, Christians for Israel and the Sabaoth Church celebrated the 70th anniversary of Israel in Verona, Italy.

The event was a huge success, with some well-known dignitaries attending and speaking. We received many warm messages, including a welcome from the Jewish community, and a greeting from the Senator of the Italian Parliament, Liliana Segre, a Holocaust survivor, who kindly sent us her greeting and thanked the organisers for the event.

The hall where we held the event was graced with flags of Israel, and our guests were overwhelmed by the love and warm welcome they received.

Mr Rafael Erdreich, Minister of Public and Political Affairs of the Israeli Embassy, was our guest of honour. Mr Erdreich is a good friend of Professor Edda Fogarollo, president of Christians for Israel Italy.

Dr Roberto Israel, president of 'The Holocaust Children' from the National Holocaust Study and Research Centre, said: "In times like these, when being a Jew in Europe has become difficult, events like



these are very important to change the history of the nations."

Dr Edi Maria Neri, who represented the Mayor of Verona, commented that working together to stand with Israel is important. She said the Mayor's office would be happy to work with Christians for Israel Italy to transform the culture tainted by the false information propagated by some media outlets

regarding Israel. Pastor Roberto Belloni and Chiara Canciani from the Christians for Israel Youth Group were also among the speakers.

A concert titled 'Note Scordate' by Duo Elimo, dedicated to the story of Jewish musicians persecuted by the racial laws in Italy, closed the event. We are grateful to God for this beautiful event, which also got local media coverage.

Short News

Something 'Blue'



The colour blue has its own exhibition in Israel, at least the specific Biblical colour blue called *tekhelet* (Hebrew) as seen on the Israeli flag, has. However, the origin of this colour has its roots in the Bible. The Ark of the Covenant, for example, had to be covered with *tekhelet*-dyed cloths, and a blue thread had to be placed in the corners of the garments of every Israelite. In honour of the seventieth anniversary of the State of Israel, an exposition was opened in the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem that explores why this national colour is so important for Israel.

Conference 'Hacked'

During a speech by Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel, in a conference on cybersecurity, the lights suddenly dimmed, and on the screen, the following message appeared: "Ladies and gentlemen, this conference has just been hacked. Ironic, isn't it? (...) We are located in a country not far from Israel. That is all you should now at this moment." It turned out to be a simulation. However, Prime Minister Netanyahu pointed to the real threats of states that can hack the Israeli systems. "We have huge opportunities, but also face immense challenges."

Help for French Jews

Jews from France who move to Israel have to deal with enormous bureaucracy. Prime Minister Netanyahu promised during his visit to Paris, France, that Israel will try its best to diminish the red tape, especially when it comes to changing drivers' licences and professional certificates.

20th Jubilee in Germany

By Joachim Kudlek, Editor of Christians for Israel Germany. Translated and abridged by ML Weissenböck

From 15 to 17 June, more than 300 participants attended the Jubilee - Conference in Würzburg, in honour of the 70th anniversary of the State of Israel and the 20th birthday of Christians for Israel in Germany.

Harald Eckert, the chairman of the German branch, was pleased to welcome Christian and Jewish guests on the opening evening. In his message, he referred to *Ezekiel 37*, where the vision of the valley of the dry bones symbolises the Jewish exile and reminds us of the Holocaust. Today we rejoice in the fact that the people of Israel have started to come home and a State has been created. *Verses 24 to 28* in the same chapter give us hope for a wonderful future together.

Roger van Oordt, the director of

Christians for Israel Netherlands, the founding organisation of Christians for Israel International, remarked: "The Lord is faithful to His people, and He is fulfilling His promises to them. The return of the Jewish people to the land of their forefathers is a fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. We are a privileged generation to witness this. But the return and restoration is not without difficulties. Like in the time of Moses, Nehemiah and Esra, there are many obstacles and wars against Israel. We, as Christians, should not be indifferent, but help the Jewish people, through prayer and practical support. It is a great privilege that God has chosen us to bless Israel."

Marie-Louise Weissenböck, Chairwoman of Christians for Israel in Austria and Regional Director of Europe, spoke about

the wonderful cooperation between Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

On the last day, Pastor Tobias Krämer, a member of the German board, preached about *Deuteronomy 7:6-8*. He emphasised God's eternal love for the Jewish people and the oath He gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, binding Him to His people like a man to his wife, legally and emotionally. Paul confirmed this in *Romans 11:28-29* when he says that the Jewish people are loved on account of the patriarchs. Therefore it is also the mandate of Christians, to stand alongside Israel.

The conference was a very special event with times of worship, prayer, speeches by Jewish and Christian representatives, a concert by Israeli musicians, a film about Israel, among other items.

Uganda Prayer March 2018

By Rev Cornelis Kant

Christians for Israel Uganda organised a 7km Prayer March in July to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Israel. The Prayer March started at Makerere University and went through the streets of Kampala city and ended at Kololo Airstrip.

