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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

www.c4israel.org | info@c4israel.org



US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seen at the White House in Washington DC, following Trump's unveiling of the US Peace Plan. 28 January 2020. | Photo: Flash90

Trump's 'Peace to Prosperity' Plan Unveiled

Tuesday, 28 January 2020 was one of the most extraordinary days in Israel's history. Attorney-General Mandelblit filed an official indictment against Prime Minister Netanyahu on counts of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust - an hour after Netanyahu withdrew his application to the Knesset for immunity when it became clear that he could muster no majority. This is the first time in Israel's history that a sitting Prime Minister has been officially charged with crimes. On the same day, in Washington, American president Donald Trump announced the political aspects of his long-awaited 'Peace to Prosperity' plan. 'A realistic two-state solution' is how he described it.

The Trump team, led by the President's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has worked for three years on the plan, which is unlike any peace plan proposed in relation to the conflict since the Oslo Accords of the mid-1990s. It reflects the broad principles for peace set out in the UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

Both Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz were invited to the presentation of the plan in Washington, as was Palestinian leader Mahmoud

Abbas. The Israeli leaders accepted, but the PLO leader declined, calling Trump 'a dog and the son of a dog'.

The presentation was also attended by leaders from Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

The plan contains two parts: a Political Framework and an Economic Framework. The Economic Framework had previously been unveiled in June 2019.

Israeli PM Netanyahu has embraced the plan, as has Gantz's Blue and White party. There is some opposition within right-wing parties to the idea of the creation of a Palestinian state of any sort.

The Palestinian leadership has rejected the plan outright. "I don't have long to live", Fatah representatives quoted Abbas as saying to the Jerusalem Post. "I don't want to go down as a traitor. It's either dying like martyrs or flying the Palestinian flag on the walls of Jerusalem".

The Palestinian leadership under Abbas has made clear it will not accept anything less than the terms demanded by them consistently and many of which are reflected in UN resolutions such as Security council resolution 2334: full

sovereignty over all of the territories captured by Israel in 1967 except for mutually agreed adaptations; removal of Israeli settlements; full Palestinian sovereignty over all of Jerusalem; and return of Palestinian refugees.

The plan conflicts with the mainstream interpretation of international law that underpins the UN and EU-sponsored approach to the conflict, supporting the PLO demands: Israel must end the occupation of the 'Palestinian' territories; all Israeli settlements in the occupied territories have been established illegally; the Palestinians have a right to statehood, and all of East Jerusalem is to become the capital of a Palestinian state. The plan is thus likely to receive much international criticism.

The US, on the other hand, considers that Israel has valid legal and historical claims to the territories captured in 1967, that it is not obliged to withdraw from all these territories, that Israeli settlements are not necessarily illegal, and that the Palestinian refugees do not have a right of return. A small number of states, such as Australia, support the US view on many of these issues.

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

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.

Editorial Team

Andrew Tucker

International Editor-in-Chief
atucker@c4israel.org

Cathy Coldicutt

Managing Editor
newspaper@c4israel.org

Marloes van Westing

International Communications Manager
international@c4israel.org

Ian Worby, Bryce Turner, Rita Quartel,
James Patrick, Marie-Louise Weissenböck
and Marijke Terlouw

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C4I Offices

Christians for Israel International

Leon Meijer, *Chairman*
Rev. Willem J.J. Glashouwer, *President*
Rev. Cornelis Kant, *Executive Director*
P.O. Box 1100 | 3860 BC Nijkerk,
The Netherlands | Tel: +31 33 422 0405
info@c4israel.org | www.c4israel.org

The English Edition of *Israel & Christians Today* is published by the following English speaking branches:

Christians for Israel - Australia

Ian Worby, *National Leader*
PO Box 1508, Springwood
Queensland, Australia 4127
Tel: +61 402 277 930, info@c4israel.com.au
www.c4israel.com.au

Christians for Israel - New Zealand

Bryce Turner, *National Executive Director*
PO Box 12 006, Penrose,
Auckland, New Zealand 1642
Tel: +64 9 525 7564, info@c4israel.org.nz
www.c4israel.org.nz

Christians for Israel - United Kingdom

PO Box 789, Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands B73 5FX, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 121 647 3710, ukinfo@c4israel.org

Christians for Israel - USA

Fred J van Westing, *CEO*
PO Box 2589, Manteca, CA 95336, USA
Tel/Fax: +1 209 665 4280
fredvanwesting@c4israel.org
www.c4israel.us

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The God of the Future

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains that the God of the Old Testament is a forward-looking, active God, who intervenes in history. This understanding of God was lost by the early church fathers, who focused on God the eternal, unchangeable being remote from worldly events. As a result, many in the church today, influenced by Greek thinking, have lost our understanding that God is on the move, that He has a plan and that He calls us to participate in the fulfilment of His purposes with the world. We are no longer looking for the coming of God's future because we think He has already fulfilled all things. There is nothing left for God to do.

I think this loss of a prophetic, expectant mindset has been one of the greatest tragedies of the Christian church, which was created not to replace the Jewish mindset, but to enter into it even more fully. One of the results is that for many Christians, the prophetic scriptures have become closed books. The book of Revelation - instead of drawing us closer into an understanding of God's most intimate secret - is barely read any more.

We have also lost something concerning our understanding of free will. As Sacks so eloquently explains, it is precisely because God is forward-looking that we can exercise our free will. God invites us to decide whether we will use our freedom to participate in His future or pursue our own (often well-meaning) goals.

Another result is that many Christians no longer understand the Jewish mindset, which is constantly looking forward, seeking creative and innovative ways to participate in the fulfilment of God's purposes, working towards the coming of Messiah to usher in God's kingdom. It also means we do not understand the nation of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people.

When Moses heard the mission he was to be sent on, he said to God, "Suppose I go



| Photo: Shutterstock

to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' Then what shall I tell them?" That was when God replied, cryptically, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* (*Exodus 3:14*). Sacks says:

"This was translated into Greek as *ego eimi ho on*, and into Latin as *ego sum qui sum*, meaning 'I am who I am', or 'I am He who is'. The early and medieval Christian theologians all understood the phrase to be speaking about ontology, the metaphysical nature of God's existence as the ground of all being. It meant that He was 'Being-itself, timeless, immutable, incorporeal, understood as the subsisting act of all existing'. Augustine defines God as that which does not change and cannot change. Aquinas, continuing the same tradition, reads the Exodus formula as saying that God is 'true being, that is, being that is eternal, immutable, simple, self-sufficient, and the cause and principal of every creature'.

But this is the God of Aristotle and the philosophers, not the God of Abraham and the Prophets. *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* means none of these things. It means 'I will be what, where, or how I will be'. The essential element of the phrase is the

dimension omitted by all the early Christian translations, namely the future tense. God is defining Himself as the Lord of history who is about to intervene in an unprecedented way, to liberate a group of slaves from the mightiest empire of the ancient world and lead them on a journey towards liberty...

Whenever I visit Israel, I find myself awestruck by the way this ancient people in its history-saturated land is one of the most future-oriented nations on earth, constantly searching for new advances in medical, informational, and nano-technology. Israel writes its story in the future tense.

And the future is the sphere of human freedom because I cannot change yesterday, but I can change tomorrow by what I do today. Therefore, because Judaism is a religion of the future it is a religion of human freedom, and because Israel is a future-oriented nation, it remains, in the Middle East, an oasis of freedom in a desert of oppression. Tragically, most of Israel's enemies are fixated on the past, and as long as they remain so, their people will never find freedom and Israel will never find peace." Food for thought.

Prayer Points

By Pieter Bénard

Israel

- New elections will be held in Israel on 2 March. Pray that the Israeli people are well informed in the run-up to the elections. Also, pray that a government can be formed after this third round of elections and that Israel does not have to go to the polls again.
- "I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." *Isaiah 44:22*. Pray for Jewish Israelis who do not believe in God. Pray that they may come to faith and thank and pray for the work of organisations such as Am Yisrael Echad and the Savyon Center that connects secular Jews with their Jewish roots and their God.
- Pray for security in Israeli villages in Judea and Samaria. Pray that terrorist attacks will be prevented.

Israel & the Nations

- "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me, declares the Lord" (*Isaiah 54:17*). After the liquidation of the most important army general of Iran by the US Army, tensions in the Middle East have risen again. Pray for the protection of Israel.

- Pray for protection for Jews living outside Israel. In many parts of the world, especially in Europe and America, anti-Semitism is on the rise. Pray also for those who want to make Aliyah (immigrate to Israel), pray that they have the right means to do so.
- Pray for Christians in the Middle East and particularly for Christians living under the rule of Hamas or the Palestinian Authority. Pray for their protection and pray that they will be a blessing to those around them.

Christians for Israel

- "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 *Thessalonians 5:24*). In 2020 Christians for Israel celebrates its 40th anniversary. This is a point of thankfulness. Pray that the coming year will be another fruitful year and that many people around the world will hear about God's eternal love for Israel.
- Pray for the representatives of Christians for Israel who are 'ambassadors' for Israel around the world.
- Pray that churches worldwide will stand up against anti-Semitism. And that Israel will play an important role in the prayers of Christians.

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

Short News

McDonald's Kosher



After nine years of absence, the Big Mac is now again available at the Israeli airport Ben Gurion. At the beginning of the year, McDonald's opened a branch in Airport Terminal 3. The Chief Rabbinate has also issued a kosher certificate for a restaurant in Israel that is open on Shabbat. In return, McDonald's has committed itself to precook the products and using only non-Jewish staff on Sabbath. | Photo: The Yeshive World

Boeing Names New 787 'Tel Aviv'

Ethiopian Airlines now offers two daily flights direct from Tel Aviv to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Bilan Arpain, the regional director for Ethiopian Airlines in Israel, said that naming the new Dreamliner aircraft after the city of Tel Aviv demonstrates with it the significance and importance Ethiopian Airlines attaches to Israel, the local market and their loyal Israeli passengers.

Imports and Exports at Gaza Crossing



Between 500-1000 trucks a day go into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. Chai latte, popcorn, all kinds of household goods and also cement. In principle, such access can be used to build terror tunnels. However, to punish 2 million people for the terror of 35,000 Hamas members is a bridge too far for Israel. Exported goods include agricultural products such as tomatoes. The crossing is regularly bombarded with explosives. Apparently, some people don't want any goods to come into Gaza. | Photo: C4I

Jamie Oliver Enjoys Israeli Breakfast

During his visit to Israel, famous chef Jamie Oliver had breakfast in popular cafe Kalo in Jerusalem. The standard Israeli breakfast consists of eggs, salads, cheeses and bread, which was a kibbutz creation. Jamie Oliver marvelled about the variety of salads, herbs and colours that were presented at breakfast. He commented: "This blows most breakfasts around the world out of the water."

Historic Third Election

■ Yochanan Visser
Christians for Israel
Correspondent | Israel

For the third time in one year, Israel is gearing up for parliamentary elections.

This is the first time in the history of the Jewish state new repeat-elections will be held after the previous rounds resulted in a deadlock whereby neither the left-wing bloc (which includes the Arab parties) nor the right-wing bloc (led by Likud) succeeded in forming a majority government.

If we are to believe the polls – taking into account that in Israel polls are often wildly off the mark – the upcoming elections on 2 March will not change the situation.

Kachol Lawan (Blue and White), a centre-left party that was founded before the first elections in April last year with the goal to oust Benyamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving Prime Minister in Israel's history, is leading in the latest polls.

Netanyahu (Likud) is facing three indictments for bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Attorney General Mandelblit filed charges in Jerusalem on Tuesday, 28 January, after Netanyahu earlier in the day angrily withdrew his attempts to obtain Knesset immunity in order to stay in office.

The PM accused his opponents of political murder. Blue and White leader Gantz repeated his party's position that an indicted leader is not fit for the office of Prime Minister.

