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Understanding Israel and world events from a Biblical perspective

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Israeli ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon and UN representatives, visit the house of 58-year-old Moshe Agadi, who was killed from shrapnel wounds after his house was hit directly by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip, in Ashkelon, southern Israel, on 5 May 2019. | Photo: Flash90

Iran Sponsors New Round of Violence as Israel Goes Back to the Polls

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

Heavy violence erupted early May between Israel and the Hamas and Islamic Jihad regimes in Gaza. Four Israelis were killed and dozens injured by projectiles fired from Gaza. Those killed included Moshe Agadi, a father of four who died after a rocket slammed into his home in southern Israel early Sunday morning 5 May. During two days of intense conflict, around 25 people were killed in the Gaza Strip, including several Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists. This new round in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Islamic regimes in Gaza was part of Iran's ongoing promotion of terror in the region.

On 15 May 2019, Palestinian Arabs in Gaza commemorated the so-called Nakba Day, the annual commemoration by Arab countries of what the Palestinian Arabs call Nakba (Disaster), the founding of the State of Israel and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.

During the Nakba commemoration, Hamas and Islamic Jihad again vowed to continue the violent struggle against Israel. The two Gaza-based terror organisations organised a new violent mass-protest along the border with Israel in Gaza and again launched incendiary balloons which caused at least nine fires in southern Israel.

The Israeli military foiled a number of infiltration attempts and used riot control measures against the violent protesters wounding 60 of them.

Leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, vowed to fight Israel until the "liberation of all of Palestine from the (Mediterranean) Sea to the (Jordan) River."

This not merely rhetoric as we will see. One could argue that the Palestinian Arab terror organisations have already been trying to destroy Israel for more than 70 years and that all attempts by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to realise their goals have utterly failed.

However, something has changed over the past two years.

Since the beginning of the so-called 'Great March of Return', the violent Palestinian mass-protests along the Israeli border in March 2018, Hamas and Islamic Jihad attempted eight times to drag the Israel Defense Forces into a new war by launching hundreds of rockets at southern Israel.

At the beginning of November 2018, the parties came close to all-out war when Hamas and Islamic Jihad fired 460 projectiles into southern Israel destroying a complete building in the coastal city of Ashqelon which was levelled by an Iranian missile. The missile was a copy of the Iranian Falaq-2 and was assembled by Islamic Jihad in Gaza.

The mini-war began with an attack by a Kornet anti-tank missile on a bus which had transferred a group of IDF soldiers to the Gaza-border. Only one soldier was injured by the missile which had been supplied by Iran via its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah, according to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in Israel.

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Landmark Windmill



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

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Will Israel Annex Judea and Samaria?

■ **Andrew Tucker**
International Editor | Christians for Israel

Since the last edition of this newspaper, much has happened. ‘King’ Bibi Netanyahu, the master of the art of turning defeat into victory, emerged as the winner in the elections held in Israel early April. With a remarkable shift towards the centre/right, the political landscape in Israel was transformed. But in a dramatic and unprecedented turn of events, Netanyahu was unable to form a coalition and Israel will now go back to the polls in September.

On 25 April President Trump announced that the US ‘recognises Israeli sovereignty’ over the Golan Heights - a statement that attracted global condemnation (see the analysis on page 12). In early May, as Yochanan Visser reports on page 1, Hamas fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, this time resulting in casualties, and a strong Israeli response.

Whatever the results of the September elections, one of the main issues facing any new government will be Israel’s relations with the Palestinians, especially the question of the status of settlements.

Prior to the elections, Bibi had announced that if re-elected he would annex (i.e. extend Israeli sovereignty to) Israeli settlements in the ‘West Bank’ (i.e. Judea and Samaria), including ‘isolated settlements’. He also ruled out a Palestinian state as it would ‘endanger our existence’. In a recent tweet Netanyahu indicated he intends to fulfil that promise, referring to Judea and Samaria as ‘our patrimony’, and rejecting objections by some former Israeli security leaders that annexing parts of the ‘West Bank’ would endanger the security of Israel’s citizens.