Over 12,000 Christians participated including government ministers, city mayors, the Uganda Police Force Band, bishops, pastors and others from Ethiopia, America and Israel. The whole march was broadcast live on Salt Television and Kingdom TV, which was watched by millions of Ugandans and people abroad. In her speech, Minister of

Health, Dr Christine Ondo said Uganda has gone back to her biblical roots: "Israel and this historical Prayer March, the first ever of its kind, will be a great bridge between the two states." Drake Kanaabo, director of Christians for Israel Uganda said: "The church must wake up and stand with her big brother Israel."

Drake and seven other well-known spiritual leaders of Uganda including Pastor Laban Jumba and Pastor Bugingo of the House of Prayer Church, one by one led the people into an outpouring prayer for Israel. After the event, Christians for Israel Uganda hosted a dinner for 350 people at the Serena

Hotel Kampala including the Ugandan First Lady Mrs Janet Museveni, country diplomats, military generals, Israel's Ambassador Mr Noah, members of the Jewish community, bishops and ministers.

Two weeks after the Prayer March, a delegation of Uganda parliament visited



Israel and had a meeting in the Knesset. Drake Kanaabo: "To God be the glory."

Growing Anti-Semitism in Europe

By Ruben Ridderhof, Christians for Israel Netherlands

'Never again.' Year after year people around the world repeat these words during Holocaust memorial events, and of course, they mean what they say. Yet European policymakers seem clueless about how to reign in the increase of anti-Semitism. In some countries, it seems that even the government itself is infected. Although not all Jews in Europe feel unsafe, they do feel a growing unease.

Religious freedom is under pressure. Political disagreements with Israel are taken out on (local) Jewish communities. Meanwhile, traditional forms of anti-Semitism are also resurfacing.

Of course, authorities do speak out against anti-Semitism now and then. Of course, there are public shows of support, for example in Berlin, where hundreds of people took to the streets wearing *kippot* in response to the news that Jews no longer feel safe wearing a *kippah* on the street. Of course, Jewish organisations can count on help with security from the police, or even from the military, but all of this only addresses the symptoms instead of curing the disease. Despite everything, anti-Semitism appears to keep on growing.

European leaders' attitudes on the matter do not give concerned citizens much reason for hope. Recently PA leader Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech in which he, in effect,



Photo: Flash90

blamed the Holocaust on the Jews themselves. There was not a single word of condemnation from Europe. Let us hope

and pray that the Eternal One will give us the courage to continue to stand in the breach for His people in times like these.

>> Recent Anti-Semitic Developments in Europe

Iceland is considering making circumcision a crime, with a six-year prison sentence for anyone performing a circumcision.

The **United Kingdom** saw a shocking increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017. On average there are four anti-Semitic incidents per day.

In **Ireland's** parliament, a large majority voted for a Senate proposal that makes the sale and purchase of products from Israel's 'territories' a punishable offence. Because of political pressure, the proposal has not yet been made law, but the majority vote speaks volumes.

In **The Netherlands**, a Jewish restaurant was vandalised multiple times. The police and media hesitated to call the violence 'anti-Semitic'.

A curriculum for children in **Belgium** for the commemoration of the Holocaust promotes anti-Semitic ideas, for example with anti-Semitic cartoons as illustrations.

In **France** 84-year-old Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll was murdered in her Paris apartment on March 24th. The authorities are calling it an act of anti-Semitism.

In **Sweden** Molotov cocktails were thrown into a group of Jewish youth at a Hanukkah celebration at the end of 2017.

Jews in **Finland** are feeling more and more unsafe. In late 2017 the Jewish community in Helsinki turned to crowd-funding to finance extra security measures.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism in **Poland** are on the rise after the Polish government has adopted a law denying Polish involvement in the Holocaust. Polish Jews do not feel safe and are worried about what may be coming.

The conflict with Russia is contributing to a rise in nationalism in **Ukraine**. This often goes hand in hand with anti-Semitism. National heroes are honoured, but often those same heroes were guilty of organising pogroms or collaborating with the Nazis. On April 20th Adolf Hitler's birthday was celebrated with various expressions of anti-Semitism. Graffiti reading: "A world without Jews. Kill a Jew." was sprayed onto a wall in Odessa. In Poltava, a Jewish mass grave was desecrated with graffiti to the same effect: "Death to the Jews."

A high-ranking official in **Hungary's** ruling political party chose to spend January 27th, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, attending a memorial for a former Nazi-collaborator.

Bucharest, the capital of **Romania**, ranked third in online anti-Semitism in January according to research from the Israeli Ministry for Diaspora Affairs. In first and second place were the cities of Santiago in Chile and Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk) in Ukraine.

In April, Jewish leaders in **Germany** called on their followers not to wear a kippah after a 21-year-old immigrant wore a kippah as an 'experiment' and was attacked.

Italian soccer fans misused pictures of Anne Frank to make fun of Lazio Roma supporters.

Alon Ben-Gurion Visits C4I Headquarters



Pim van der Hoff, Chairman of Christians for Israel Netherlands and Alon Ben-Gurion during the opening of the David Ben-Gurion hall. Photo: Han Schenk

Christians for Israel office in the Netherlands was opened in the presence of Alon Ben-Gurion, grandson of David Ben-Gurion – the first Israeli Prime Minister and one of the founders of the modern State of Israel. At this occasion, one of the halls of the new Israel Centre was renamed David Ben-Gurion Hall.

