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CHRISTIANS FOR
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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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

Praying for Redemption

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

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

The tense situation in Israel is concerning. For those of

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

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

government.

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

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

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

That is what we pray and long for.



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

Colophon

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Mission

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

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

■ Andrew Tucker

International Editor | Christians for Israel

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

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

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

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

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

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

remain in the Gaza Strip.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is the task of the gentile church.

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

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

Prayer Points

Israel

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

Israel and the Nations

- Give thanks for what the United States has meant to

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

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

Christians for Israel

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

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

Syria Must Normalise Ties with Jerusalem or Accept IDF Presence

■ Israel Kasnett

Journalist | JNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Kurds and the Druze

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

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

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

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

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

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

central government led by al-Sharaa.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Short News

Israel Issues Mental Health Guidelines for Freed Hostages



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

Historic Auction

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

Mount Hermon Reopens After Year-long Closure



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

Israel's Military a Necessity in Samaria

■ Amit Barak

Tour Guide | Judea & Samaria

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

No settlement, no security

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

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

Biblical and strategic importance of Samaria

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

The smuggling of weapons from Jordan

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

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

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

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

The growing threat from Tulkarem

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

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

Israel at Seventy-Seven: *Rebirth and Redemption*

■ **Kameel Majdali**

Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

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

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

Accomplishments

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Challenges

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Short News

Fifth of Israelis Displaced by War



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

Residence Status

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

US Seek to Rename West Bank



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

Will God's Land be Divided?

■ Rev Henk Poot

Christians for Israel Netherlands

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

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

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

The heartland of Israel

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

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

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

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



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

Zion

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

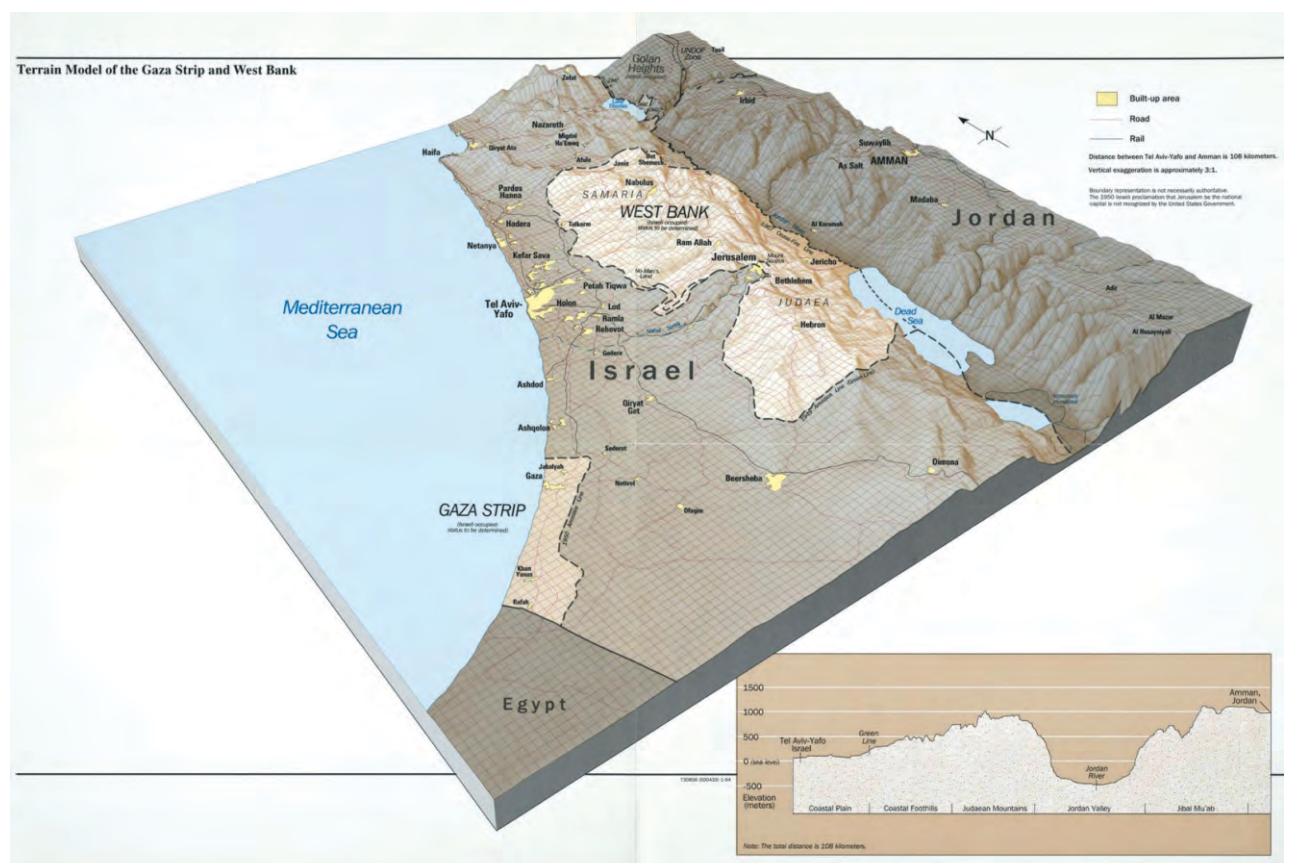
This is a spiritual war. After Auschwitz, the destruction of God's people, the city around which the future of the world revolves must now be torn out of God's land. That is the plan of the ruler of the world.