In the meantime, small parties on the right and left are trying to establish new



Members of the Blue and White party seen at the election committee where political parties running for a spot in the upcoming Israeli elections, arrive to present their party list at the Knesset. | Photo: Flash90

mergers that will ensure they would cross the 3.25 per cent threshold on election day.

Israel's founding party, Labor, recently merged with the far-left party, Meretz, because both parties were in danger of not reaching the threshold. Labor had already merged with the right-wing party, Gesher, before the last elections in September 2019 to avoid demise.

On the right, the only parties that were not trying to establish mergers are the ultra-orthodox, Shas, and Likud.

The national-religious parties are in disarray after Yamina leader Naftali Bennett blocked a proposal to merge with the far-right party, Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power).

Yamina leaders and PM Netanyahu now call upon Otzma Yehudit leader, Itamar Gvir, to drop out of the race in order to

avoid a situation where thousands of votes of right-wing Israelis will go down the drain.

You might think: what about a national unity government?

In Israel, political deadlocks during the formation of governments were always solved by establishing national unity governments.

Kachol Lawan, however, is blocking this solution, citing Netanyahu's legal troubles.

In terms of political platforms, there aren't wide gaps between Likud and Kachol Lawan. Both parties have the same views on the Palestinian Israeli conflict and security issues which are the most important topics for the majority of the Israeli public.

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'Palestine' has wide international support for its claims to sovereignty over the whole of the West Bank including East Jerusalem; has, since 2012, successfully acceded to tens of multilateral treaties, including the statute of the International Criminal Court; has been granted 'UN non-member observer state status' and is recognised as a state by over 130 states; and receives significant international funding.

Trump's 'Peace to Prosperity' Plan Unveiled

The question is whether the Palestinians will now be willing to accept less: a demilitarised state that can only come into existence when they satisfy the demands of the USA. On the other hand, the Trump plan includes many incentives and benefits for the Palestinians, such as massive economic investment, state-building assistance, and regional recognition, should they accept the plan.

Some of the main aspects of the Political Framework are as follows:

Palestinian Statehood

The plan envisages the creation of a demilitarised Palestinian state, provided certain criteria are met. "The Palestinians

deserve a better future mid-1990s and this Vision can help them achieve that future. Palestinian leaders must embrace peace by recognising Israel as the Jewish state, rejecting terrorism in all its forms, allowing for special arrangements that address Israel's and the region's vital security needs, building effective institutions and choosing pragmatic solutions. If these steps are taken and the criteria set forth in this Vision are satisfied, then the United States will support the establishment of a Palestinian State."

Negotiations Leading to a Peace Agreement

The plan envisages both Israel and the Palestinians to take various steps that would lead to a binding peace agreement to end the conflict.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem west of the security barrier will remain undivided under Israeli sovereignty. A Palestinian capital can be established in the area of Jerusalem outside the barrier. Jordan retains control over the Temple Mount.

Territory, Borders and Settlements

The plan contains a map showing the borders of the proposed future Palestinian

state. The Palestinian state would cover all of current Areas A and B as well as about 70% of Area C. These areas are connected by major roads. A tunnel connects Gaza and the Palestinian state. Israel retains sovereignty over the Jordan Valley. No Israeli settlements are to be forcibly removed.

Security

The proposal contains extensive arrangements designed mainly to protect Israel's right to security.

Gaza

Hamas and Palestinian Jihad are to be disarmed, and the Palestinian Authority is to have control over Gaza. A range of proposals is intended to improve the economic conditions in Gaza. This includes adding territory close to the Gaza strip to enable new infrastructure to be built.

Regional Development

The plan promotes regional cooperation and integration. Both Jordan and Egypt will have an important role to play in determining whether the plan obtains political support in the region, and if so, the success of the plan's implementation. There will be a free trade zone between Jordan and the State of Palestine.

From San Remo to The Hague

How the Global Community is Breaching its 'Sacred Trust'



Delegates to the San Remo conference in Italy, 25 April 1920. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons



ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

The international community is breaching the 'sacred trust' promised to the Jewish people 100 years ago.

In April 2020 it will be 100 years since the Allied Powers made one of the most important decisions in modern history. On 25 April 1920, in the city of San Remo on the Italian Riviera, the leaders of Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the USA met to decide on what to do with the territories of the Ottoman/Turkish Empire that they had just defeated.

Under the influence of US President Woodrow Wilson, they decided to allow the peoples of the Middle East to govern themselves. This was to be the end of colonialism and the beginning of the principle of 'the right of peoples to self-determination', that since WWII has become an accepted principle of international law.

In order to assist the peoples of the Middle East to self-govern, the Allied Powers created a system of 'Mandates'. Three Mandates were decided at that meeting: Mesopotamia (later Iraq), Syria and Lebanon, and Palestine. The Mandates were subsequently adopted by the League of Nations – the international community at the time – which referred to Mandates as a 'sacred trust of civilisation'.

The Purpose of the Mandate for Palestine

The core purpose of the Mandate for Palestine was that Britain would help the Jewish people re-establish their homeland in 'Palestine' – which comprised the whole territory west of the Jordan River (i.e. all of current-day Israel plus the West Bank and Gaza), and also some territory east of the river (in current-day Jordan). To that end, Article 6 of the Mandate mandated Britain to allow Jews to 'closely settle' the land of Palestine.

It did not take long before Britain, and most other nations reneged on the promises made at San Remo. Proposal after proposal was made to divide Palestine, and force the Jews into small pockets of land. Against all odds, and only after the virtual destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust, and in the face of massive efforts of the Arab world to annihilate it, the Jews finally succeeded in establishing their own nation when the State of Israel was created in May 1948.

Ever since the Jewish people have been fighting both on the battlefield and in the UN institutions for the right to be recognised as a full member of the international community. To this day, the international community continues to treat Israel as a second-class citizen and believes it has the right to decide where Jews should live.

War Crimes

The latest development is the announcement in The Hague by the Prosecutor of the UN International Criminal Court (ICC), Ms Bensouda, on 20 December 2019 that she intends to open an investigation that will

undoubtedly lead to prosecution of Israeli political and defence force leaders for alleged war crimes in the 'State of Palestine'. In her view, Israel's 'settlements policies', whereby Israel has enabled Israeli's to live in so-called 'East Jerusalem' (i.e. the Old City and surrounds) and the 'West Bank' (i.e. Judea and Samaria) is a war crime, because it amounts to a forbidden 'transfer' of its own population into an 'occupied territory'.

In other words, it has now apparently become a crime for Israel to allow Jews to settle in the very parts of the country that were in 1920 intended to become the Jewish homeland.

This case is just one of several being conducted in the international institutions concerning the status of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. All are the result of Resolution 67/19 of the UN General Assembly in 2012 to grant Palestine the status of 'UN non-member Observer state status'. On the basis of that resolution 'Palestine' has acceded to dozens of international treaties, and magically become a 'state' with a President, a Foreign Minister, embassies around the world, etc.

It is time for the international community to realise that what is happening is nothing less than a fundamental breach of the 'sacred trust' promised to the Jewish people 100 years ago.

Because Israel is not a party to the ICC's Statute, the Prosecutor can only prosecute if the crimes have been committed on the territory of a state that is a party to the Statute. So she has asked the Court's Pre-Trial Chamber to confirm her decision that the 'State of Palestine' is, in fact, a state and that she, therefore, has jurisdiction to proceed.

According to the ICC Prosecutor, the mere fact that 'Palestine' signed up to the ICC's Statute is enough to make it a 'state', and thus enough to give the ICC jurisdiction to prosecute Israeli leaders for war crimes.

The matter is even more bizarre given Israel is not an ICC member. Israel supported the creation of the ICC in 2002 as an instrument to prevent impunity of war criminals for the most heinous war crimes. But it ended up not signing the Statute of Rome for the simple reason it believed the ICC would become politicised. The very thing Israel feared has now become a reality.

The fact is the Palestinian Authority (PA) simply does not satisfy the normal criteria of statehood (e.g. the requirement to have an 'effective government'), and an ICC prosecution would undermine the Oslo Accords, a multilateral binding treaty system to which not only Israel and the PLO are signatories, but was also witnessed by Russia, the USA, the EU, Jordan and Egypt.

A False Narrative

The ICC is just following the international community's willing adoption of the narrative that the Palestine

Liberation Organisation (PLO), with the backing of the Arab League members and many other States, has promoted since the late 1960s. This narrative regards the Palestinians as victims of Israeli aggression. It considers all Israeli civilian and military presence in the territories conquered by Israel in June 1967 as illegitimate, and an obstacle to the realisation of the right to self-determination of the truly indigenous people – the Palestinians. It essentially ignores the fact that the Mandate was intended to create a safe Jewish homeland in Palestine, and disregards the historical and legal significance of events prior to June 1967.

In other words, the international community is deliberately turning its back on what it decided in 1920.

In so doing, it is giving in to those Arabs (including the Palestinian Arab leadership) who want nothing less than 100% control of the Middle East (and beyond), and have consistently rejected the Mandate and launched numerous wars to eliminate the Jewish homeland.

In November 1947 they rejected the UN proposal for the creation of Jewish and Arab states in Palestine, electing instead to try to eliminate the Jewish homeland. When the

British Mandate came to an end, and the State of Israel was created on 14 May 1948, the Arabs again chose to try to destroy it by force.

In June 1967 Israel took control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and Golan Heights only because it fought a successful defensive war against five Arab armies that were intent on (yet again) destroying the Jewish State. In October 1973 they tried again. After that, they abandoned warfare and adopted lawfare.

What Should We Do?

The clock cannot be turned back to prior to 1948 in accordance with the anti-Israel chant 'From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free'. The Palestinians' claim to self-determination today must be seen in the context of the prior existence of the State of Israel that itself was the result of the granting of independence to non-self-governing territories following the collapse of the Ottoman/Turkish Empire in WWI.

It is time for the international community to realise that what is happening is nothing less than a fundamental breach of the 'sacred trust' promised to the Jewish people 100 years ago.

A promise, based on respect for historical truths, to create a safe haven for the Jewish people to ensure they will never be annihilated.

Andrew Tucker is Director of The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation, and co-author of the book Israel on Trial – How International law is being misused to delegitimise the State of Israel.

Short News

Fiddler Going Strong



The iconic Broadway play, *Fiddler on the Roof*, is still going strong. Since its premiere in 1964, it has been daily performed somewhere in the world. *Fiddler* was the first musical on the US stage to not have a lead American character and *Fiddler* held the record for longest-running Broadway musical for almost ten years. Set in 1905 in czarist Russia, where most Russian Jews were forced to live under the weight of anti-Semitic restrictions, the musical tells the story about the allure of tradition and the pull of assimilation in the shtetl (town) of Anatevka. Tevye, a poor dairy farmer, lives in this town with his wife and five unmarried daughters until a pogrom drives them out. | Photo: Flashgo

Training in Israel

Palestinian nurses from Gaza, Judea and Samaria received a four-day medical refresher course at Sheba Hospital, using a high-tech manikin. For ten years now, the hospital has been providing several refresher courses for Palestinian doctors and nurses. A nurse from Bethlehem said, "This was my first training in Israel, and it was very useful. I hope it isn't the last."

192,000 Holocaust Survivors



Ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day new statistics were revealed by the Finance Ministry. These statistics show that 192,000 survivors of the Holocaust live in Israel. Last year 14,800 survivors who lived in Israel passed away. | Photo: Newsweek

Israeli Zoo Sends Aid for animals in Australia

The Jerusalem Biblical Zoo is collecting donations to help the Animal Rescue Collective purchase veterinary supplies for animals affected by wildfires in Victoria, Australia. Supplies will include burn creams, milk replacers, hydration concentrates, wound sprays, syringes, disinfectant, feeding bottles and more. It has been estimated that 480 million animals have been affected by the fires in New South Wales alone. No one knows exactly how many have been injured or killed.