Alon Ben-Gurion opened the hall by installing a name sign above the door.

On Friday 18 May the new summer exhibition *Israel Wonder of the World* at the

Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast

By Andrew Tucker

Christians for Israel was privileged to participate in the second Annual Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast (JPB) from 6-7 June 2018 in Jerusalem. Modelled on the National Prayer Breakfast held annually in Washington, the JPB attracted over 600 Christian delegates from about 70 nations.

Highlights of the JPB were the meetings with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and Speaker of the Knesset Yuli Edelstein, sessions of prayer, and powerful speeches by a number of Jewish and Christian leaders including Deputy Minister and former Israeli Ambassador to the US Michael Oren, Anne Graham Lotz, former Congress member Michele Bachmann, and Governor of Kentucky Matt Bevin.

The Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast is a testimony of the growing understanding between Christian and Jewish leaders. As well-known religious and political figure, Orthodox Rabbi Yehuda Glick, said in his official greeting: "I'm so excited that today we have Christians from 70 nations in Jerusalem, our capital, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem! We have been waiting for you for some 2,000 years! As the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 2:2: Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it."

JPB events are being planned in many nations in the coming year.

3rd Thesis: Faith on Israel

By Kees de Vreugd, Theologian, Christians for Israel International, and Editor of Israel and the Church

In this article, we continue our discussion of the ‘Twelve Theses of Faith on Israel’ published by Christians for Israel.

Thesis 3: We believe that the Church has not replaced Israel. By faith in Jesus Christ we also have become ‘children of Abraham’, the father of all who believe.

Elaboration: It is our strong conviction that the Church has not replaced or superseded Israel in God’s economy. The presupposition that the promises that were given to Israel now have been transferred to the Church is a terrible aberration and a sin before God.

We believe that Christ Jesus is the seed of Abraham so that the promised blessing for the nations has come through Him, and Abraham has become the father of all those who believe. As the body of Christ we celebrate the mystery of salvation through the crucified and risen Lord.

Clarification: We initially considered writing that ‘replacement theology’ is a heresy. However, we realised that this

aberration has never been adopted by an authoritative Church Council. It would nevertheless be very appropriate for the churches to strongly speak out against this misunderstanding, this misconception and fallacy in all its variations, because replacement theology is proclaimed openly more and more, or cloaked in theological terms such as ‘expansion theology’ or ‘fulfillment theology’.

Everyone who has been baptised in Christ Jesus is covered with Christ.

A typical characteristic of such false concepts is the idea that the role of the people of Israel, the nation of Israel and the land of Israel are redundant, replaced or superseded.

Believers from the nations can fully participate in God’s plan of salvation. Thanks to the blood of Jesus the dividing wall has been broken down (*Ephesians 2:13*). Everyone who has been baptised in Christ Jesus is covered with Christ.

Galatians 3:26-29: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (compare also Galatians 3:7 and Romans 4:11).

But men will still be men and women still will be women, albeit in a deep spiritual unity within the church of Christ. Whereas Jews will be Jews and Gentiles will be Gentiles, in the church this is in a deep spiritual unity by faith in Christ.

>> Reflection by Conrado Lumahan

Christians for Israel Philippines
Director

In this article, we are going to answer the following questions: What is replacement theology? How has this theology become the foundation stone of anti-Semitism? How do we know if a Christian or a church has been affected by this teaching? And lastly, what shall we do now?

Replacement theology is shown in doctrine and in practice which started locally and became global. This theology assumes that because the Jews killed Jesus, God has replaced them with the church and all of God’s blessings have been given to the church, which is the ‘new’ or ‘spiritual’ Israel. Israel is left with the curses of God. Replacement theology is anti-Israel. It is anti-Zionism. Worst of all, adherents do not understand that this theology is anti-God. Why anti-God? Because replacement theology makes God a liar. It makes God a covenant and promise breaker. To believe that God has broken His covenants and promises with Israel is a heresy. Replacement theology, therefore, is not a Christian theology although it was conceived by Christian bishops and theologians, i.e., the Church Fathers.

Anti-Semitism is justified in the name of replacement theology. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks convincingly defines anti-Semitism. He said Anti-Semitism is not ‘disliking’ the Jews. If you dislike a person, it does not mean you hate him. It is not ‘criticising’ them. If you criticise an individual, it does not mean you hate him. Anti-Semitism is ‘denying their rights to exist’ as a nation and to live as a people. Anti-Semitism takes different forms in different ages. *In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated because of their religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Jews were hated because of their race.*

Today, the Jews are hated because of their nation-state.’ Criticism of the State of Israel is not necessarily anti-Semitism. But the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement is a form of this kind of anti-Semitism, because the fundamental premise of the BDS movement is the denial of the right of the Jewish people to live as a nation (the BDS movement advocates destruction of the Jewish state in favour of a single state in which the Jews have no national identity).

The worst kind of anti-Semitism is driving the Jews out of Israel. Opposition to the right of Jewish people to fulfil their God-given destiny in the Land of Promise is the most dangerous form of anti-Semitism today.