Given the latest political crisis in Israel, nothing will be done before President Trump’s team has revealed its peace plan. The ‘deal of the century’ - a mastermind of Trump’s (Jewish) son-in-law Jared Kushner - is a highly-guarded secret (Kushner said recently even the President hasn’t read it yet). It is still being drafted as we speak and is due to be released mid-June at the earliest. Kushner has revealed enough of

the plan already for us to know that it will constitute a radical departure from the one-dimensional ‘two-state’ paradigm – the model that has dominated diplomatic discussions for the last few decades but has so far failed to produce an outcome acceptable to both Israel and the Palestinians.

Basically, the Two-State Solution says that the Palestinians have a right to a state covering all of the so-called West Bank, including ‘East Jerusalem’ as their capital.

The Two-State Solution has failed because it assumes the PLO is capable of governing the Palestinian people (as Mordechai Kedar argues, on page 4, the PA has practically no legitimacy amongst the Palestinians). But also because its main conditions are simply unacceptable to Israel. The vast majority of Israelis will not – and cannot - agree to the division of Jerusalem, creation of a Palestinian state without adequate security guarantees, and removal of all settlements. In addition, they cannot accept the Palestinians’ claim that Palestinian ‘refugees’ have a ‘right to return’ to Israel. To accept such conditions would be to sign their own death warrant.

In true Trump style, the U.S. plan will be ‘out of the box’. It will provide detailed proposals addressing core issues (e.g. suggestions for the final borders of Israel, the status of Jerusalem, the future of Palestinian refugees, etc.), but it will not be about how to create a new negotiating process; rather, its goal is to offer ‘solutions.’ Above all, the U.S. plan will have proposals for attracting investment to improve the quality of life for Palestinians, while dismissing their ‘political aspirations’. When asked to endorse the idea of demilitarised statehood that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself once proposed, Kushner said he was avoiding the term ‘state’ altogether: “If you say ‘two-states’ it means one thing to the Israelis, it means one thing to the Palestinians, and we said, let’s just not say it.”

Many are skeptical about the plan’s chances of success and worried about the risk of unforeseeable consequences if it fails. And the chances of the plan being implemented

are very slim indeed. The U.S. has no power to impose any solutions. The Palestinian leadership have already rejected the plan. European leaders are also vehemently opposed to any plan that replaces their cherished ‘Two-State Solution’.

The plan is just one factor in a major shake up in the region, and it is impossible to predict how things will play out. Bahrain has announced its agreement to host a conference in June to launch the ‘economic’ aspects of the plan - yet another indication of growing acceptance of Israel in the Middle East, due in part to the deepening hostility between the (moderate) Sunni and more radical Shiite regimes. However Israel’s peace partners Egypt and Jordan are showing little willingness to support the plan, and it remains to be seen how far other moderate Arab states will go in sticking their necks out for a proposal that does not recognise Palestinian statehood or Arab sovereignty over East Jerusalem. All of this is complicated by the attempts to get Arab states to participate in MESA (Middle East Strategic Alliance), the US-Saudi initiative to establish an ‘Arab NATO’ to counter Iran. Several weeks ago Egypt announced it does not intend to participate in MESA.

Plan or no plan, there is increasing pressure on the Israeli government to take action regarding Judea and Samaria. Many (former) IDF leaders have been warning for some time that the ‘West Bank’ is slowly becoming another Gaza. Israel must either completely withdraw or take back more control. The current policy of maintaining the status quo is untenable in the long run. But Israel will face huge resistance if it seeks to take more control in Areas A and B, and/or annex Area C - not only in the diplomatic arena but more importantly on the ground, especially from radical elements within Palestinian society, Hamas, Hezbollah and other radical Islamic forces in the region, backed by Iran. It is also hard to see how Israel could unilaterally roll back the structures that have been put in place since the Oslo agreements in the early 1990s. One way or another, an escalation of conflict in the near future seems likely.

Prayer Points

By Pieter Bénard

Israel

- Pray for Prime Minister Netanyahu as he seeks to form a coalition government, and President Rivlin as he oversees this process.
- Pray for the newly elected Knesset. Pray that the parliamentarians make good decisions and will expect help from the Lord. Pray for wisdom during the formation of the new government.
- Pray for peace in the South of Israel. Pray that the ongoing threat from Gaza will stop and that the Israeli government will take appropriate decisions in its dealings with the governing authorities in Gaza.
- ‘But the mountains of Israel will produce heavy crops of fruit for my people – for they will be coming home again soon! See, I care about you, and I will pay attention to you. Your ground will be ploughed and your crops planted. I will greatly increase the population of Israel, and the ruined cities will be rebuilt and filled with people.’ (Ezekiel 36:8-10). Give thanks to God for the fulfilment of His promises which can be seen happening in Israel right now.