God knows

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

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

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



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

The Jewish Temple Mount:

Holy Grail for the Nations—Part 2

Wim Kortenoeven
Former Member of Dutch Parliament
| Middle East Specialist

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

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

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

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



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



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

“May it be Your will, Adonai, our God, and the God of our Fathers that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah. And there we will serve You reverently as in the days of old, and in earlier years. And let Adonai be pleased with the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem as in the days of old and in earlier years.”
From the Eighteen Benediction, part of the daily Jewish prayer cycle.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

God's Faithfulness to Israel Proclaimed

■ Renske Lankman

Christians for Israel Netherlands

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

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

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

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

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

What were your main duties as director?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the aim and impact of these international conferences?

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



Cornelis Kant. | Photo: C4I

As you retire, what are your plans?

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

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International Insert
April 2025

Why the UN Push for Palestinian Statehood Should be Rejected

■ **Andrew Tucker**
Director General | The Hague Initiative
for International Cooperation (*thinc.*)
| www.thinc.info

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

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

Resolution ES-10/24 (September 2024) demands Israel’s unconditional withdrawal from this territory within 12 months of its date of adoption. Resolution A/79 L/23 (November 2024) calls for a high-level, international conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, in New York in June 2025.

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

There are three main problems with these resolutions

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Third, these resolutions are flawed from a legal perspective. Reflecting weaknesses in judicial procedure and reasoning of the recent Advisory Opinion by the

International Court of Justice (ICJ), they conflict with Israel’s rights under international law to territorial integrity and political inviolability.

In particular:

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

Recommendations

thinc. argues that UN member states should:

1. Reject the terms of UNGA Resolution ES-10/24, which calls for an immediate and unconditional Israel withdrawal from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
2. Prioritise the legal obligation of states to neutralise internationally sponsored terrorism and *jihadi* threats in the region over Palestinian demands for Israeli withdrawal and immediate and unconditional statehood;

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

4. Affirm that further implementation of the Palestinian right to self-determination is conditional upon - (a) the cessation of violence and removal of extremist and destabilising forces of the radical Islamist camp in the West Bank and Gaza;

(b) dissolution of UNRWA;

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

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

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

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

The full report can be accessed on www.thinc-israel.org. *thinc.* is actively briefing governments around the world on these issues, in the period leading up to the UN conference planned in New York in June 2025. The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation (*thinc.*) is a global network of international lawyers who promote the fair and equal application of law to support international cooperation and development.