Many church leaders are asking: “How do I know if our church or I have been influenced by replacement theology?” Ask yourself some questions:

- Do you or your church pray for the Jewish people, the peace of Jerusalem, and Israel?
- Do you or your church practically bless the Jewish people by giving funds to support the needy in Israel or Diaspora?
- Do you or your church support a Christian or a Jewish organisation involved in Aliyah (*helping Jews to return to Israel*)?
- Do you or your church boycott products produced in Israel?
- Do you or your church preach on Israel and the Jewish people and their biblical significance?
- Do you or your church teach on the significance of the Jewish roots of the Church?
- Do you or your church ever preach against replacement theology?
- Do you buy and read books that bring awareness for the need to stand with God’s covenant people such as Why Israel? Why Jerusalem? Why End Times? Or the Menorah and the Cross?
- Do you or your church organise a tour to the Bible Land?

If the answer to these questions is ‘No’ then your church may be under the deception of, or believe in, replacement theology. You may need to become involved in speaking out against that position.

The message from the Bible is clear. God has promised to love the Jewish people forever, and to bring them back to the land He promised them. He requires us as believers to have the same attitude to them that God has. To say we love God and to hate Israel and Israelis is contradictory. We must choose to stand in solidarity with the Jewish people in such times.



Twelve Theses of Faith on Israel

1. We believe that Israel was created and chosen by God to bless the nations.
2. We believe that the Church and the nations should bless Israel.
3. **We believe that the Church has not replaced Israel. By faith in Jesus Christ we also have become ‘children of Abraham’, the father of all who believe.**
4. We believe that all the Covenants since Abraham have been made with Israel.
5. We believe that the Lord will be faithful to all the Covenants He made with Israel, as well as to all the promises He gave to the Church.
6. We believe that there is the mystery of the hardening in part of Israel for our sake, but that there is also the blindness of the Church for Israel, and a veil over the nations with regard to Israel.
7. We believe that the Church should repent for all deeds of anti-Semitism committed in her name, and should show her true repentance in acts of love and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people.
8. We believe that the restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel is the beginning of ultimate redemption. We believe that the nations carry a responsibility to help the Jews return.
9. We believe that the City of Jerusalem is the place where the Lord again will make His Holy Name dwell.
10. We believe that one day, Messiah will come to establish His worldwide Kingdom, Then the bodily resurrection of the righteous dead will take place and they will reign with Christ in His Kingdom on earth. We therefore pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
11. We believe that the Son of man will sit in judgment over the nations when the Kingdom comes and will ask them how they have treated Israel and the Jewish people.
12. We believe that ultimately and finally the renewal of all things will take place. Creation will be delivered from its bondage to decay and be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. And God will be all and in all.

Coming Home to the Promised Land

By Pim van der Hoff, Board Member Christians for Israel International

“When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more.” (Ezekiel 39:27,28)

This word from the prophet *Ezekiel* characterises the remarkable event that took place on 23 July at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv. A large EL AL plane carrying over three hundred olim - new Jewish immigrants - landed late in the afternoon. It was extraordinary to witness the arrival of so many new residents from various countries at the same time.

“Today is the Jewish people’s world championship, with one major difference: It is not being played in Russia but in Israel. Everyone in this arrival hall is a winner. Let us continue building, dreaming and making this an even bigger miracle than it already is today,” Greg Masel said in his welcome address. He is the General Director of Keren Hayesod, the organisation that together with the Jewish Agency has been responsible for the immigration of Jews from around the world for nearly a century. In his speech, he explicitly thanked Christians for Israel and other Christian organisations that made it possible for over three hundred Jewish immigrants to arrive in Israel at the same time. For many years there has been a strong connection and close cooperation between Christians for Israel, Keren Hayesod, and the Jewish Agency.

Before the EL AL Boeing 747 taxied across Ben Gurion Airport to the large hall, hundreds of people had spent hours eagerly awaiting the arrival of three hundred olim from all the corners of the

world. They welcomed the immigrants with songs and waving flags.

As soon as the plane had stopped, we had the privilege of welcoming the new Jewish residents of Israel on the plane together with Ms Sofa Landver, Minister of Immigration and Integration, Nathan Sharansky, outgoing President of the Jewish Agency, and his successor, Isaac Herzog. Inside the plane, there was an overwhelming sense of excitement and joy at having finally arrived in the Promised Land. There were many families with young children. Most had come from France, but there were also olim from South America and Canada. Immigrants who had arrived earlier from other parts of the world were also present at the airport, including a handful of families from Russia.

The official reception took place in the huge arrival hall. Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau was first to address the crowd, which included an especially large number of young people, of whom many have not been living in Israel for long. He gave a short speech in the spirit of the well-known verses from the prophecy in *Isaiah 43:5-6*:

“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you, I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth.”

At the end of the 19th century, the Jewish people began to return to the land of their fathers after living in the diaspora for nearly two thousand years. During much of that time, they had suffered under persecution which reached a devastating low point with the murder of six million

Jews during World War II. Christians for Israel has been involved in Aliyah since the 1990’s through the project ‘Bring the Jews Home’. Many Christians for Israel affiliates collected funds for the return of the Jews to the Promised Land, as a gift for Israel’s 70th birthday.

The arrival of over three hundred new olim in Israel and the ceremony at Ben Gurion Airport were visible proof of the tremendous support of Christians for the homecoming of the Jewish people in their only safe harbour in the world, the land of Israel.