Why We Are Friends of Israel



Christian Union party leaders Gert-Jan Segers and Joël Voordewind in Israel. | Photo: Eppo Bruins

■ Joël Voordewind and Gert-Jan Segers

The Christian Union (CU) is a political party in The Netherlands and is currently one of the members of the Dutch coalition government. The CU party leaders recently visited Israel to meet with Israelis and Palestinians. "Because of abiding anti-Semitism, our first loyalty is with Israel", say Joël Voordewind and Gert-Jan Segers.

We are friends of Israel. For some of our colleagues in the Dutch Parliament, that is a reason to challenge us. Former Dutch Prime Minister van Agt says our friendship with Israel conflicts not only with our own commitment to human rights but also with international law.

Any reference to the tragedy of 75 years ago, when six million Jews were beaten, starved, shot and gassed, seems to be a sensitive topic for some people. Although we are still able to speak with the last remaining survivors of this European orgy of anti-Semitic violence, some people believe it is no longer relevant to refer to the Holocaust when discussing the legitimacy of the State of Israel. But the Holocaust was not the only example of anti-Semitism. We might just as well refer to the recent murder of Jews in New York and France, the recent attack on a synagogue in Brussels, or the bullying of a Jewish family in the Dutch town of Hippolytushoef. And what about the fact that schools and synagogues in Holland need to have 24/7 police protection? Or that virtually all Jews have been driven out of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, with the exception of Israel - where, by the way, one and a half million Arabs live in freedom.

We live in a world where anti-Semitism may, for a time, seem to disappear, but sooner or later it always comes back. It is an ineradicable, irrational evil. The only apparent reason we can see for anti-Semitism is the unique relationship between God and the Jewish people.

No other minority group has suffered such oppression as the Jewish people. No matter how civilised, assimilated, or peaceful her members were, they were always threatened with death and destruction. Yet no other people have so managed to retain its unique identity for so long, in the face of storms of hate and oppression.

Believe it or not, anti-Semitism is in our eyes so incomprehensible that - in a negative, perverse way - it proves the existence of God. It is so irrational that it must be Satanic. But even if you don't share that belief, Israel and the Jewish people deserve our support.

Israel's Right to Self-Defence

With the holocaust behind us, we have arrived at a time in history when, after two thousand years, the Jewish people have a homeland again, and have returned to the place where their history began.

In a world in which anti-Semitism seems eradicable, the state of Israel is, for every last Jew in the world, the last remaining hope for a safe haven.

In this world that is so unsafe for Jews, we want to be friends of Israel, the safe homeland for the Jewish people. Wherever the borders will end up, they need to be secure. If there is one people that deserves to be able to defend itself, it is the Jewish people.

Even after political peace agreements are signed, such as those with Egypt and

Jordan, millions of people in Israel's neighbouring countries do not accept Israel's right to exist. Words of hate that constantly flow from the mouths of Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah and Syria are no mere threats, but have countless times been put into action. Just this past week, rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israeli civilian areas. If there is one country that deserves our support, it is Israel.

Being a Friend of Israel Does Not Mean Hating Palestinians

Friendship does not mean we cannot criticise Israel. In fact, true friends can point out faults or missed opportunities. Our friendship with Israel does not automatically imply hate of Palestinians. We support a just resolution of the territorial conflict, and for many years we have supported many reconciliation projects that bring Jews and Arabs closer together.

During our recent trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories, we talked with Israelis - Jews and Arabs - as well as Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Unfortunately, a number of Palestinian politicians cancelled their meeting with us at the last minute. That will not deter us from seeking much-needed dialogue.

In the public debate about this conflict, there is a one-sidedness that is suspicious. Morocco occupies Western Sahara, and China occupies Tibet, but the world says nothing about these occupations. People who remain silent about these occupations, but continually accuse Israel of war crimes because of its occupation, and criticise our friendship with Israel, have other motives than the pursuit of human rights.

Gert-Jan Segers is the leader of the Christian Union, and Joël Voordewind is Foreign Affairs spokesman.



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Really Blessed - Psalm 2 - Part 8

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

This article is the final instalment in a series of contributions to the interpretation of *Psalm 2*.

Psalm 2 is frightening and dreadful, but it concludes by saying: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him!" (verse 12e).

In his interpretation of *Psalm 2* on Christ Jesus, Martin Luther writes: "That's why He suffered, that's why He's risen, that's why He has been installed as king, that's why He has received everything as an inheritance, that He could save all who trust in Him." There would be nothing to add to that from the Christian point of view if there were not a fateful exegetical tradition which wipes out everything Jewish and every link to the Land of Israel.

However, even in its last sentence, the message of *Psalm 2* should not be seen in one dimension exclusively, as Christian exegesis traditionally has often done. All hermeneutical levels of *Psalm 2* should be kept in mind. Christ must not be removed from His national context. Not without a good reason did Jesus emphasise: "Salvation comes from the Jews" (*John 4:22*).

And the saving work of God cannot be detached from its geographical context, from the Land of Israel, from the city of Jerusalem. When Paul declares in *Romans 10:13*, that only that person shall be saved, who will "call upon the name of the Lord", he quotes the prophet Joel, who continued in the same breath: "For there shall be refuge on Mt Zion and in Jerusalem" (*Joel 3:5*).

The work of God through Messiah is interconnected with the people and Land of Israel, whose heart is the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the Land of Israel, and the longing for Zion are rooted in the Word of God. As the nations rage against the Lord and His Messiah, they also rage against the people and the Land of Israel, and against Jerusalem. Everyone who wishes to 'take refuge in Him' should keep an eye on that.

Luther, finally, finds a connection between the terrible and the safety, which is expressed in the closing word of *Psalm 2*: "Because that's why His anger is scary, so that he may urge you to trust Him." "There is no refuge from Him," the British exegete Derek Kidner perfectly sums up the statement of the last sentence of *Psalm 2*, "only in him."

Samson Raphael Hirsch connects the Hebrew root '*hasah*' (to seek/to take refuge) with 'the intensified' '*hazah*' (to see, to look) and concludes: This 'seeking refuge' is about 'the most intimate, most expectant focusing at something'.

Concrete: Anyone who seeks refuge in God will constantly focus on God and His actions. This does not



A young boy holds an umbrella on a rainy winter day at the Western Wall. | Photo: Flash90

happen automatically. The temptation is huge to allow the reality surrounding us to capture our attention. But whoever turns away his focus from the Lord and His Messiah, allowing themselves to be caught even for a little moment by the 'strong winds', by the raging storm; will, as Peter once did, begin to sink (compare *Matthew 14:22-33*).

The opposite of those who seek refuge with God is the man who seeks his safety in people. The living God calls such a person 'cursed' (*Jeremiah 17:5a*).

Comparison with Psalm 1

Rabbinic teachers of Scripture discovered early on that the word '*ashray*' (blessed) is like parentheses around *Psalm 1* and *2*. The Babylonian Talmud hands down a saying of "Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nahmani on behalf of Rabbi Yohanan: Every section of Scripture that David especially loved, began with '*ashray*' (blessed is) and concluded with '*ashray*' (blessed is). He started with '*ashray*' as it is written [at the beginning of *Psalm 1*]: "Blessed is the man..." and concluded with '*ashray*', as it is written [at the end of *Psalm 2*]: "Blessed is the one who seeks his refuge in Him".

The first two chapters of the *Book of Psalms* are also linked in terms of content and language by many parentheses. Hakham observes: "In *Psalm 1*, the wicked and the righteous face each other." Likewise, in *Psalm 2* "the evil nations face the Lord and His Messiah".

Linguistic references are often only visible in the Hebrew original. Thus the Gentiles 'mutter' in *Psalm 2:1* in vain, just as the righteous man had 'muttered' over the Torah in *Psalm 1* day and night. *Psalm 2:12* warns "so that you will not perish", direct connecting it back to the statement in

Psalm 1:6: "The way of the ungodly will perish."

In some cases, the opposites are striking, which directly confront each other both in terms of language and content. Thus, the efforts of the Gentile nations in *Psalm 2:1* are 'absurd,' 'failing,' and 'into the void,' while the righteous in *Psalm 1* will be 'successful in all things' (verse 3).

The connection between the first two chapters of the *Book of Psalms* is perceived to be so closely linked by Jewish interpreters that they even claimed that they were originally one single chapter. Derek Kidner observes that *Psalm 2* lacks a headline typical of many other chapters in *Psalms*. Furthermore, there are indeed some ancient manuscripts that treat both psalms as one chapter. However, Paul in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia speaks about the 'second psalm,' quoting our passage (*Acts 13:33*).

From what *Psalm 1* 'expresses for the individual life', *Psalm 2* "draws the consequences for the national life and the whole future". Whereas in *Psalm 1*, we see a single man, an individual with a certain attitude that he makes his lifestyle; *Psalm 2* describes a worldwide perspective in which the individual has to prove himself. *Psalm 2* has a broad prophetic horizon, while *Psalm 1* focuses on the behaviour of the individual, on ethics.

If we want to know how an individual should behave in the global chaos that *Psalm 2* describes, if we want to know what it looks like, 'to seek refuge in Him' or 'to sit in the shadow of the Almighty', then we have to look at *Psalm 1*.

The full text of this article, including extensive footnotes, can be found at www.c4israel.org/teaching-articles/

Jewish Hesitation Towards Jesus

■ Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

Why don't many Jews believe that Jesus is the Messiah, when it's clearly written in the Bible?

This sort of question is one with which we all are familiar. Some even regard Jews stubborn for this reason. In doing so, we are doing the Jews a serious disservice and ignoring the great difficulty that they have faced when it comes to Jesus over the last 2000 years. Paul referred to this as a 'mystery'.

During his missionary journeys, Paul always visited the synagogue first. Some Jews believed, but others could not accept his message about Jesus. The prophets in the Old Testament spoke in one breath about the coming of the Prince of Peace, the Messiah, and the coming of the worldwide kingdom of peace from Jerusalem. *Isaiah 2* speaks about the coming of the Root of Jesse, followed by the 'earth that shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord'

and 'the nursing child that shall play by the cobra's hole'. But for the Jews in Paul's days, the brutal occupation of Israel by the Romans was still going on. Nothing had changed. And they had never seen Jesus personally. Let us try to understand a bit of their resistance.

Over the centuries, the Christian Church believed that the Jewish people were cursed for eternity. The church had become the true Israel and would have taken Israel's place. Jews in Europe were forced to repent and be baptised and renounce their Jewry. Maintaining the Torah, eating kosher, celebrating Jewish feasts and memorial days were then no longer allowed. They had to give up their Jewish identity completely and live a Christian life. How could the church demand this of Jews! Church Father Chrysostom said in the 3rd century: "Visiting the synagogue equals visiting a brothel or robber's lair". However, maintaining the Torah out of reverence for God was sacred to Jews.

For them, the 'Christian Jesus' could never be their Messiah. This resistance was reinforced by the many massacres of Jews and looting of Jewish homes and possessions. Instead of arousing jealousy, as Paul wrote, we made it almost impossible for Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah. The Church forgot that Jesus himself is a Jew and that the ancient prophecies about the coming of the Messiah were part of Judaism.

In the 20th century, even the Holocaust would take place in the heart of Christian Europe. Too much has happened over the centuries. After the Second World War, the attitude of many churches towards the Jews has improved considerably and there are many good relationships. At the same time, many churches find it difficult to renounce the classical replacement theology and there are even churches active in the BDS movement for an economic boycott of Israel. Let us realise that there is a 'mystery' at this point and understand the difficulty and resistance of Jews regarding Jesus.

Large Menorah Unveiled in Sderot

At least 500 people gathered in the late afternoon of Tuesday, 17 December 2019, on a roundabout in a new housing estate in Sderot. A twelve-meter-high menorah was unveiled that immediately became the largest menorah in the Middle East.