“We Just Cannot Lose Hope”

■ Amelie Botbol
JNS

As uncertain times lie ahead, Ilay David, the brother of Hamas hostage Evyatar David, called on family and friends of the hostages still being held in Gaza not to lose hope.

“I see in my mind Evyatar hugging my parents in tears and I imagine us playing music as we did every week,” he told JNS. “I know that he holds on to the same things and we just cannot lose hope. We need to send them our prayers, hope, powers, energy and strength to give them the hope to continue and survive because eventually they will be home.”

Israel believes that fewer than half of the remaining 59 hostages, 58 of whom were taken into captivity by Hamas on 7 October 2023, are still alive. The body of Lt Hadar Goldin, killed in Gaza in 2014, is still being held by Hamas.

“Hell has been ongoing for the hostages in Gaza for more than 530 days. It doesn’t matter if there is a ceasefire or not. The hostages are still held in terrible conditions. They have been living in hell for almost a year and a half now,” Ilay David said.

Last month, Hamas published a propaganda video showing Israeli hostages Guy Gilboa-Dalal and Evyatar David at their friends’ release ceremony from captivity in Gaza.

Hamas compelled the two to watch the ceremony from inside a vehicle as hostages Eliya Cohen, 27, Avera Mengistu, 39, Hisham al-Sayed, 36, Omer Shem Tov, 22, Tal Shoham, 40, and Omer Wenkert, 23, were released.

“We had no solid sign of life from Evyatar or Guy for 505 days,” Evyatar’s brother said. “Just imagine not knowing where your child is for 5 or 15 minutes. My mother didn’t know where her son was for 505 days and that is because of sadistic people who kidnapped Evyatar and many others from a music festival.”

David said he had watched the video while US President Donald Trump was addressing CPAC in National Harbor, Maryland.

“I and Guy’s older brother, Gal, listened as our phone exploded and we started seeing messages and phone calls. We got into Telegram and we saw that there was a video of Evyatar and Guy. I felt I was going to pass out,” he said.

“We watched it muted at the beginning. It was terrifying. I didn’t know what to expect and it felt again like 7 October when we last watched a video of them. We saw that they are together and that they are alive,” he added.



Ilay David (left) and his brother, Evyatar David, who has been held hostage in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023. | Photo: Courtesy

“We need to send the hostages our prayers, hope, powers, energy and strength to give them the hope to continue and survive,” says Ilay David, brother of Hamas hostage.

Via that propaganda clip, David stressed, the whole world could now see what sadistic maneuvers Hamas terrorists were conducting.

“They brought them in a van to watch other hostages being released. It was the first time they saw sunlight in eight months and then they slammed the door on their faces as they begged for their lives and were thrown back to the tunnels,” he said.

“We saw their body language, the despair in their eyes, we saw how pale and how thin they are. Omer Wenkert, when he was released (on 22 February) after staying with them underground for eight months, said the terrorists fed them two weeks prior to the release because they were afraid that the video would otherwise backfire,” he said.

“Although they gave them more food two weeks prior they still looked starved,” he added.

Up until that point, David said, he had remained somewhat delusional, convincing himself that Hamas terrorists were keeping the hostages, their only asset, in good shape.

“They are kept in a very narrow small space 1 meter by 11 meters with barely enough space to stand. They are starved, humiliated, and abused. They have no day or night. They have a constant light above their head, they have no connection to the outside world and it’s happening for more than nine months

before they were above ground. It was also hell but of another kind,” he said.

“My brother is suffering and being tortured every day and I have to live with that and do whatever I can to advocate on his behalf and be his voice,” he continued. “My parents are broken into pieces and they have to pick up those pieces and do whatever they can to bring their son back.”

Mid-March, the IDF struck targets in Gaza marking the end of six weeks of a ceasefire with Hamas which led to the release of 33 hostages and three weeks of limbo in negotiations.

“I felt frustrated, anxious and worried. I’m still very worried. There are so many people who stayed behind,” David told JNS.

“The hostages are now in a very great danger to be executed or bombed by the IDF by mistake, they are staying in a war zone because of Hamas. It makes me very worried,” he said.