Israel Already Belongs to Jesus, their Shepherd

By Rev. Cornelis Kant, Executive Director, Christians for Israel International

In *Ezekiel 34* the prophet speaks about the wrong shepherds of Israel in his days: “Woe to you shepherds of Israel (...) you have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost (...) My flock was scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.”

Then the Lord God promises He will gather Himself his own people back to their own land. He will be doing this by establishing a new shepherd over them: “I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel (...) I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them. He will tend them and be their shepherd (...) The nations will no longer plunder them.”

Centuries later Jesus calls Himself in *John 10* ‘the Good Shepherd’. Undoubtedly He is thinking about the words of *Ezekiel* because Jesus is also placing the Good Shepherd contrary to the bad shepherds. “The hired hand is not the shepherd and does

not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.” Jesus speaks about the same problems as *Ezekiel* did: mismanagement, the flock being scattered and becoming a prey to wild animals.

So Jesus Himself is not only the established new shepherd, but He is also the owner of the flock.

But then the climax is coming: what is the difference between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the bad shepherds? The difference is the ownership. *Ezekiel* already spoke about the Lord who is calling the flock “My flock”. And now Jesus says: “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep.” And about the wrong shepherds, He says: “The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” So Jesus Himself is not only the established new shepherd, but He is also the owner of the flock.

It is obvious that He speaks about Israel at first, the Jewish people, His people. Jesus, Himself as the owner of the Jewish people, is also the anointed one who one day will be bringing back His own people to their own land. We are blessed in this present time to be witnesses of this

process that started over a hundred years ago. We are used to applying to ourselves Jesus’ remarks about sheep who scatter away from the flock when we might scatter away from Jesus and His church. We all know the beautiful images of the Good Shepherd bringing a sheep back upon His shoulders. That is good. Jesus is also our Good Shepherd. But it is good to be reminded that He speaks firstly about His own people, the Jewish people, the people of Israel.

Coming to Terms with Your Neighbour, and with God

By Kees de Vreugd, Theologian, Christians for Israel International, and Editor of Israel and the Church

The tenth of the Hebrew month Tishri (this year on 19 September) is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus chapter 16 gives a detailed description of the rituals the High priest has to perform on that day, including changing his clothes and washing his body several times. Further on, God commands a Sabbath rest on that day: “Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God” (see *Leviticus 23:24-32*). However, with all the details concerning the rituals, Scripture does not specify for what sort of transgressions or sins atonement is made.

Rabbinic tradition states: ‘Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and God, but for a transgression against one’s neighbour, Yom Kippur cannot atone until he appeases his neighbour.’ Thus Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah expounds the text, “From all your sins before the Lord shall ye be clean” (*Leviticus 16:30*): For transgressions between a person and God, Yom Kippur atones, for transgressions against one’s neighbour, Yom Kippur cannot atone, until he appeases his neighbour” (*Mishna, Sayings of the Fathers 8:9*).

One of the most famous parts of the Yom Kippur liturgy is Kol Nidrei. It is sung during the opening service on the eve of Yom Kippur. The traditional tune has spoken to many and inspired composers like Max Bruch with beautiful music. In fact, the old Aramaic text is not a prayer,



A man with his shofar.
Photo: Oren Rosenfeld, Flickr

but a declaration before a judicial court, regretting and annulling all the vows and oaths one will take before God until the next Yom Kippur. It refers to vows done to God, often recklessly, like for example the Corban (something that is dedicated to God or the temple) in temple times (compare *Mark 7:11*). It does not refer to agreements with humans. Moreover, all relations with your fellow man should be made good before you can receive atonement on Yom Kippur. Settling your human relations is required for settling your relation with God. We find a reference to this principle in Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the

altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift” (*Matthew 5:23-24*). You have first be reconciled with your fellow man before you can bring your offering to God. In fact, we can understand the whole Sermon on the Mount as a teaching preparing for a right experience of the ten ‘Days of Awe’ from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. Repentance and introspection characterise this period. It is a time of praying, fasting, giving alms to the needy, and thus coming to terms with your neighbour and with God.

Short News

Israel Has More Jews



Aliyah and Integration Minister Sofa Landver (pictured above) has declared that the largest concentration of Jewish people in the world is in Israel. More than six million Jews reside in Israel, compared with 5.7 million in the US. Minister Landver attributed her ministry’s success to cooperation with the Jewish Agency, organisations which assist olim and local authorities.

“We invest a lot in encouraging Aliyah – we hold fairs in the countries of origin, offer potential immigrants personal accompaniment and assistance in their job search, studies and housing.” Of 245,235 olim who arrived in Israel over the past 10 years, 29,228 made aliyah in 2017, of whom 7,239 are returning residents.

Aliyah: Bnei Menashe Arrive in Israel



In June 2018, 225 Jews from India (Bnei Menashe) made Aliyah to Israel thanks to your support. As they arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport, they burst into song, chanting traditional Hebrew melodies as well as ancient tribal hymns. They were accompanied by many Israeli travellers and tourists, who clapped and sang along, joining in the celebration of this homecoming after 2700 years of exile. The immigrants were greeted by loved ones, many who had been separated for years. These included 80-year old Abel Hangshing, who met his Israeli-born great-grandchildren for the first time, and Seingul Lotjem, who was reunited with his parents who moved to Israel in 2000. He had not seen them in 18 years.