Although the menorah was inaugurated on Israeli soil, the impressive construction was not entirely new to many visitors. At least 150 people came along on a journey with Christians for Israel, Netherlands, and many of them had seen the menorah before in the Netherlands. There it had been on display successively in Nijkerk, Urk, Maastricht, The Hague, Lelystad and Leeuwarden during public Hanukkah celebrations that Christians for Israel was allowed to organise together with the Jewish community. After having wandered around in the Netherlands for six years, the menorah now came ‘home’ to Israel.

Sderot was chosen deliberately, a city only a few kilometres from the Gaza strip. The inhabitants suffered severely under the missile terror of Hamas. The menorah is meant as a visible sign of friendship between Dutch Christians and Israel.

Danielle Mor of the Jewish Agency started the meeting: “It is everybody’s duty to spread the light. That is why we are here.”

Mayor Alon Davidi from Sderot was happy to see so many friends of Israel in his city. “It is important that we are here

and that we stay here, even if Hamas wants us out of the way. They try to destroy our city, but we are rebuilding it.”

Chairman Pim van der Hoff from Christians for Israel Netherlands referred to Israel as a light for the nations. “The prophet Isaiah already wrote this, and the menorah is a tangible example of that.” Van der Hoff also thanked the Frisian entrepreneurs Arjen Lont and Klaas Zijlstra who assumed responsibility for the construction of the menorah six years ago. “Today, after six years of having spread the light in the Netherlands, we want to bring the light where it belongs. That is in Israel.”

Chief Rabbi Jacobs of the Netherlands took up that remark: “Some six years ago I joked to a number of people from Christians for Israel that if they wanted to do something extraordinary, they ought to build the biggest menorah in the world. Apparently, they didn’t know that rabbis make jokes every now and then because have a look behind me”, he said, pointing at the menorah. It was Jacob’s seventh time he was present at the lighting of the menorah. The six previous times he had to be lifted up with a hydraulic arm, but now a touch of a button was enough to switch on the lights.

Isaac Herzog (director of the Jewish Agency) wondered how you can lead a normal life in Sderot when you are surrounded by so much darkness. He answered the question himself: “We oust the darkness by spreading the light.”



The Menorah spreads its light. | Photo: Christians for Israel Netherlands

The menorah is now permanently located on a prominent place in Sderot. The unveiling took place one week before the Jewish people celebrated Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights.

‘Never Again!’ is Now!

■ Dr Emilie Noteboom
Director of Outreach, European Coalition for Israel

Monday, 27 January, marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Soviet troops. The world commemorated the tragedy and horrors of the Holocaust, remembering the six million (some argue many millions more!) precious Jewish lives that were ruthlessly snuffed out.

Collectively we gasp again at what man can do to man and wonder how such a thing as the Holocaust could ever have happened. Where were the normal, decent people in the face of such evil? Why did our Jewish friends and neighbours not receive more help so they could be rescued from a fate unspeakable?

My nation of The Netherlands was home to 144,000 Jews before the Second World War. After Nazi rule, only 40,000 Jewish people were left. The ghost town areas of Amsterdam, completely bereft of all its Jewish inhabitants, served for years as a silent witness to the huge numbers of people, young and old, deported for the sole crime of being Jewish. How could this have been?

History tells us that some Dutch people collaborated with the German occupiers. Some joined the underground resistance and fought back. One famous such hero was Corrie ten Boom who, with her family, hid Jews and helped where she could.

We like to remember people like Corrie ten Boom. They had a moral compass that directed them to do what was right despite the personal cost and suffering. We like to think of them as our friends, as kindred spirits, as we, too, would want to have been like them in the face of such monumental challenges. But —and I say this with shame— most Dutch people did *not* help. Most kept their heads low and hoped the grotesque nightmare would go away. Of course, war is complicated. The Germans were ruthless. If you helped, you and your family, perhaps your whole street or village, might be tortured and deported to the camps. So people looked away. What could one person do against a war machine, against all the propaganda?

Desperate times have a way of bringing into the open what kind of person we really are; what our character is



Holocaust Memorial | Photo: unsplash

made of. The track record of my fellow Dutch folk is that right under our noses more than 100,000 beautiful souls were tragically murdered. At the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we remember the many millions who died and also those who returned from the camps broken and often the sole survivors of their entire family, who were frequently mistreated and unwelcome even after returning from their hellish experiences. I cannot help but wonder what kind of person I would have been had I been alive at that time. In the face of such evil and under such difficulties, how would I have acted? What would I have done? Would I have helped?

While we cannot change the past, the present is witnessing a horrifying rise of the old poison of anti-Semitism in Europe and around the globe, showing disturbing similarities to the 1930s. Again Jewish businesses are singled out and marked for boycott, through the Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) efforts. A recent ruling by the European Court of Justice ruled that Israeli wine originating from the so-called West Bank must be labelled as coming from ‘Israeli settlements’. Jewish professors and students are made to feel

unwelcome in academia and on university campuses. Legislation is being considered that would make Jewish life impossible such as proposals within the EU to outlaw circumcision and kosher slaughter. Again neo-Nazi rhetoric is propagated in Central and Eastern European countries, while violent attacks on Jews in Western European countries, and most recently also in the US, is becoming alarmingly more common, so much so that the German government (!) has this past year advised German Jews not to wear skullcaps as their safety can no longer be guaranteed.

As the old hatred of anti-Semitism is gaining momentum, often expressed by hatred for Israel, my question is no longer, “What would I have done?” My question has become, “What am I doing?” Am I willing to stand with the Jewish people and the Jewish State? Am I helping? Are you willing to do so, despite the likely cost? May our remembrance of the atrocities of the Second World War remind us where the cancer of anti-Semitism can lead, and may it galvanise all of our resolves to fight this evil and help where we can to stop it in its tracks.

‘Never again!’ is now!

Holocaust Remembrance Day

■ Perry Trotter

Founder | Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation NZ

Father had been very religious - but not after the war. “Six million Jews had prayed for all they were worth”, he said. “We’ve been the chosen people long enough. Choose someone else”.

These are the words of one of the many survivors we have photographed and interviewed over the last twelve years. They give a glimpse of what I believe underlies many of the challenges and controversies currently surrounding Holocaust memory.

In 2005 the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 60/7, designated 27 January as an international memorial day for the victims of the Holocaust. The day chosen was the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Since that time, in many capitals of the world, significant events, many of them lavish, have been held to mark the day. Politicians and dignitaries gather, often pledging their commitment to stand against anti-Semitism. And yet the statistics on anti-Semitism continue to rise in most of those nations.

And it is not only the Jewish people themselves who face hostility. The memory of the Holocaust itself is increasingly under attack, both from within and without.

In Eastern Europe, a trend has emerged in which history is being rewritten so as to exonerate past national leaders or even whole nations. And in the West Holocaust memory is being universalised and instrumentalised: the industrialised murder of Jews in the 1940s has been harnessed for anything from disability rights to gay rights in the 2010s.

In a recent article, Prof. Monika Schwarz-Friesel wrote, “Comprehending this unique character of Jew-hatred as a cultural category sui generis rather than as one form of prejudice among others is a precondition to challenging it successfully.”

It is that uniqueness that is obscured when the Holocaust is diluted in service of other causes. What philosophers might call particularity, Christians and religious Jews more often call chosenness. And it is that chosenness and all it entails that I believe underlies, in large measure, anti-Semitism and the mounting challenges to Holocaust memory.

Europe’s attempt to purge itself of the Jews and of all they represent hangs like a shroud over the conscience of the continent. And the mishandling of the memory of that event will do nothing to lift its darkness. Whether it is the Eastern European tendency to distort or the Western tendency to seek absolution in memorialising and moralising, or the trend within some sectors of the Jewish community to universalise, the uniqueness of the event will persist.

UN International Holocaust Remembrance Day events



Auschwitz I: The Main Gate. From the exhibition ‘Auschwitz. Now.’ | Photo: Perry Trotter

will no doubt continue, but the custodians of Holocaust memory must guard its integrity with increasing vigilance. As years pass and survivor numbers diminish, the importance of remembering the Holocaust will only increase. Our Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand will do all it can to keep the memory alive through our exhibitions and events.

The Jewish people, and all they represent, will continue to challenge us all - in life, in death, and even in memory.

Perry Trotter is founder of Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation, Aotearoa New Zealand (formerly Shadows of Shoah), and creator of the exhibition ‘Auschwitz. Now.’ www.shadowsofshoah.com

Holocaust Commemorations Around the World

Netherlands



700 people attended the Holocaust commemoration organised by C4I Netherlands, including 60 pupils from a local primary school. Each of them put a small stone of remembrance next to the Hanukkah.

Germany



Left: 160 participants and speakers at the Holocaust Memorial event in Berlin, organised by the Initiative 27. Januar, a partner of C4I Germany. Right: Holocaust-Survivor Franz Michalski and his wife Petra, who became his ‘spokesperson’ after a stroke.

New Zealand



Left: Dr David Cumin, Israel Institute of NZ, Joel van Ameringen, NZ Jewish Council, Yacov (James) van Ameringen, Holocaust survivor 98, Hon Alfred Ngara, Member of Parliament, Perry Trotter, Founder, Holocaust and Antisemitism NZ. Right: Dr David Cumin

Italy



Prof. Edda Fogarollo (C4I Italy) gave an historical introduction to the documentary film *The Invisible* that was screened.

Holocaust by Bullets

Between 1941 and 1944, an estimated 1,700,000 Ukrainian Jews were killed after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. This was called ‘holocaust by bullets’. In Ukraine, there were many small Jewish towns called ‘*stetls*’. In these towns the Jews –mostly mothers, children, babies, elderly and sick people– were commanded to come to a place at the edge of town where they were shot by special German commandos, often assisted by local Ukrainian police.

The bodies of the victims were buried in pits and ditches, and in order to save bullets, babies and children were buried alive. Despite accounts by the rare survivors, this part of Holocaust history in Eastern Europe is still virtually unknown.

There are about 2,000 Jewish mass graves all over Ukraine, and even today unknown mass graves are being discovered. Christians for Israel Ukraine places Holocaust Memorials at Jewish mass graves where there is no memorial or reminder. Since 2010 Christians for Israel has placed 30 Holocaust Memorials. So people can remember the past.

Lest we forget.



The train track at Auschwitz Birkenau. | Photo: Flash90

Was Auschwitz Really Liberated?

■ Binyomin Jacobs

Chief Rabbi of The Netherlands

A bishop called upon his congregation to start a pogrom in the Jewish Ghetto. His followers were allowed to steal, to hurt, to kill. But, being a religious man, he gave the Jews an escape. There would be a contest between a priest and a volunteer of the Jewish community. If the Jew won the contest, the pogrom would not take place. How did he propose that the contest would take place? There would be a long table. On one side would be placed the priest, and on the other side, the Jew. On both sides would be galleries for the public. Standing behind both the priest and the Jew would be a soldier with a sword. The Jew and the priest were to question each other on any subject they chose. If either one of them answered "I don't know", this would be the signal for the soldier to chop off that person's head.

As you might have guessed, there were not many volunteers amongst the Jews to enter this contest.

But finally, on the last possible day, a *schlimazel*, a poor and perhaps slightly foolish fellow told the community that he was prepared to enter the contest. As nobody else was prepared to join this dangerous operation, they agreed to send him as their candidate. After throwing the dice, the Jew was allowed to ask the first question to the priest. "What does '*ani lo jodea*' mean?" he asked. The priest, who spoke Hebrew very well, answered with the correct translation: "I don't know!" The soldier, not knowing Hebrew at all, just heard "I don't know" and immediately chopped off the priest's head.