David termed the most recent ceasefire-for-hostage deal which began on 19 January as a “bad agreement.”

“I knew Evyatar wouldn’t be released in that agreement because the chances to continue to Phase 2 were so low. It was a bad agreement but I don’t know if there is a better option. Every time I go abroad and to the United States and speak with policymakers, I try to challenge them to think about a better solution or a better framework,” he said.

“We need something holistic and not small solutions along the way,” he added.

While acknowledging that military pressure puts hostages at risk, David noted that it had in the past led to conclusive results in negotiations with Hamas.

“The war brought us the first agreement in November 2023. There was a massive military operation ongoing and it was a good deal in terms of saving as many lives as we could. I think that’s what the government is reaching for, something of that magnitude,” he said.

“I believe the Israeli government really wants the hostages back and I think they understand they cannot bring the hostages using military power only,” he continued. “Hopefully, it won’t backfire on us because that would be a very big black stain on both us and western values. If it does not lead to saving the hostages in the coming weeks or even days we probably made a mistake.”

He concluded: “We also need actions and people to make it their first priority. That’s what we have—prayers and actions.”

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59 HOSTAGES		
UNTIL THE LAST HOSTAGE		
HOSTAGES AND MISSING FAMILIES FORUM		
Name		
1	Ariel Cunio	Samir
2	Idan Shtivi	David
3	Judi Weinstein	Yosef-Chaim
4	Gadi Haggai	Eitan Levi
5	Matan Zangauker	Yonatan
6	Avinatan Or	Yonatan
7	Ran Gvili	Guy
8	Yair Yaakov	Guy
9	Rom Braslavski	Yonatan
10	Eitan Horn	Yonatan
11	Inbar Hayman	Yonatan
12	Eitan Abraham Mor	Yonatan
13	Aviv Atzili	Sahar Baruch
14	Uriel Baruch	Yonatan
15	Ilan Weiss	Yonatan
16	Alon Ohel	Yonatan
17	Bar Abraham Kupersht	Nattapong Pinta
18	Elkana Bobhot	Sudthasak Rinthalak
19	Dror Or	Yonatan
20	Hadar Goldin	Yossi Sharabi
21	Omri Miran	Yonatan
22	Yonatan Kalfon	Yonatan
23	Yonatan Cooper	Yonatan
24	Yonatan Rudaeff	Yonatan
25	Yonatan Neutra	Yonatan
26	Yonatan Nimrodi	Yonatan
27	Yonatan Zalmanovich	Yonatan
28	Yonatan Berman	Yonatan
29	Yonatan Berman	Yonatan
30	Yonatan Chen	Yonatan
31	Yonatan Alexander	Yonatan
32	Eliyahu Margalit	Yonatan
33	Nimrod Cohen	Yonatan
34	Yonatan Keidar	Yonatan
35	Yonatan Levinson	Yonatan
36	Yonatan Oz	Yonatan
37	Daniel Peretz	Yonatan
38	Yonatan Hamami	Yonatan
39	Yonatan	Yonatan

■ Dr Sheree Trotter
Historian

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

Over the past few weeks we have joined with Israel and the Jewish people in a roller coaster of emotion, as hostages held for over 15 months have been released in highly choreographed, staged affairs. We have rejoiced over the captives set free and grieved with them as they faced the reality of loved ones lost. Today we think of the Bibas family and mourn for the loss of 10-month-old Kfir, 4-year-old Ariel and their mother Shira Bibas and we send our *aroha*, our love and words of support to Shiri's husband, Yarden.

How can we forget the image of this young mother, clutching her babies to her breast, torn away from her husband and her home, her safe place? We saw the face of innocence in 10-month-old Kfir and 4-year-old Ariel. We saw the face of vulnerability and fear in Shiri, as she protected her boys with all she had, her loving arms and a protective heart. We saw the face of evil in those who violently seized her and tearing her away from her home, to an unimaginable fate in Gaza.