Israel 8th Most Powerful Country

Israel has been ranked as the eighth most powerful country in the world, according to a US World Report. The rankings look at the influence of a nation as well as its political, economic and military power. A country’s alliances factor in as does its influence and whether the country is a leader. The US was ranked the world’s most powerful country, followed by Russia, China, Germany, Britain, France and Japan.

Reassuringly Ridiculous Psalm 2, Part 3

© Johannes Gerloff, Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer and Author

So far, the author of *Psalm 2* concentrated on immanent developments. He described what happens among the nations in a way which any newspaper reader, radio listener or television viewer can easily understand – having some basic understanding of biblical thought. Now, the psalmist pulls back the curtain to the invisible world. From *verse 4* onwards, he opens up a perspective that looks at the whole scenario from the Creator's point of view. Luther observes: *"This is all so hidden, that you are not able to recognise it when you are not in heaven."*

"He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord scoffs at them" (*verse 4*). For those raging masses of nations, who rebel against His regulations, who wish to override the divine orders and declare the Word of God irrelevant, the Lord has nothing left but mockery.

God derides all the Gentile nations (*Psalms 59:9*), He laughs at the evildoer *"because he sees that his day is coming"* (*Psalms 37:13*). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch states, this laughter is *"not actually an expression of joy"*, but rather *"a sneering, contemptuous laugh"*. Laughter in the Bible is *"without exception, an ironic laugh, a laugh that carries with it a certain negation, condemnation of the object that caused the laughter"*. It is *"exclusively caused by the perception of something ridiculous"*.

Once, Abraham and Sarah laughed, when the divine messengers claimed that the hundred-year-old man and his ninety-year-old wife would have a child in their old age (*Genesis 17:17; 18:12*). Too big, too ridiculous seemed the contrast between what could be grasped by relevant human experience and what was said to them. Hirsch realises: *"The whole beginning of the Jewish people is ridiculous, its history, its expectations, its hopes, its entire life borne by these hopes appear to the reasoning that calculates only the ordinary, natural relations of causality as the most monstrous, ridiculous pretension."* Therefore, the son of Abraham and Sarah also gets the name *"Yitzhak"*, *"one laughs"* (*Genesis 21:3,6*).

Yet, as ridiculous as God's dealings with Israel may appear to Gentiles, the contrast between the excitement and effort of the non-Jewish nations on one side and the character and essence of the Creator on

the other side is infinite, unbelievably, unimaginably greater. And in God's laughter and mockery lie scornfulness and contempt. The kings have no way at all to do something against the will of the Lord.

As ridiculous as the history, the way, and the hope of the Jewish people may seem too prosaic, down-to-earth, rational contemporaries, from God's point of view, the thinking and planning of the nations and their representatives is anything but objective, realistic or reasonable. It is simply ridiculous. Luther words it strikingly: *"O how great strength of faith is required in these words! For who could have taken to sense that God laughs... since it occurs to us as if we are both by God and by men being mocked and trodden down."*

Laughter often expresses a sense of security, a consciousness of superiority as opposed to fear. God's laughing shows: He is the One who has created this universe.

He sits and laughs because He has everything – really everything! – firmly under His control.

He disturbs the nations and makes them migrate. He appoints kings, presidents, prime ministers and princes, and He also deposes them when their time has come. The Lord sits in heaven. He does not nervously run back and forth, rubbing His hands in desperation, because he might have lost the helm of world history. He sits and laughs because He has everything – really everything - firmly under His control.

If this living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who sits in heaven and laughs, indeed is my father, then I do not have any reason at all to be disturbed. No migration tsunami, no conflagration in the Middle East, no what-so-ever unreasonable decision of big-mouthed politicians, not even the evidence of underhand machinations of the powerful or frightening suspicions of destructive conspiracies can bring me out of the peace. The father laughs. May the Gentiles rage. The One in heaven has everything firmly under control.

The Lord laughs and scorns. If the Bible



Photo: Shutterstock

says the same thing twice, that shows a great certainty. Twice dreamed the Egyptian pharaoh, which meant that God would do what He had planned with certainty and soon (*Genesis 41:32*).

actions. He does not place the scenario into a distant past which can be analysed with interest but remains ultimately irrelevant. Neither does he speak of a future that may be postponed forever. The choice of words of the prophetic psalmist makes every fairytale *"Once upon a time"* equally impossible as the fantasies of science fiction. The psalmist speaks in the present tense – whether this once was historically rooted for the contemporaries of King David or the first Christians and their opponents in Jerusalem, or whether this could be relevant for us today or even describe a future global scenario.

Israel 70 Years

One-Time Edition | Collector's Item

Magazine 112 pages, full colour

2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the State of Israel. After ages of diaspora, the Jewish state was reborn in 1948. A true miracle. In the 70 years of its existence, Israel had to fight eight wars to defend itself. It not only survived but thrived. It's among the most educated and innovative countries in the world and has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Jews from all over the world are returning home, a fulfilment of Biblical prophecies.