The Jewish community danced for days from happiness. But after a few days, they realised that something illogical had occurred. How was it possible that this simpleton had such a brilliant idea? He, of course, knew that the priest would know Hebrew and at the same time he, of course, knew that the soldier didn't. They called him over and asked him where he got this great idea from. His answer was: "I once read a book. And in that book was written '*ani lo jodea*'. I didn't know the meaning. So, I went to my rabbi and asked him: rabbi what does '*ani lo jodea*' mean? My rabbi answered: "I don't know".

Well, if my rabbi doesn't know I was sure the priest also wouldn't know."

Why did I start with a joke? Because anti-Semitism is not only a physical attack but also a mental war. Anti-Semitism tries to hurt, to damage, physically and mentally. Yes, the gas chambers of Auschwitz killed my family, but before the killing there was the mortification. Human beings were reduced to mere numbers. It is of huge importance to keep strong, refuse to give in to any kind of threat, physical and spiritual. I refuse to change my Jewish-looking hat, or my *kippa*, for a baseball cap. When Netanyahu called upon French Jewry to leave France and to make *Aliyah* to Israel, a journalist suddenly pushed his microphone in front of me. "Rabbi, do you agree with Netanyahu that Jews should leave Europe?" My answer was a strong 'yes' and a strong 'no'.

Yes, it is true that my parents, survivors of the Holocaust, did not have a place to go. And I, if needed, could, thank God, go to Israel. But the question of if and when I will or won't go, will be decided by me, myself, and not by fear of terror.

But what exactly is the subject I am asked to talk about, the subject of this speech? Am I requested to give my thoughts on how to deal with anti-Semitism? Am I supposed to give my opinion about the discussion of whether there is new anti-Semitism? Or if anti-Semitism never disappeared but was just invisible?

Do I have to give a proposal of how to fight anti-Semitism? Do I have to give a wake-up call to those Jews who believe that anti-Semitism is only in the minds of the Jews and really isn't so bad? Or do I have to warn my fellow Jews that they shouldn't see an anti-Semite behind each and every tree and consider each Gentile as an enemy?

In my country, the Netherlands, the highest percentage of Jews in civilised Western Europe were killed. Yes, in my country it was, thank God, only a small percentage of the Dutch who collaborated with the Nazi's, but, be aware, it was also a very small percentage that was prepared to fight them. The majority saw it happen and let it happen: 102,000 out of 140,000 Dutch Jews were killed. Many of those who managed to survive still suffer, or have suffered till their last day on earth.

I was brought up with 'before the war' and 'after the war'. I had to learn how to play the violin because my Uncle Joseph, who was a partisan and executed in prison, also

played the violin. When I was a little boy, both my parents used to tell me: "Don't worry, this will never happen again". When I was about 14 years old, my father advised me to always make sure I had 8000 guilders in the house, just in case. Shortly before my father passed away, he told me very clearly: "Dear son. Don't fool yourself! Be aware: it could happen again!"

Most Dutch Jews, being integrated into Dutch society, believed that it could happen in Poland, in Germany, but not in Holland, "because we are Dutch". But it did happen.

It is true, the Dutch Government today is not anti-Semitic. We can't compare it with the Nazi regime at all. But, like a senior German politician once told me: "We will give the Jews all the required protection, but we can't predict who will be the next Government. Don't forget: Hitler was chosen democratically".

Today my house is surrounded by police cameras. I am thankful to the Police, who are making sure that nothing will happen to me, they are just great. Both our Jewish schools are surrounded with a huge fence, like in a prison for top criminals, and soldiers are making sure, during lessons, that my children are able to attend the school without danger.

My parents were the wrong race. They weren't Arians. My problem is that I am Jewish and therefore a Zionist. And Zionism, Judaism and Israel are all the same.

The refugees are the problem today, the Muslims! But then again, during the years 1940-1945 in Holland, there was no Islam at all.

It's good that Jewish events and buildings receive extra security, and I am grateful that the Dutch Government cares about my safety. I realise that my children and grandchildren have never attended school without police protection, which is absolutely impressive.

But, at the same time, it is ridiculous and in fact, unacceptable that this is needed 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz.

Therefore I am puzzled: was (or is) Auschwitz really liberated?

This article is the transcript of a speech given in Krakow on 20th January 2020 on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau Camps.

Netanyahu: Israel will Defend Itself

In the largest diplomatic event in Israel's history, leaders of over 40 nations met in Jerusalem late January to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps in January 1945.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reminded the world that Israel will no longer rely on others for its survival: "Israel is eternally grateful for the sacrifice made by the Allies. Without that sacrifice, there would be no survivors today. But we also remember that some 80 years ago, when the Jewish people faced annihilation, the world turned its back on us," Netanyahu said. "The Jewish people have learned the lessons of the Holocaust: that we cannot take threats to annihilate us lightly; to confront threats when they are small; and above all, even though we greatly appreciate the help of our friends, to defend ourselves by ourselves," Netanyahu said.

He continued: "The Jewish people have learned the lessons of the Holocaust: to take, always to take seriously the threats of those who seek our destruction; to confront threats when they are small; and above all, even though we deeply, deeply appreciate the great support of our friends, to always have the power to defend ourselves by ourselves. We have learned that Israel must always remain the master of its fate."

While the world learned the lesson about evil, it did not necessarily learn the lesson about pre-emption, he argued. "There are some signs of hope – and this extraordinary gathering is one of them. Today, the dangers of racism, hateful ideologies, and anti-Semitism are better understood. Many recognise a simple truth: that what starts with the hatred of the Jews doesn't end with the Jews," he said.

But, he added, "I am concerned. I am concerned that we have yet to see a unified and resolute stance against the most anti-Semitic regime on the planet – a regime that openly seeks to develop nuclear weapons and annihilate the one and only Jewish state."

Calling the ayatollahs' regime the "tyrants of Tehran," Netanyahu said Israel "salutes President Trump and Vice President Pence for confronting the Tyrants of Tehran that subjugate their own people and threaten the peace and



Israeli PM and Israeli President with world leaders during the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem on 23 January, 2020. | Photo: Flash90

security of the entire world. They threaten the peace and security of everyone in the Middle East and everyone beyond. I call on all governments to join the vital effort of confronting Iran."

And he vowed: "I wish to assure again our people and all our friends, Israel will do whatever it must do to defend our state, defend our people and defend the Jewish future."

Analysis: Israel's Security Situation

■ **Yochanan Visser**
Christians for Israel Correspondent | Israel

The assassination of Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis the commander of the Kata'ib Hezbollah militia and the deputy commander of the al-Hashd al-Sha'abi organisation of predominantly Shiite militias in Iraq, caused a significant change in the war that Israel is fighting against Iran.

At the end of 2019, Aviv Kohavi, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), indicated during a security conference in Herzliya, that Israel wasn't satisfied with the fact that it was fighting Iran's imperialistic drive in the Middle East alone.

But, on 3 January, came the American drone attack that killed Soleimani, a national hero in Iran, and al-Muhandis who had more than 40 years of experience in asymmetric warfare against foreign actors in Iraq.

The assassination changed the whole strategic situation in the war against Iran and its numerous proxies and Israel's case for the better.

Until 3 January, Israel carried out more than 1,000 air strikes against Iran-related targets in Syria while the Israeli air force (IAF), in 2019, widened its attacks against the Iranian axis to Iraq where Soleimani was arming the al-Hashd al-Shaabi militias with ballistic missiles that could reach Israel.

At the same time, the Quds commander was interfering in Iraqi politics and tried to establish a new, pro-Iranian government that would force the US army out of Iraq; a

plan that would also have repercussions for Israel since the US military in Iraq was cooperating with Israel in the field of intelligence.

Soleimani, however, overplayed his hand when he ordered attacks on US targets in Iraq which eventually resulted in the death of an American engineer in Iraqi Kurdistan and the wounding of four US soldiers.

The Iranian general also engineered violent attacks on the US embassy in Baghdad. This together with a reported plan to attack additional US embassies in the Middle East, caused US President Donald Trump to okay the assassination of Soleimani and his Iraqi sidekick al-Muhandis.

The Iranian response came in the form of a missile attack on two US bases in Iraq that only lightly wounded nine American soldiers. This was followed by new mysterious airstrikes on pro-Iranian militias in the area of the border town of al-Bukamal on the Syrian Iraqi border.

Arab media reported that this time the airstrikes were contributed to by the US-led coalition that used to fight Islamic State and not the IAF.

The airstrikes marked the first time the US army directly confronted the Iranian axis, and they could be a game-changer in the war against Iran.

In one month's time, Iran lost the high ground it had in its imperialistic drive to take over the Middle East.

It lost Soleimani, the shrewd architect of the Shiite Crescent project, a man whom Israel regarded as its biggest foe and who was actively preparing for war against

the Jewish state by forming a coalition of proxy forces that included Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in both Syria and Iraq, the Ansar Allah or Houthi militia in Yemen, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Gaza.

These militias and terror organisations received massive amounts of weapons and money from Soleimani as well as militarray as became apparent by reports about the chaos in the Hashd al-Sha'abi organisation in Iraq. Another indication that the pro-Iranian axis is suffering from a leadership vacuum is the fact that Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, is trying to raise his profile by making comments indicating that he would like to take over Soleimani's training in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Iran reportedly also delivered long-range missiles to Ansar Allah in Yemen that were supposed to be used against southern Israel and the Gulf of Eilat, a very important waterway for Israel.

With Soleimani and al-Muhandis gone, the pro-Iranian axis seems to be in dis role.

The Hezbollah leader lacks the skills of Soleimani, however, and is not able to travel around freely in the Middle East since Israel is looking to assassinate him.

To conclude, Israel isn't alone anymore in the fight against the Iranian axis now that the US has entered the fray. The axis doesn't have a leader like Soleimani anymore and the regime in Iran has been weakened not only by Soleimani's death but also, by the popular uprising that followed the tragic shoot-down of a Ukrainian civilian plane in Iran.

Biblical Names

By Kees de Vreugd

Rachel

Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob. Her name means ewe. It is an expression of all the history and life-setting of the family (*Genesis 29*). Father Laban gives to his daughters names that are connected directly to his business: sheep and cow (Leah). Those names may express his hope for prosperity and a great offspring.

Laban's ancestors had arrived in Paddan-Aram as nomadic shepherds, where they settled in Haran (*Genesis 11:31*) – maybe for good, or maybe just temporarily.

In any case, sheep-farming remained their source of income. Abram went further as shepherd-prince to arrive in the Promised Land. From there, his grandson Jacob returned to the family to find a wife. He finds her at a well, the meeting place for the region. There the shepherds come together with their flocks and there, too, comes a shepherdess with her flock. The shepherdess is not only Jacob's cousin, but she is also 'beautiful of form and face' (*Genesis 29:17*). The groom in the Song of Songs sings of his bride: "Your teeth are like a flock of ewes which have come up from their washing, all of which bear

twins, and not one among them has lost her young" (*6:6*). Seeing Rachel inspires Jacob to great deeds. He rolls aside the large stone that covers the well and then waters the sheep of Laban, which are under Rachel's guard. For Rachel, Jacob will serve Laban, fourteen years in total. And after that, he will serve Laban for another six years for his flock. During all that time, Laban's ewes and she-goats have not miscarried (*Genesis 31:38*). Bitter is it then that Rachel herself remains childless, and dies when giving birth to her second son. She is buried 'on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)' (*Genesis*

35:19), a place that will always be kept in remembrance: "A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children" (*Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:16-18*).

Finally, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a "sheep that is silent before its shearers", a Rachel! (*Isaiah 53:7*) Did he think of the matriarch? That is probably a bit far-fetched. Yet, apart from the preceding verses, this is the only Bible reference where that word is used. Might it perhaps be a poetic reference to the origins of Israel, be it by association?

Jewish Festivals

Tu BiShvat

New Year for Trees
10 February 2020

Tu BiShvat is a minor Jewish holiday, occurring on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Sh'vat. It is also called 'The New Year of the Trees'. Tu BiShvat is one of four 'New Years' mentioned in the Mishnah. Tu BiShvat begins at sundown on Sunday, 9 February 2020.