For months we hoped and prayed that this family would be released, along with all the other 250+ hostages. But as the months passed, hope faded, as we became more aware of the bestial brutality of Hamas terrorists and their accomplices—as reports came to light of rape, torture and beheadings, the burning and mutilation of bodies, of the use of hospitals and schools in Gaza as bases of operation and the hiding behind human shields. And in recent weeks, as hostages have been released, we've witnessed the grotesque ceremonies, the pantomime, the celebration over the coffins of the dead. What disturbed us more than the evil of Hamas, was the reaction of the western world, the propensity, to look away to turn a blind eye to make excuses to justify these atrocities...

We've seen months of moral inversion.

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

And what of Shiri?



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

The forensics team confirmed that she did not die in an Israeli airstrike as Hamas had previously claimed. The forensic scientist stated: “We were met with depths of evil and malice that could not be conceived”. The tragedy that befell the Bibas family has brought into sharp relief the difference between those who cherish life and protect the vulnerable and those who glorify death and sacrifice their own children on the altar of Jew hatred. Where we as a society stand on these issues is a litmus test for decency and humanity. Will the world continue to shield and protect terrorists, or stand with a nation that values life?

And yet amidst the terror and trauma of the past 16 months, there have been glimmers of light and hope. We witnessed last week one of the remarkable strengths of the Israeli society. As people poured out onto the streets to farewell the Bibas boys and their Mother, we saw the power of unity and love. We saw the people of Israel as one vast extended family. Ben Gurion stated, “to be a realist in Israel, you must believe in miracles”.

We've just heard the testimony of Eli Sharabi who came home after 491 days in Hamas captivity. He stated that he was aware that there was something watching over him in the tunnels and though not a religious man he would say the *shema* prayer every day. The remarkable young woman, Agam Berger, who was released after 482 days, stated: “I chose the path of faith and with the path of faith I have returned”

It says in the *Tehillim*, “He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” That doesn't mean there won't be war, death, pain and suffering, but we know that Israel will survive, as she has for more than 3½ millennia. The Jewish people have a miraculous history, a heritage and a moral code that has stood the test of time. Her enemies, among them great empires, have come and gone and yet the people of Israel are still here. They will continue. The people of Israel live! *Am Y'Israel chai!*



Dr Sheree Trotter addresses the gathering.



A solemn reminder of those who remain in captivity.



C4I Executive Director Bryce Turner and his wife Eleanor.

Bringing Hope to a Gloomy City

■ Anemone Rüger

Project Coordinator | Holocaust Survivors Ukraine

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

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

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

Who brought the flowers?

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

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

Alla's tears

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

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

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

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

Alone—over and over again

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

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

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



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



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



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

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

A precious crown

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Israel's Message Well Received in Ivory Coast and Rwanda

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Former Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

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

Ivory Coast

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



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

Rwanda

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

The board expressed strong interest in partnering with us.

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

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



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



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



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

Your Will Be Done

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recommended Reading

The New Hamas
by Rabbi Itzhak Shapira

Review by Mandy Worby

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Spirit of Anesthesia
(Stuper or Slumber)

Ancient Roman Writing Instruments | Photo: Shutterstock

■ Johannes Gerloff
Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel at War: An Assessment

■ Kameel Majdali
Director | Teach All Nations Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

area. Their dislocation lasted for many months.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Biblical Roots

By David Nekrutman

Christians Should Celebrate *Purim* with the Jewish People

Not only was Esther written and canonised within *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit), but the establishment of *Purim* on the Jewish calendar is also done by the work of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. Esther, for all intents and purposes, should not be in the Bible. It’s a story that takes place outside of Israel after giving of *Torah* at Sinai, between the First and Second Temple period, and the book does not contain God’s name in it. If I was on the Bible Canonisation Committee Board, I wouldn’t dare put Esther into the Hebrew Bible. The *Ruach HaKodesh* ensured that Esther was in the Hebrew Bible.