This limited commemorative edition magazine celebrates the 70th Anniversary of the State of Israel. It is beautifully illustrated, with in-depth articles, inspiring interviews, photos, facts, time-lines and much more. A 'must have' for everyone who loves to know more about Israel.

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Letters of the Aleph-bet: Peh פ

By Kees de Vreugd, Theologian, Christians for Israel International, and Editor of Israel and the Church

The letter *peh* is the seventeenth letter of the aleph-beit. The Hebrew word *peh* means mouth. In the form of the letter, with a little fantasy, you can recognise a mouth. The original sign possibly represented a mouth, but its angular shape also hints at the Hebrew word *pe'ah*, which means corner. The Greek *pi* and our *P*, have developed from this letter.

The letter represents two sounds: *p* and *f*, and has two shapes. As the last letter of the word, it is long stretched, whereas, at other positions, it has a round shape.

According to the Talmud, the round ('*bent*') and log stretched *peh* point at an open and a shut mouth: *"There is a time to be silent and a time to speak"* (*Ecclesiastes 3:7*).

The *peh* much resembles the *kaf*, the only difference being the little 'tooth' hanging in the *peh*. However, this implies a world of difference. *Exodus 1:10* reads: *"Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or (Hebrew: pen, meaning 'lest') they will become even more numerous."* But in *verse 12* we read: *"But the more*

they were oppressed, the more (Hebrew: ken) they multiplied." Two words, with both two letters; one *peh-nun*, the other *kaph-nun*. Jewish explanations say that God was angry about pharaohs words. Therefore He hit a tooth out of pharaohs *peh* so that it became a *kaph*: *"The Holy Spirit said: you say: 'lest (pen) they will multiply'. But I say: 'so even more (ken) they will multiply'."*

The numerical value is eighty. Moses was eighty years old when he led the Israelites out of Egypt and received the

Torah. According to *Psalm 90*, a prayer of Moses, eighty is the age of enduring strength. With the age of eighty man reaches an exceptional strength.

Therefore *Psalm 81* (according to Chasidic tradition the psalm of an eight-year-old, who is in his 81st year of life) says: *"Open wide your mouth (peh), and I will fill it"* (*verse 11*). God lifts up man above himself. That is what this verse literally reads at the beginning: *"I am the Lord your God, who lifted you up from Egypt"*.

Emergency Appeal: Terrorist Attacks Start Hundreds of Fires in Southern Israel

For the past two months, Israel has been plagued by a new form of Hamas terror. Thousands of acres have gone up in flames, spread by incendiary kites launched towards Israel from the Gaza strip. Their purpose is to inflict the greatest possible damage to Israel's nature reserves, agricultural areas, and cities.

Please help to combat this form of terrorism by making a donation for extra firefighting vehicles in the Negev desert.



View of the burnt area near the border with the Gaza Strip. Photo by Hadas Parush/Flash90



The fires threaten not only agricultural areas and nature reserves but also populated areas, like this neighbourhood near Sderot.

Background of the Emergency Appeal

David Ben-Gurion, the founder and first prime minister of Israel, dreamt of making the barren desert bloom. As is prophesied in the Bible:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose. Isaiah 35:1

In the past seventy years, Israel has succeeded in making the majority of the desert bloom. But the product of the Jewish people's seventy years of work and dedication has been destroyed at a rapid pace during the past few weeks due to the newest terrorist tactic from Gaza: **burning kites**.

Hamas terrorists use special launchers to fly the burning kites, which land in Israeli nature reserves, agricultural land, and populated areas.



An all terrain firefighting vehicle (left) with a reserve tank (right) in order to refuel the vehicle as quickly as possible.

The result of two months of terror kites expressed in numbers is shocking:

- 450 fires caused by the kites around the Gaza Strip border
- 7,000 acres of agricultural land gone up in flames
- 1 -2 million euros in estimated damages

The fires are also disastrous to local nature and wildlife. More than 3,000,000 bees were **roasted alive**, and hundreds of other desert animals haven't been able to escape the fires in time.

Israeli firefighters and the Israeli army have been able to extinguish 600 flaming kites in the air, but unfortunately, they are not always successful. Because of the ongoing drought and open spaces, the fires continue to spread.

Emergency appeal - will you help?

Christians for Israel has set up an emergency appeal to counteract this terrorism from Hamas. We received a distress call from Sha'ar HaNegev because of the unrelenting fires, asking for help acquiring ten extra firefighting vehicles that are suited to difficult to access terrain, such as in the desert.

With these vehicles, they will be able to prevent new fires and extinguish existing fires quickly, saving many acres of nature reserves and agricultural land - and Ben-Gurion's dream.

Will you help too? If you would like to donate, please complete the coupon on the back page. Any amount is welcome.

Volunteer at Aleh

**A gap year, sabbatical or spare time?
Consider doing voluntary work at Aleh in Israel!**

Aleh is an organisation in Israel that takes care of children with severe, multiple disabilities. The organisation was founded in 1982 by a group of parents who were determined to arrange the best possible care for their children with severe disabilities.