Shabbat Shekalim

Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh Adar
22 February 2020

Shabbat Shekalim (Sabbath of shekels) read in preparation for Purim, requests each adult male Jew contribute half of a Biblical shekel for the upkeep of the Tent of Meeting. The Torah portion *Exodus 30:11-16* is read. This Shabbat takes place on the Shabbat before the 1st of the Hebrew calendar month of Adar, or on the 1st of Adar itself if it falls on Shabbat. In leap years on the Hebrew calendar, when there are two months of Adar, Shabbat Shekalim is on the Shabbat before the 1st of Adar II (or on the 1st of Adar II itself if it is Shabbat). Shabbat Shekalim begins at sundown on Friday, 21 February 2020.

Shabbat Zachor

Shabbat before Purim
7 March 2020

Shabbat Zachor (Sabbath of remembrance) is the Shabbat preceding Purim. *Deuteronomy 25:17-19*, describing the attack by Amalek, is recounted. The tradition from the Talmud that Haman, the antagonist of the Purim story, was descended from Amalek. The portion read includes a commandment to remember the attack by Amalek, and therefore at this public reading both men and women make a special effort to hear the reading. Shabbat Zachor begins at sundown on Friday, 6 March 2020.

Ta'anit Esther

Fast of Esther
9 March 2020

The Fast of Esther (Ta'anit Ester) is a Jewish fast from dawn until dusk on Purim eve, commemorating the three-day fast observed by the Jewish people in the story of Purim. If the date of the Fast of Esther falls on Shabbat (Saturday), the fast is instead observed on the preceding Thursday. Ta'anit Esther begins at dawn on Monday, 9 March 2020.

Purim

One of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar
10 March 2020

Purim (Hebrew: 'lots', from the word *pur*, related to Akkadian *pūru*) is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people in the ancient Persian Empire from destruction in the wake of a plot by Haman, a story recorded in the Biblical Book of Esther (Megillat Esther). Purim begins at sundown on Monday, 9 March 2020.

12th Thesis: Renewal

Kees de Vreugd

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

In this article, we complete our discussion of the 'Twelve Theses of Faith on Israel' published by Christians for Israel.

Thesis 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.

Elaboration: We finally believe and confess that the Lord Himself will be the guarantee of the renewal of all things, of the (re)new(ed) heavens and of the (re)new(ed) earth. Then the heavenly Jerusalem will come down to earth and the nations will walk by its light and the Glory of God will be its light and the Lamb will be its lamp. And the tree of life will be the source of healing for the nations. On that day God will be all and in all. Hallelujah!

Clarification: When Messiah will eventually have destroyed all the enemies and the final enemy, death, has been defeated, Jesus will surrender the Kingdom to God the Father, and the Universe will enter into its final phase of everlasting glory. *1 Corinthians 15:24-28* says: "Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For He 'has put

everything under His feet.' Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under Him, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ. When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all." In the prophetic and eschatological perspective, it is not always clear to define which prophecy refers to which stage of the unfolding Kingdom. The prophets sometimes mix the beautiful elements without sharply defining which element belongs where. But the Kingdom of God will be realised when Satan and the powers of darkness will be bound, but death is still a reality (*Isaiah 65:20, Revelation 20:1-6*). Finally, there will be the realised Kingdom of God, that will glow with everlasting life and in which death shall be no more (*Revelation 21:1-5*).

Kameel Majdali

Director | Teach All Nations

And he that sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new". And he said unto me, "Write this down, for these words are true and faithful". *Revelation 21:5*

The 12th Thesis announces a wonderful truth: God has saved the best for last. It reflects the fulfilment of the longing of all Godly people, and of creation itself. First, let us be clear that God is Creator, and is celebrated as such from Genesis to Revelation. Everything God made was 'very good.' Yet, due to the first couple's disobedience, sin and death were introduced into humanity and creation was corrupted. From this disaster came

seven formidable enemies: sin, sickness, worldliness, danger, the devil, death, and hell. No religion, no ideology, no economic or military power could defeat any of these, except the cross of Christ and His resurrection.

Through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, all seven enemies have been dealt a fatal blow, including the last and greatest enemy, death. God's plan of redemption includes the salvation of souls and the renewal of all things to the state they were in before sin and death came into the world. At the end of the age, the glory God has already given us will be revealed in us; our bodies will be renewed, glorified, and made bullet-proof from death.

Creation will also return to its pristine, pure creation-condition. In the millennial reign of Messiah, *Isaiah 11:6* says, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." The bondage of sin will be replaced by renewal, freedom, and eternity itself.

Messiah will continue to reign until all enemies are under his feet, the last of which is death itself (*1 Corinthians 15:25-26*). Satan, death and hell will all be cast into the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:10, 14*). With all enemies vanquished, including sin, death, sorrow, crying, and pain, the earth is ready for renewal and the arrival of the New Jerusalem, our eternal home (*Revelation 21:1-5*).

Book Review



Gerald McDermott wrote a popular-theological book to make the complex questions regarding the people and land of Israel accessible for 'lay' Christians. *Israel Matters* offers a profound and nuanced consideration of both the theological and political dimensions and is an absolute must-read.

In the introduction, the writer takes you on his personal quest for the role of Israel in the Christian narrative. As a traditional Anglican, McDermott used to have troubles with Christian Zionism as being not only incompatible with the gospel but, moreover, using theology to gloss over everything the State of Israel did, without caring for the suffering of the Palestinians. Until he took his Bible and started to give notice to the details. The results of his study are summarised in *Israel Matters*.

Israel Matters

Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land

by Gerald R McDermott

The book starts with a nuanced overview of Christian thinking concerning Israel through the ages. McDermott, for example, shows that the disconnection of the land and the people in Christian theology is much younger than often thought, and is not simply related to anti-Semitism. Then he gives a lucid description of what the New Testament actually says about the relationship between Israel and the believers called out of the nations. In the Old Testament, he discerns a distinction between the covenant with Israel and the land promise. The covenant with Israel is unconditional and eternal. The land promise, whether Israel may live in the land and govern it, however, is conditional, as seen in the past it turned out from the different exiles Israel experienced. In the eternal covenant between God and Israel, however, McDermott also sees a future for the land promise. Just as the distinction between Israel and the other nations remains, so, too, the distinction between the land of Israel and the rest of the world. Yet, his conclusion does not lead McDermott to the standard Christian Zionist view. From the viewpoint of justice, McDermott's engagement with the fate of the Palestinians remains strong. That brings him to an extraordinarily nuanced form of Zionism, in which the connection with Israel and love of justice are in balance.

This unique Zionist view McDermott extrapolates to the larger narrative of Christianity. In the last two chapters, he explains what his view means for how we as Christians confess our faith, and for the message we preach. In addition to that, Zionism, or the Christian relation to Israel, is no longer a purely political story, but a narrative that deepens our faith in all its aspects.

Available from Amazon (www.amazon.com). *Israel Matters. Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land. By Gerald R. McDermott. Published by Grand Rapids, Brazos Press 2017. 176 pages. ISBN 9781587433955.*

Walking in the Dust of Our Rabbi - *Part 3b*

■ **Mandy Worby**
Christians for Israel Australia

This article is the final instalment in a series of contributions based on the book 'Walking In The Dust Of Rabbi Jesus: How The Jewish Words of Jesus Can Change Your Life' by Lois Tverberg. www.ourrabbijesus.com

Jesus said to the religious leaders, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." (John 5:39)

The only Scriptures they had at that time were the Old Covenant Scriptures, so when we study the entire Bible (the whole counsel of God) we should be looking at it and placing Jesus at the centre of it so that it reveals Him. We are to learn it and live it, for practical application from the examples set in it from those who lived during the Old Covenant time frame.

So when we 21st century disciples of Jesus, read the Bible, are we reading it with a view to imitate our Saviour or simply to obtain knowledge or interesting information?

This is a challenge to all of us because we're so ingrained with a Greek mindset, it pervades all Western society and it's all we know. It's particularly challenging for me because I love to study, I love learning new things but having a lot of knowledge or information rattling around in my brain isn't enough. The real challenge for Jesus's disciples today is to read His Word and set ourselves to practical living and expression of His teaching so that we look and sound just like Him.

Our Rabbi has personally chosen us to be His disciples and that is a privilege beyond our comprehension.

Jesus said to His disciples in *John 15:16*, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

He chose us so that we would learn from Him, imitate Him, talk like Him, serve like Him, love like Him, and represent Him before the eyes of the watching world.



Sheep on a mountain paradise | Photo: unsplash

After His resurrection Jesus said to this to His disciples.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age." (*Matthew 28:19-20*)

They were to go and make disciples throughout all the nations, disciples who would be committed to imitating the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; they were to teach those disciples to observe (attend to carefully, to guard, to keep, to undergo something) all that Jesus had originally taught them and while they were producing and making disciples throughout the world - those who would obey and imitate Jesus - He Himself would be with them throughout all of human history, walking with them throughout that process.

Paul imitated Jesus; Paul was a deeply committed and faithful disciple who never flinched from the call on his life to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world. Paul never stopped preaching the Gospel to his Jewish countrymen; he always went to the synagogues first to preach the Gospel and debate with his fellow Jews, despite the danger it posed to himself, and then he told his own disciples within the churches to imitate him. He was like a father to them, he wasn't merely a teacher or tutor to them, he loved them like a father and looked upon them as his children in the Lord. (*1 Corinthians 4:16*)

Jesus said we're to imitate Him; Paul imitated Jesus and then told his own disciples to imitate him: that's the pattern. So let's imitate Paul, who imitated Jesus. Let's study His words, His life, His service and His love and walk in the dust of our Rabbi by becoming just like Him.

Tu Bishvat: New Year of the Trees

■ **Kees de Vreugd**
Theologian | Christians for Israel International & Editor
| Israel & the Church

'Tu Bishvat' – these perhaps somewhat puzzling words indicate a date on the Jewish calendar. Tu (composed of the Hebrew letters tet and vav) is 15, and Shevat is the name of the 11th month (while 'bi' is the preposition 'in'). So it is the 15th of Shevat. This day is celebrated as the New Year of the Trees. On that day each year, it is a custom to eat fruits of trees such as nuts, raisins, and other products that symbolise the fertility of the land of Israel (*Deuteronomy 8:8*). In modern times, the Jewish National Fund has declared this a day on which new trees are to be planted in Israel. In other words, Tu Bishvat celebrates the connection with the land of Israel.

This year, Tu Bishvat begins on the evening of Sunday, 9 February, and ends on the nightfall of Monday, 10 February. That may raise some questions: a New Year in the eleventh month, and an eleventh month in what we consider the beginning of the year – how so?

The Talmud identifies four New Year days: (1) the new year for kings and festivals on the 1st of Nisan (the month of Pesach, assigned in the Bible as the beginning of months, *Exodus 12:2*); (2) the new year for the tithe of beasts on the 1st of Elul (August-September); (3) the new year for years, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years on the 1st of Tishri (which



Olive tree | Photo: unsplash

is commonly known as Rosh Hashana, Jewish New Year); and (4) the new year of the trees, on the 15th of Shevat.

Tu Bishvat as such is not mentioned in the Bible. But probably, this date was set to determine the tithe of fruits of trees (*Leviticus 27:30*), and *orlah* (*Leviticus 19:23-25*):

harvesting the fruit of the first three years is forbidden, while the fruit of the fourth year is set aside as a praise offering to God.

From the fifth year on, harvesting the fruit is allowed (the parable of the fig tree, *Luke 13:6-9*).

Israel - A Safe Haven for Arab Christians

■ Amit Barak

Author | Breaking Israel News

Christians are disappearing fast from the Middle East. Israel is the only country in the Middle East, where the number of Christians is increasing.