At first glance, the Book of Esther seems to be an exclusive Jewish experience and victory. It is quite astounding that Esther remained in the Christian canon. Certain Early Church Fathers and Martin Luther argued to remove Esther from the Bible. It was just too Jewish! How does one explain Esther’s canonisation in Christian Scriptures as well as being invoked by a remnant of Christian brothers and sisters to ‘stand in the gap’ for Israel (*Esther 4:14*)? The *Ruach HaKodesh*! I humbly believe that Christians should celebrate *Purim* with the Jewish people. Although God’s hand provided the military victory, it was both Jews and non-Jews who were the divine agents to win the war.

Traditionally, *Esther 8:17* has been translated to invoke that a mass conversion to Judaism occurred—“... Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them” (NKJV). My preferred translation is “Then many of the peoples of the land anchored their destiny with the Jewish people because the remarkable God of the Jews descended upon them.”

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

Freed to Serve

Passover: Festival of a Twofold Liberation

■ Kees de Vreugd

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deuteronomy 16 is the last iteration of the cycle of the



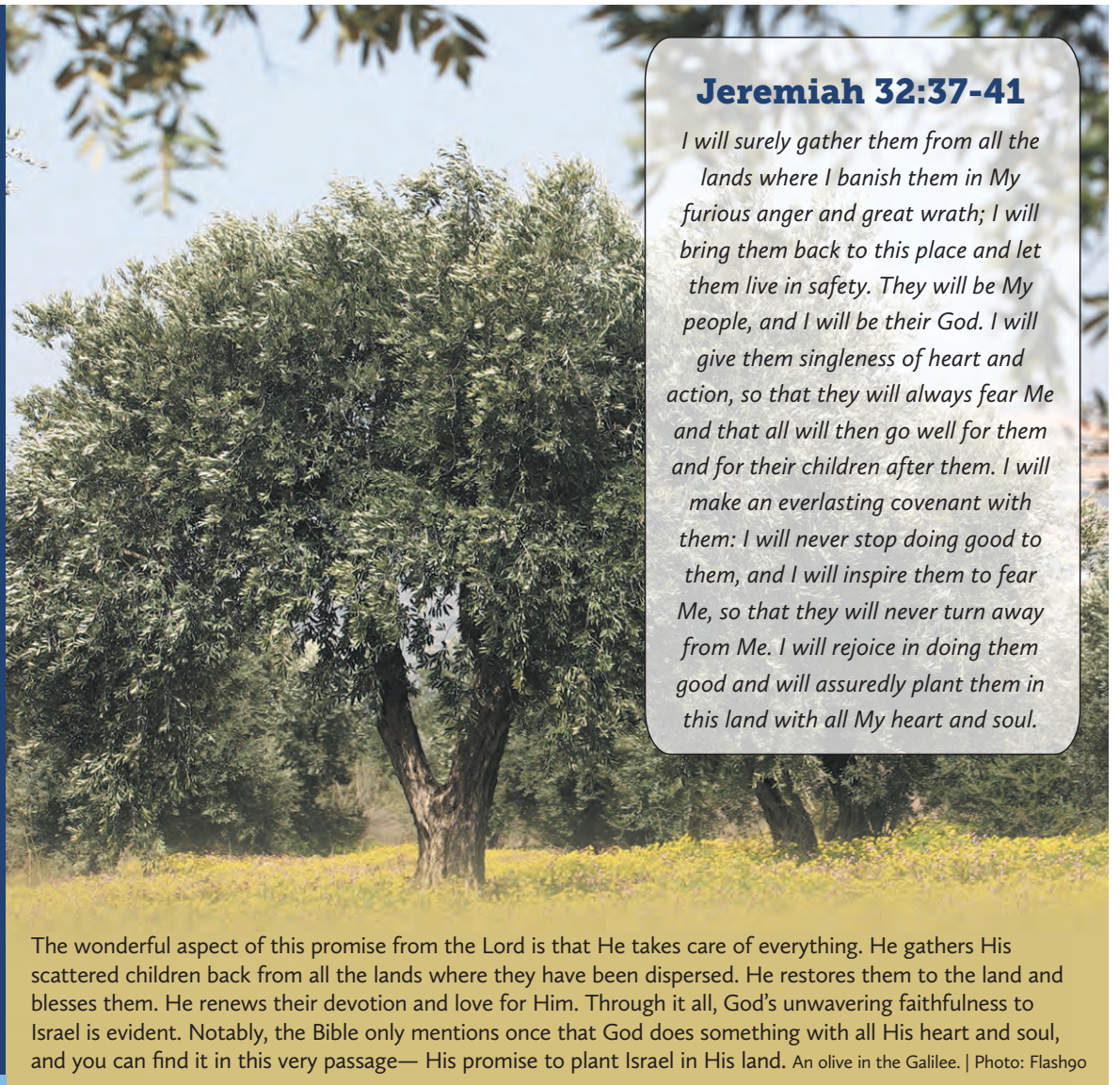
Ultra Orthodox Jews prepare Matza, traditional unleavened bread eaten during the 8-day Jewish holiday of Passover. | Photo: Flash90