Nowadays 700 residents, from babies to adults, receive the best care 24/7 at one of the four Aleh facilities in Jerusalem, Gedera, Bnei Brak and the Negev. This makes Aleh the biggest care network for multiple disabled people in Israel.

The value of life is very important at Aleh, and as a volunteer, you can contribute to that! Chrystal (pictured above) volunteered at Aleh for a year: "What I find so heart-warming at Aleh is that people do not look at the background of a resident. The only thing that matters is the care that someone needs. My tasks were very diverse but mainly consisted of taking care of meals and making sure that residents remained mentally challenged. We find it very important that people can do as much as possible themselves."

For more information: Go to www.aleh.org/volunteering



Photo: Isreality

Aliyah - From Bila Tserkva to Acco

By Anemone Rüger, Christians for Israel Project Coordinator - Holocaust Survivors in Israel and Ukraine

It's Monday morning in Kiev (Ukraine), and due to the holiday, the streets are not as jammed as usual. This morning, the traffic jam is happening in the elevator we are taking to the fourth floor of a Kiev movie theatre to an 'Aliyah Day' – a large information fair run by the Jewish Agency on immigrating to Israel. 'Repatriatsia' is the word used in Russian. In 2,000 years of Diaspora, the Jewish people never forgot their historic homeland. Christians for Israel runs one of the many information booths designed to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Tanya, chairwoman of the local Jewish Agency office in Bila Tserkva, has brought two buses and 100 visitors from the Jewish community in Bila Tserkva, an hour south of Kiev. The city became notorious for becoming the site of the first murder of children during the Holocaust. In the post-war years, an aerodrome provided many jobs but disappeared with the collapse of the communist system. None of the 18 pre-war synagogues have been rebuilt. The minimum pension is only US \$59 while living expenses continue to climb. Finding work and housing is hard.

"Of the 50 people in the bus, statistically 30 will go to Israel this year," says Tanya. "The other 20 will go next year."

Tanya is also our go-to person for finding needy Holocaust survivors and putting them on Christians for Israel's sponsorship programme. As she checks her cell phone, Tanya has news for us. "My sister is texting me from Israel. She made Aliyah yesterday, on Aliyah Day!"

Tanya's father was three, and his brother Yasha was five years old when World War

II made its way to Ukraine in June of 1941. Their father was immediately drafted into the Red Army. He was killed in the first few months of the war. Tanya's grandmother grabbed her two children and raced to the crowded train station, together with her sister and thousands of panicked refugees.

"When they arrived, the station was bombarded," said Tanya. "My father's brother and his aunt were killed. My father's arm was injured, and it never healed."

Tanya's grandmother boarded a freight wagon and fled to the East with her only remaining son, all the way to Uzbekistan.

After the opening of the country and the restoration of Jewish institutions in the 1990s, Tanya started working at the newly established Jewish School in Bila Tserkva. "Step by step I got drawn into this Jewish environment, and I felt very comfortable there," Tanya says. She began asking her

"...didn't want to hear about her Jewish roots... now she is the first one in our family to make Aliyah"

father about the family's Jewish history.

"I also told my sister Margarita about what I found out, but I always hit a wall with her. She didn't want to hear about it; she didn't care, she said. Something happened to her in school. People hid their origins at that time..."

That was eight years ago. Over the last two years, Tanya has started inviting her sister to Jewish holidays.

"One day she made an appointment at the consulate, just in case. And suddenly she says, 'I want to make Aliyah!'" Tanya recalls.



Anemone (pictured 3rd from right) with Christians for Israel Ukraine at 'Aliyah Day'

"She was so shy at the beginning. But then we attended the information seminars by the Jewish Agency. After she verified with the consulate that she was entitled to make Aliyah, she started asking questions – what is Hanukkah, and Rosh Hashanah, and

"My sister, out of all people!" Tanya exclaims. "The one who was always against and didn't want to hear about her Jewish roots. Now she is the first one in our family to take that step, together with her entire family!"

Tanya says she doesn't try to convince people into making Aliyah. "I inform people about their options but ultimately, the decision is theirs. Yet, my sister said to me, 'Tanya, I'm so thankful that you put that bug in my ear. With every piece of information, you melted the ice that was inside of me.'"

what year it is in the Jewish calendar."

At the end of last year, Margarita and her husband decided to pack their suitcases and move their family to the 'Land of their Forefathers'. "Something in her blood was calling her," Tanya says.

Margarita told Tanya on the phone: "When our feet touched the tarmac, I immediately felt home!" She has only been there for a few hours, and already she says she so loves it there as if she had always lived there. "This is my land," Margarita said.

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- ☐ Hineni - Soup Kitchen
☐ Holocaust Survivors - "I'm not Alone" Café Europa
☐ CFOIC - Christian Friends of Israeli Communities
☐ Emergency Food Parcels Ukraine - \$12 per parcel
☐ First Baptist Church Bethlehem and Holy Land Ministry
☒ **Emergency Appeal: Extra Firefighting Vehicles**

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

- ☐ One person (Ukraine) - US \$170
☐ One family (5 people) (Ukraine) - US \$850
☐ One busload (25 people) (Ukraine) - US \$250
☐ First Home in the Homeland
☐ Bnei Menashe (India) - One person - US \$1100

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