Since 2000, over 77 per cent of Iraq's 700,000 Christians have fled. In Syria, where there were, until recently, two million Christians, there are now fewer than a quarter of a million. In Egypt, the Christian Coptic community suffers from daily persecution and terror. Similarly, Christians under the Palestinian Authority also suffer from persecution. Most Christians in the Middle East who can escape persecution at the hands of Muslim extremists have fled. Those who remain face financial discrimination, physical threats, and the most heinous of crimes. Why? Because they adhere to a faith which the Muslim extremists will not tolerate.

In the Middle East, there is only one country where Christians are not persecuted. That country is the State of Israel.

Israeli Christians

Not many people in the world know that being a Christian in Israel does not affect that person's right to Israeli citizenship. Eighty per cent of the 175,000 Christians in Israel are Arabic-speaking, often called 'Christian Arabs.' They form two per cent of the population in Israel.

Most Arab-speaking Christians in Israel belong to the Greek Catholic or the Greek Orthodox Church. Others are Maronites, Copts, Protestants, Baptists, Evangelicals and others. There are also Armenians living in Israel, many of whom also speak the Arabic language. Families are often of mixed ethnicity and religion, and there is a marriage between Christians of all denominations.

Most Arab-speaking Christians self-identify more strongly as Arab rather than Israeli. Embedded within Muslim Arabs in Israel, they are a minority within a minority. As a result, they do not have a unified political leadership and have no significant political influence. Even though Christians have risen to key positions in the Israeli public, such as judges in the supreme court, most of them do so in a personal and private manner as individuals.

To change this, a number of Christian activists decided in 2012 to establish a forum that would encourage the Christian community to connect with the State of Israel and Israeli society.



Father Gabriel Naddaf (left) of the Greek Orthodox Church in Nazareth was one of the founders, who called on Christians in Israel to stand up and contribute to the defence of the state. "If Israel provides us with protection and security, we must be part of it", they claimed. And

Christians in Israel responded to the call. Before 2012, the

average number of Christians who volunteered for IDF service was approximately 35 per year from 1,800 high-school graduates. Today, approximately 40 per cent of the Christian high school graduates declare practically that they are Israeli Christians, an integral part of Israeli society and the State of Israel.

Revolution

This is a real revolution of historic proportions. It also provokes many reactions, manifested in campaigns and conferences against recruitment (some funded by the European Union), boycotts, and threats against Christian families. Physical violence has been directed against activists, families of Christian soldiers, and other volunteers who encourage the historic move.

The Christians who advocate for integration emphasise their pride in both their Christian and Israeli identity. For so long, they were told that they are Arabs, part of the Arab nation. They now reject this, acknowledging that their roots are in the Holy Land and Levant, planted many years before the appearance of Islam and the Arab tribes. They also point to Arab and Islamic persecution of Christians in the region as proof that they are not part of either. "Is this what brothers do?" they ask themselves.

Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, some 13,000 Arab-speaking Christians live among Muslims and under pressure from the Palestinian Authority. Many of the Jerusalemite Christians study in Bethlehem and even in the church schools they learn lies about Israel, Palestinian identity, and politics, preventing many of them from the opportunity to learn Hebrew. This dramatically reduces employment opportunities and restricts social mobility.

The Christian activists mentioned above have established the 'Jerusalemite Initiative' in order to help integrate the younger generation of Arab Christians closer into Israeli society offering practical help to increase their ability to find work and be confident in their relationship within Jewish society. This is a big step and a significant challenge.

Extremist Anti-Israel Minority

Among Israeli Christians, there is a vocal minority that promotes anti-Israeli activities. Within this minority, the most prominent activists are the leaders of the Council of the Greek Orthodox Church in Nazareth (funded by the State of Israel); Bishop Atallah Hanna of the Greek Orthodox Church, a terrorism supporter who called young Christians to join the Hamas and recently also met with Bashar al-Assad, and Father Naim Ateek, an Anglican priest founder of the 'Sabeel' organisation that promotes Palestinian Liberation Theology.

Intimidation

Some churches located in Jerusalem also have associated



A priest meeting a soldier. | Photo: Flash90

churches and monasteries in the Palestinian territories, Gaza, and Jordan and have various connections throughout the Middle East. Those churches are responsible for the safety of clergy and possessions in those countries and regions. Therefore, fear is only natural.

Those churches are often persecuted by Palestinian Authority officials, who take action against Christians for propaganda purposes while succeeding in covering their own wrongdoings which they cause to the Christian population in the Palestinian Authority.

The Christian population within the territories governed by the Palestinian Authority has plunged ever since Israel transferred control to the Palestinian Authority. In the 1970s, Christians in Judea and Samaria accounted for about five percent of the population. Currently, Christians represent only about one to two per cent of the population. In 1950, Christians in Bethlehem accounted for about eighty six per cent of the population, and it was distinctly a Christian town. Now, the number of Christians in the city represents only about ten per cent, trending negatively.

The situation in Gaza is even worse. Out of thousands who lived in Gaza prior to 2005, only a few hundred Christians remain. They are being persecuted and live under constant threat, with severe restrictions on Christian holidays and rituals without any rights to practice their faith.

While the Palestinian Authority persecutes Christians, violates their freedom of religion, worship and expression, and undermines their security, the situation is different in Israel. Israel is not just a safe haven for Christians; Israel is their true home, and I believe that even the radical elements among Christians would prefer to live under Israel. This is in fact the difference between the Jewish, democratic, free state of Israel – which accommodates, for better or worse, slanderous accusations which distort the truth – and the Palestinian Authority, where, no matter how much money Europe invests, remains corrupt, terrorising anyone who is not in line with its views, particularly the Christian minority.

Amit Barak is one of the initiators of the historical movement to integrate Arabic-speaking Christians into the IDF and the Israeli Society. Amit is an expert about Christian-Jewish relations in Israel and abroad.

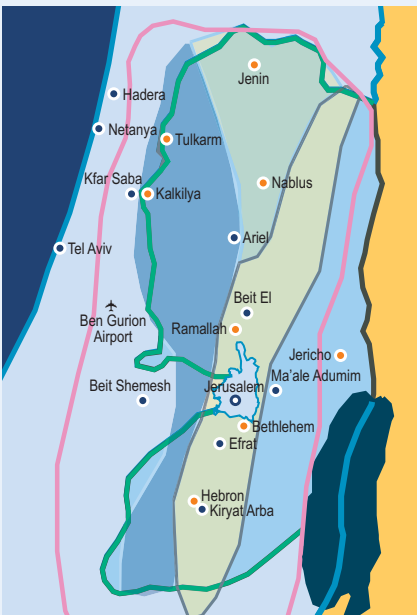
Israel's Story in Maps

■ Map 12 | Judea & Samaria Half of Israel's Water Sources

Fifty per cent of Israel's natural water resources come from the mountain aquifer (including all three of its basins). The rain trickles down from Judea and Samaria and flows into groundwater reservoirs under the coastal plain and along the coast itself.

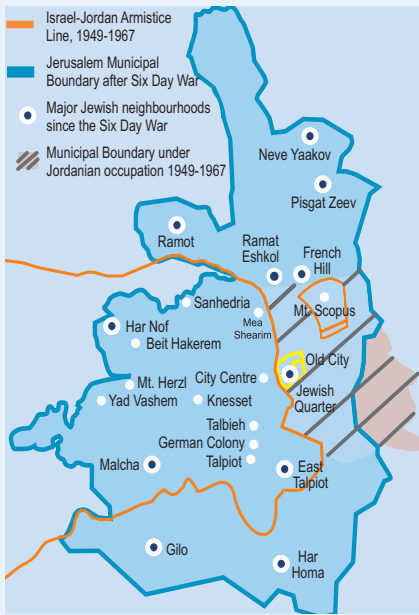
Whoever controls this area, controls water pollution or overuse of water resources. The water requirements of the Arabs living in Judea and Samaria has significantly increased in the past 40 years.

They are now almost equal in demand per capita to that of Israelis, mainly due to Israeli improvements in the water infrastructure and the advancement of Arab society. The Arabs here have a far better quality of life than their neighbours in Jordan.



■ Map 13 | Jerusalem Israel's Eternal Capital

Jerusalem has been the Jewish capital for over 3,000 years. Since 1864 Jews have been the majority in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is mentioned over 600 times in the Bible, but not once in the Koran. In 1967, Israel widened Jerusalem's municipal boundaries to include areas east, north and south of the former 1949 armistice lines which had been under Jordanian rule for 19 years. The State of Israel rebuilt the destroyed Jewish Quarter inside the walls of the Old City. The Government also built new neighbourhoods of Ramat Eshkol, French Hill, Gilo, Har Homa, Neve Yaakov, Pisgat Ze'ev, Armon Hanatziv and others in those sectors of the city. As of 2008, Jerusalem includes 510,000 Jews (317,000 in the west and 193,000 in the east) while 264,000 Arabs live in the eastern neighbourhoods of Jerusalem.



Short News

Israeli Breakthrough
in Laser Technology

The Israeli Defense Ministry has had a technological breakthrough in the development of lasers for the interception of RAM (rocket, mortar, and artillery) threats, UAVs, and ATGMs. Head of the Directorate of Research and Development, Brig. Gen. Yaniv Rotem stated: "We are entering a new age of energy warfare in the air, land and sea. The State of Israel is now among the leading countries in the field of high-energy laser systems." | Photo: Jerusalem Post

Biblical Marketplace
Found in Jerusalem

During excavations in Jerusalem, near the Temple Mount, archaeologists have found measuring instruments from the time of Jesus. Researchers conclude they've found the central marketplace of Jerusalem, which lies near the so-called 'pilgrim road'. According to archaeologist Reich, in biblical times the office of the 'Agoronomos' (inspector for measurements) was also located near the marketplace.

Physicists forecast El
Niño by end of 2020

Farmers and fishermen should prepare for another El Niño — a disruptive weather phenomenon caused by changing ocean conditions — by the end of 2020, according to a prediction method developed by German and Israeli researchers. Their algorithm relies on a network analysis of air temperatures in the Pacific region. This algorithm correctly predicted the last two El Niño events (in 2014 and 2018) more than a year in advance.

Has Jesus' Childhood
Home Been Found?

The childhood home of Jesus may have been found underneath the Sisters of Nazareth Convent in Nazareth, Israel, according to archaeologist Ken Dark. He not only describes the remains of the home itself, but explores the evidence that suggests that this is the place where Jesus spent his formative years—or at least the place regarded in the Byzantine period as the childhood home of Jesus. | Photo: biblicalarchaeology.org

Plain of Philistia



Jaffa old city and seaport. | Photo: Shutterstock

■ **Kameel Majdali**
Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

We continue our 'Walk through the Land' series (Genesis 13:17) with our third article. Our goal is to increase understanding and appreciation of the Bible by understanding its geography.

In our previous article, we began to explore the coastal plain. Though it is long, straight, and prominent, Israel's coastline is not uniform. It can easily be divided into three regions: The Plain of Acre (north), Plain of Sharon (central), and Plain of Philistia (south). We began to learn about the latter plain in our last article.

In this article, we focus on the five Biblical cities in Philistia: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath.

Gaza, on the Mediterranean, is mentioned 19 times in Scripture. It was where the Israelite judge Samson met with a harlot and, in order to escape his enemies, took the gates of the city in an overnight run and carried them 56km uphill to Hebron. In Gaza, Samson was taken into captivity and laughed at in derision by the Philistines (*Judges 16:25*). Yet, in the end, Samson was the one who had the last laugh. He prayed to the Lord, his strength returned, and he single-handedly pulled down the temple of Dagon (*Judges 26:30*). It was on the road to Gaza, which is desert, where the Ethiopian eunuch was led to Christ by Philip the evangelist (*Acts 8:26*).