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

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

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

The Bible Speaks



Jeremiah 32:37-41

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

The wonderful aspect of this promise from the Lord is that He takes care of everything. He gathers His scattered children back from all the lands where they have been dispersed. He restores them to the land and blesses them. He renews their devotion and love for Him. Through it all, God’s unwavering faithfulness to Israel is evident. Notably, the Bible only mentions once that God does something with all His heart and soul, and you can find it in this very passage— His promise to plant Israel in His land. An olive in the Galilee. | Photo: Flash90

Short News

Israel Second in List Targeted by Cyberattacks



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

| Photo: Flash90

Yad Vashem Way

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

Rare Second Temple Era Coin Found

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

■ Dr Ashley Crane

Secretary | Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia (MJAA)

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

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

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

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

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

Yom Hazikaron



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Live in Prophetic Times

■ Benjamin Philip

Director | Hineni Soup Kitchen

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

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

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

Learning from biblical times

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

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

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

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



| Photo: Shutterstock

Israel's distinct path

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

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

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

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

A mixed multitude

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shared prophetic prospect

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

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

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

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

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

Our Projects in 2024

Thank You for Your Generous Support!

Israel in need—Emergency campaign



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

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

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

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

Holocaust survivors—"Comfort, comfort My people"



Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine.

For many Holocaust survivors, loneliness adds to their financial struggles. More than half still suffer from the lasting psychological effects of their childhood trauma. The horrific events of 7 October 2023, retraumatised many, leaving them too afraid to leave their homes. With the support of the Café Europa in Jerusalem, lonely survivors can meet weekly for coffee and companionship. For many, the Hineni soup kitchen provides their only meal of the day. We were also able to support impoverished Holocaust survivors in Israel and Ukraine—through home visits, food assistance, and essential aid including medicine, glasses, and hearing aids. Your support brings comfort and dignity to those who have endured so much.

First Home in the Homeland—A soft landing

First Home in the Homeland provides young families



Providing a First Home in the Homeland.

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

Aliyah—A new beginning in Israel



Assistance with Aliyah from various countries.

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

SOS Ukraine—Helping those in need



Food parcels and emergency aid.

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

The Jaffa Institute—Giving Children Hope



Jaffa Institute, a home for children at risk.

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

ADI—Caring for children with disabilities



Help to children with disabilities.

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

Arab Christians—Support for the community



Help to Arab Christians in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

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

We deeply appreciate your support—every contribution brings hope!

Finding Comfort in the Promised Land

■ **Koen Carlier**
Aliyah Fieldworker | Christians for Israel
Ukraine

We are often asked whether we continue to visit the *olim* (Jewish immigrants) in Israel after they have made *aliyah*. The answer is both yes and no. While it is impossible to personally visit all the thousands of Jewish families we have helped, we remain connected to many—thanks to the dedication of two volunteers who themselves fled to Israel from Mariupol. Through their efforts, we continue to stay connected to many Jewish elderly and Holocaust survivors who have found refuge in Israel with the assistance of Christians for Israel.