Israel & the Nations

- Thank God for bringing His people home. More Jews immigrated into Israel in 2018 than in the year before. 29,600 Jews moved to Israel in total last year.

- ‘For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for My sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.’ (Ezekiel 34:11-12)
- Pray that the anti-Israel attitude of the United Nations will change, that countries will decide to bless Israel instead of to curse Israel.

Christians for Israel

- Pray for progress in the work of Christians for Israel in Asia. There are teams working in various countries. Pray for the right people to start an Asian edition of *Israel & Christians Today*.
- The rise of anti-Semitism is clear and happens (also) at high levels. As Christians, we need to stand in the gap for the Jewish people through prayer and not be afraid to raise our voice. Pray that opposition to anti-Semitism will be clear and will make a difference.
- Thank God for the opportunities we have in many countries to spread the message about God’s faithfulness to Israel.

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

Short News

Living in Gaza



The port of Gaza offers a colourful image of a lively city. All the reports about the conflict with Hamas may give the impression that the Gaza Strip is one big terror nest, but the reality is, of course, more nuanced. In the densely populated Gaza Strip is home to almost two million people. Not all of them sympathise with Hamas. Not all of them hate Israel. People live their daily lives to the best of their ability and try to provide for their livelihoods. | Photo: Flashgo

Old City Name Discovered

In the Negev desert, during an excavation, an extraordinary discovery was made: chiselled in stone it said in Greek the name of the city, Halutza. The text itself was chiselled into the stone some 1,700 years ago. This discovery is not an isolated case. Only a short while ago the remnants of a public bath and a Byzantine church were recovered out of the dust.

Dates Conquer the World



The Israeli avocado has already found its way abroad. Now dates are next. With this plan the chairman of the board of Osem is taking formal leave of his position. In the meanwhile investors are approached so that date plantations can be bought in the Jordan Valley. The plan is ambitious. Because the team wants to invest in computer systems so that the irrigation and fertilization are ideal. The date is one of the Majhoul varieties. With an increasing interest for healthy snacks the team expects that the juicy Majhoul date has an excellent chance to conquer the world. | Photo: Flashgo

Germany Defines BDS as anti-Semitic

A majority of Germany's Bundestag legislators have voted for a motion to label the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as an entity that uses antisemitic tactics against Israel.

Continued from page 1

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah later confirmed that his organisation had delivered the Kornet missile to the Palestinian terror organisations in Gaza.

At the beginning of May 2019, the same scenario came into play when Islamic Jihad snipers wounded two Israeli soldiers who were guarding the border with Gaza. That incident set off a new missile mini-war after the IDF responded by targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad related targets in Gaza.

When the parties reached an unofficial ceasefire in the early hours of 7 May, 690 missiles had been fired on Israeli cities as far as Beit Shemesh 20 kilometres west of Jerusalem and the port city of Ashdod south of Tel Aviv.

It later became clear that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and Islamic Jihad leader Ziad al-Nakhala had ordered the missile onslaught at the very time they were in Cairo to discuss a new long-term Hudna (tactical ceasefire) with Egyptian mediators.

Both leaders have strong ties with Iran and reportedly take their orders from Qassem Soleimani, the shrewd commander of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. The Quds Force is tasked with exporting the Islamic Revolution to other countries in the Middle East and beyond and is supporting and directing a number of proxies such as Ansar Allah (Houthis) in Yemen and the Hashd al-Sha'abi umbrella organisation of predominantly Shiite militias in Iraq. Sinwar was also responsible for reconciliation between Hamas and Iran in October 2017 and later openly confirmed Iran was the main sponsor of the Palestinian terror groups in Gaza.

The reconciliation became necessary after the Iranians significantly reduced their aid to the terrorist organisation over Hamas'



Protester waving Palestinian flag. | Photo: Unsplash

initial backing of Sunni Islamist rebels in Syria who tried to overthrow the Assad-regime. Egypt has a vested interest in calm in Gaza since it is still struggling with an insurgency by ISIS-inspired Islamists in the Sinai Peninsula.