Ashkelon is also on the coast and is mentioned nine times in Scripture. Here, Samson came, slew 30 Philistines, and took their garments to pay for his uncovered riddle (*Judges 14:19*). According to Zephaniah, Ashkelon shall be a desolation and the children of Judah shall lie down there in the evening, meaning it will go from Philistine to Israelite control (*Zephaniah 2:4,7*). Herod the Great was born here.

Ashdod, the third and last coastal city of the Philistines, is mentioned 21 times in Scripture. A remnant of the Anakims, which were no longer in the land of the children of Israel, could be found in Ashdod (*Joshua 11:22*). The ark of the covenant was taken to Ashdod, and soon after, the statue of their god, Dagon, fell face down on the earth before the ark (*I Samuel 5:3*). God's hand was heavy against the men of Ashdod and they decided to

move this sacred chest as far away as they could. Nehemiah caused the men of Israel to divorce their 'foreign wives' from Ashdod, who spoke the local language and did not serve the God of Israel (*Nehemiah 13:23-24*). Today modern Ashdod is Israel's second seaport after Haifa.

Gath, an inland city, mentioned 33 times in Scripture, was the home of the infamous giant Goliath, who was slain by the faithful young David (*I Samuel 17*). The ark of God came here after it was sent out of Ashdod, but they suffered the same heavy fate. David fled from Saul by taking refuge under the rule of Achish, king of Gath (*I Samuel 21:10*) and spent time there. Gath produced other 'giants' who also were slain by David (*I Samuel 21:20, 22; I Chronicles 20:6, 8*). David's famous eulogy after hearing of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan said:

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph - II Samuel 1:20

Ekron is mentioned 22 times in the Bible. The 'radioactive' ark of the covenant was sent here, after causing havoc in other Philistine cities. Its arrival caused great angst to the Ekronites, who declared that the God of Israel would be slaying them as well. The children of Judah captured Ekron earlier in their sojourn in the promised land (*Judges 1:18*), but apparently did not keep it. Ekron served the false god Baalzebub, which drew the attention of injured king Ahaziah, son of Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Because of his foolish inquiry of Baalzebub as to whether he would recover from his illness, rather than ask and trust the God

of Israel, he earned criticism from the prophet Elijah, who said he would not recover from his sickbed (*II Kings 1:2,3,6,16*). Like its sister Philistine cities, Ekron was appointed to divine judgement (*Amos 1:8; Zephaniah 2:4; Zechariah 9:5,7*):

For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up — Zephaniah 2:4

Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed, and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited — Zechariah 9:5

Jaffa, known as 'Joppa' in Scripture, is mentioned three times in the Old Testament and ten times in the New Testament, all New Testament references being in the *Book of Acts*. It is the ancient port city of Israel, though not of the stature of the ports of Phoenicia to the north. The logs of the cedars of Lebanon were shipped to Jaffa so that they could be transported by land to Jerusalem for the building of the Jerusalem temple (*II Chronicles 2:16; Ezra 3:7*). Jonah set sail from here to escape the presence of the Lord by sailing to Tarshish (*Jonah 1:3*). It was here that Peter raised Dorcas back to life (*Acts 9:41-42*). While he stayed at Simon the Tanner's sea-side house (*Acts 9:43*), he saw the vision of the sheets with unclean animals, symbolising God's desire to send the gospel to the Gentiles (*Acts 10:9-16*). This vision revolutionised his life, and by extension, changed the world.

We will learn more about the coastal plain, including the Plain of Sharon, in our next article, published April 2020.



Coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the city of Ashdod, Israel. | Photo: Shutterstock

A Home for Holocaust Survivors



Jerusalem Foundation

Today it's Tuesday. For Gerta, it's a good day -. Café Europa is on. Gerta is 87 years old and is one of 22,000 Holocaust survivors living in Jerusalem. Like most of them (62%), she is over 80 and faces daily struggles linked to age. For Holocaust survivors like Gerta, this time of uncertainty can also bring back past traumas.

Once a week, Gerta makes her way to Café Europa in Rehavia. This is one of six branches active in Jerusalem, where Holocaust survivors can meet and share experiences in a safe space. The first Café Europa was founded in 1988 in Los Angeles as a meeting place and support group for Holocaust survivors. The name came from a Stockholm café where survivors gathered after World War II, hoping to find lost relatives and friends. The project was so successful that many cities around the world adopted it, including Tel Aviv, Ra'anana and Jerusalem.

The Rehavia branch Gerta attends is located in the southern part of Jerusalem, while Beit Hakerem and the

Pisgat Ze'ev section respectively serve the western and northern parts of the city. The so-called Café Moscow caters to Russian-speakers, and branches in Geulah and Sanhedriya serve the Ultra-Orthodox population, with separate activities for men and women. Around 100 survivors, who are no longer able to leave their homes, benefit from the Homebound Services programme.

At Café Europa, Gerta especially enjoys singing. It reminds her of her youth. "After the camps, I just wanted to sing and dance." Gerta survived five camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau. At Café Europa, she is able to share her traumatic experience as a witness to the 20th century's most terrible atrocities, but also some positive memories from pre-war Europe.

Coffee and cake are served, while different activities take place. Music and films are very popular, as well as yoga and gardening. Several field trips have been organised through the years, including to the Knesset, the Sarona Market in Tel Aviv, and the Zion Museum. Talks and lectures are in high demand, helping participants to

navigate the worlds of technology, healthy eating, and Holocaust survivor rights. Renna, a Bergen-Belsen survivor, was quoted saying: "The talk about technology was wonderful. I FaceTimed my guide in Poland and my Grandson in America at the same time!"

Over 300 participants benefit from the activities each week, gaining access to crucial support by the programme's social workers who identify individual needs and suitable treatments. This makes it a well-rounded programme that survivors appreciate. "Café Europa is where I can socialise, hear a concert, or just read and relax, in the one place where I feel surrounded by those who truly understand me."

All this wouldn't be possible without your support of these activities. With your help, we can ensure that people like Gerta can live peacefully during old age.

You can donate to Café Europa (Holocaust Survivors - 'I'm not Alone') project by completing the coupon on the back page.

More than Sympathy

Marijke Terlouw

Christians for Israel Netherlands

"You give them something to eat." Matthew 14:16

Food is desperately needed for the poor in Israel. Over one in five people live below the poverty line. But even more invisible is the group of people who are just above the poverty line. Officially they are not 'poor', but in reality, they can't, or can barely make ends meet. There are a lot of people who work multiple jobs and after

having paid all their bills, are left with only a few shekels (one shekel is about 25 cents) a day to spend on food and clothing.

We can keep waiting until poverty is solved, but that's not what the Lord teaches us. He tells us to take action, to show His love in everything we do and to help those in need. The mission can be carried out by anybody: **You give them something to eat.** That's why we support Hineni, and their humanitarian restaurant.

Everyone Receives Help

An average day at Hineni starts at 9am. The volunteers arrive and receive instructions. They cut up vegetables for lunch, and fill boxes with food for the people who come to the soup kitchen to take home later. When lunch is finished around 2pm, everything is cleaned up, and the volunteers return home. One of the volunteers shares: "This work has my heart; otherwise, you shouldn't do

this. The desire to do something for your neighbour, and certainly for Israel, our oldest brother. All kinds of people come here. Drug addicts and alcoholics off the street, elderly people who need help to put their tray on the table, but also disabled people like someone with spastic hands. People on the edge of society. You help all of them; the people are our guests. And they thank you for that. How beautiful it is to use the gifts the Creator gave you to serve the creation."

A Matter of Obedience

Helping the poor in Israel is much more than a matter of sympathy for the people who are in need. Sympathy can be a beautiful sentiment. It inspires many good things in this world. But what's happening in Israel, is at its core, acting in accordance with the Torah, God's Word. He instructed His people to care for their neighbour and to show the world in that way how good it is to live according to God's ways. To live that way is not a matter of sympathy or sentiment, but a matter of obedience.

Grace

When you fight poverty in Israel, or anywhere else, by giving, you must remember that this is not because the poor need you. After all, God Himself watches over His people and does not need any instruments for this. Just remember the manna in the desert. God can literally make it rain food!

So the fact that we get to help alleviate poverty in Israel is pure grace. The Eternal One gives us the opportunity to Bless His people and to be obedient to His Word.

A hot meal at Hineni costs €5 or US \$6. Please support Hineni's humanitarian restaurant by completing the coupon on the back page.



| Photo: Hineni

| Photo: Flash90

A Blanket from Germany



Anemone Rüger
Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors in Israel and Ukraine | Christians for Israel

On behalf of you, our faithful sponsors, we have been able to visit and support many poor and lonely Holocaust survivors in the past weeks. We have been able to bring them the light of hope: God is there!

We knocked at Zhenia's door with two food parcels, fresh bread and warm winter clothes in our hands. When we wrapped Zhenia in a blanket that a lady from Germany had knitted for her, she started crying.

Many of Zhenia's relatives are lying in Babi Yar (ravine in the capital Kiev where 33,771 of the city's Jews were shot in late September of 1941). She was five years old when the Wehrmacht invaded Ukraine. Her father was drafted into the Red Army and sent to the battle front, her mother tried to hide with her as long as possible.

"Mom told me how they were all driven out of our village, first to Kiev, then to Babi Yar," Zhenia says.

She found refuge initially with an older man who hid her; then, when her mother died of typhus, she was smuggled to her Ukrainian grandmother on her father's side, which is where she grew up as her father also died shortly after returning from the war. Of her own family – husband and three children – only herself and a granddaughter are left, who looks after her from time to time. Christians for Israel supports her with regular food parcels.

Moved
Olga was our big surprise. When we visited her the first time in August, she was very quiet and started crying as she shared her story of Babi Yar, of being in line for the execution site together with her family. A Ukrainian neighbour saved her from the column of Jewish mothers, children and older people walking to their death, and pretended Olga was her child.

When we visited for the second time with the Christians for Israel board of the German branch in October, her tears already mingled with laughter – that's how happy she was to have found a far-travelled family who poured love, gifts and blessings on her. Her little hut, however, looked like it could collapse any moment, and none of us dared to imagine how she would survive another winter there.

Now just before Hanukkah, we were welcomed by a radiant Olga – she moved a few days earlier! Our local contact person had negotiated with the neighbours and found an abandoned little house, whose owners moved to the city and are glad to have someone to use it. It was nice and warm thanks to the wood stove. Light was falling through the large window, and even the electricity worked. Olga proudly presented her new tea kettle, which she just received.

"Moi ditki!" – my children, she kept exclaiming while hugging each of us in a row. Now the gifts – two large food parcels, those should last her for a while.

Then, with a big smile, Olga pulled photos out of the envelope. "Vse moi ditki!" she said, beaming with joy. "This one I know, and this one, and her and her." Then came the cuddle blanket which we had brought for her. Now Olga had tears in her eyes again. Such a wonderfully soft fabric!

"Convey my greetings to everyone," Olga said. "And health – I wish lots of health to all my friends!" – See you in spring, then, Babushka (grandma).

Update Food Parcel Campaign Winter 2019-2020

Our team in Ukraine visits Jewish elderly and Holocaust survivors with a van full of food parcels. The food parcels we bring are much needed to get through the harsh Ukrainian winters. However, a food parcel means far more than a bag filled with edible articles. It is a sign of friendship that demonstrates your support for our Jewish brothers and sisters, and shows them that they are not alone. One food parcel costs €10 or US \$11.



Zhenia receives a beautiful hand-made blanket to keep her warm.



Zhenia in front of her home.



Zhenia and Anemone read a letter from Germany.

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- ☐ Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

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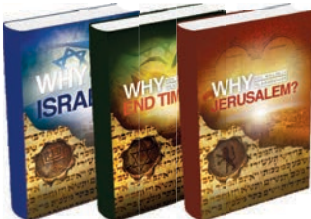
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