One of these volunteers is Golda. She fled Mariupol in June 2022 and now lives in Nof Hagalil, where she has successfully integrated into Israeli society. She spends much of her time visiting Jewish elderly and Holocaust survivors who, with our help, have made the journey from Ukraine, through Moldova, to Israel. Are these visits meaningful? Golda shares her experiences.

Golda's story
“For over a year, I have been visiting

elderly individuals who have endured so much—surviving the Holocaust, World War II, the years of stability and ‘*perestroika*’ (the policy of reform in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, which brought great economic and social changes). Now, in their old age, often in fragile health, they were once again forced to leave everything behind and flee—this time from the war in Ukraine.

With the help of Christians for Israel, many of them were able to survive by coming to Israel and starting a new life here. When I visit them, I listen to their stories, hear their worries and understand how much they need our support and reassurance. Over time, we have become like family, dear friends who need to be visited so that they do not feel alone and abandoned in a new country, far from their birthplace and loved ones.”

A story of hope: Viktoriya
“Recently, I met an extraordinary woman named Viktoriya. For years, she hesitated to make *aliyah* due to her severe health problems and difficulty walking. With the help of Christians for Israel, she finally made it to Israel. Despite her frail health, Viktoriya’s



(Left) Viktoriya in Israel. (Right) Golda (left) visits Jewish elderly and refugees from Ukraine in Israel.

optimism and immense gratitude were truly inspiring. She is overjoyed to be here, receiving care and support. Meeting people like Viktoriya reaffirms how vital the work of Christians for Israel and its supporters is. Our visits and conversations bring comfort, hope, and a sense of belonging to these elderly individuals. I am grateful for the

opportunity to make a difference in their lives.”

Bringing Jews home means more than just helping them make *aliyah*—it means continuing to care for them in Israel. Thanks to dedicated people like Golda and the support of our donors, these elderly immigrants are not forgotten. | Photos: C4I

Would you like to contribute to the work our Aliyah work in Ukraine help Jewish families, the elderly, and Holocaust survivors begin a new life in Israel? Your donation makes all the difference! Together, we can continue this life-changing mission and ensure that those who have fled hardship find comfort and hope in the Promised Land.

Will you help? Any amount helps.

YES! I Want to Support Christians for Israel

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL MINISTRY

☐ My donation for ministry costs, print & post

☐ Emergency Situation in Israel

ALIYAH - BRING THE JEWS HOME

☐ One person from Ukraine - € 135 | US \$150

☐ One family (5 people) - € 675 | US \$750

☐ One bus (25 people) - € 4500 | US \$5000

☐ First Home in the Homeland - € 450 | US \$465

☐ Bnei Menashe (India) (1 person) - € 950 | US \$1000

☐ Aliyah Ethiopia

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

☐ Meals on Wheels - € 5 | US \$5 each

☐ Food Parcels in Ukraine - € 15 | US \$15 each

☐ Children at Risk - Jaffa Institute

☐ Hineni Soup Kitchen - € 7,50 | US \$7.50 per meal

☐ Holocaust Survivors Ukraine and Moldova

☐ Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC)

☐ Arab Christians

TOTAL DONATION

DONATION

\$.....

TEACHING RESOURCES

☐ Israel on Trial (Book) by Andrew Tucker

☐ 70 Questions About Israel (Book) by Chan Siew Fong

☐ Israel 70 Years (One-off Collector's Magazine)

☐ Jerusalem 50th Anniversary (One-off Collector's Magazine)

☐ Israel: Covenants & Kingdom (Book) by Willem JJ Glashouwer

☐ Why Israel? (Book) ☐ Why Jerusalem? (Book) ☐ Why End Times? (Book)

☐ Why Israel? (Trilogy Book Set)

☐ Why Israel? Study Guides (Trilogy Book Set)

☐ Why Israel? (DVD) ☐ Why Jerusalem? (DVD) ☐ Why End Times? (DVD)

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☐ Why Jerusalem? (Book, DVD & Study Guide)

☐ Why End Times? (Book, DVD & Study Guide)

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