Iran, on the other hand, has no interest in a lasting ceasefire in Gaza since it wants to drag the IDF into the Gazan mud to open a multi-front missile war against Israel.

Former Israeli national security adviser Ya'acov Amidror later confirmed that Iran was behind the serious escalation in southern Israel at the beginning of May. For this reason, the IDF decided to assassinate the so-called 'money man' Hamed Ahmed Abed Khudari a Hamas terrorist, who was responsible for the transfer of Iranian funds to the various Palestinian terror groups in Gaza.

It later became clear that Iran's proxy Islamic Jihad in Gaza – also called Quds Brigade- had tried to drag Israel into a new Gaza-war and that its operatives formed the bulk of the terrorists killed by the IDF.

The more than 290 Israeli airstrikes on terrorist targets in Gaza during the two-

day war, between 6-7 May, were enough to ensure a new period of relative quiet.

Iran is, however, expected to pressure the Palestinian groups to keep up the current war of attrition, and it continues to work on its plan for a multi-front missile war against Israel. For this reason, the Quds Force has supplied Hezbollah with more than 140,000 missiles and has created the so-called Golan Liberation Brigade in Syria, an 80,000 men-strong Shiite fighting force, while attempting to build missile factories in both Lebanon and Syria.

Israel has so far deterred the Quds Force from engaging in a new confrontation with the IDF, such as the one on 10 May 2018 when the Israeli air force destroyed much of the Iranian military infrastructure in Syria after 32 Iranian missiles were launched in the direction of northern Israel.

This is the wider picture of the current conflict with the Palestinian terror groups in Gaza, and it explains why the Israeli government of PM Netanyahu decided not to launch a large ground operation in Gaza in November 2018 and May 2019.

Heart and Soul

■ Rev Willem Glashouwer
President | Christians for Israel

‘...I will surely gather them from all the lands (...) I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety (...) I will give them singleness of heart and action (...) I will make an everlasting covenant with them (...) I will assuredly plant them in this land with all My heart and soul.’
Jeremiah 32:37-41 NIV

In August 1997, the Jewish World Congress in Basel, Switzerland, celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the first Jewish Zionist Congress which took place in Basel under the leadership of Theodor Herzl. Zionism was the Jewish movement which started with only one goal: going home, to Israel, to Zion. Zionism is the longing that the Most High worked into the hearts of Jews all over the world. It is not a political movement as such. But it the longing for Zion, for Jerusalem, for Israel, for the Promised land.

And Jews began to come. From the pogroms in Tsarist Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. From the countries of Central Europe.

From Poland and the Balkans. Herzl predicted in 1897 that it would take fifty years at most before there would be a Jewish State of Israel. Well, it took exactly fifty years: 1947 was the year in which the United Nations General Assembly decided that Jews could have their own homeland, and in 1948 the independent Jewish State of Israel was proclaimed.

When Ezekiel prophesies about the return of the scattered Jewish people, when he sees how the valley of dry bones comes to life, how the bones come together and tendons and flesh appear on them and skin covers them, and when he gets to prophesy breath, spirit, life into them, then the Lord says in the explanation of this vision: “(...) My people, I am going to open your graves (the Jews being like buried among the nations) and bring you up from them (from the ‘graves’ of the nations in which Jewish people were like dead), I will bring you back to the land of Israel.”

Who is bringing the Jews home? It is the Lord Himself. The time has come when the Lord will be merciful to His people and will fulfil all His promises to Israel.

He is committed to this with His all His heart and with all His soul.

As far as I know, there is only one verse in the Bible that speaks about the heart and soul of God. Many verses speak about the heart and soul of us human beings. But only one that tells us what's in the heart and soul of the Most High right now.

Jeremiah 32:37-41 says: “(...) I will surely gather them from all the lands (...) I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety (...) I will give them singleness of heart and action (...) I will make an everlasting covenant with them (...) I will assuredly plant them in this land with all MY heart and soul (...)”.

In order that soon from Jerusalem, peace will cover the whole earth, and the nations will never train for war any more. “(...) I will come to give rest to Israel.”
(Jeremiah 31:1-2)

If HIS heart and HIS soul are fully committed right now to bringing HIS people home to HIS land, shouldn't our hearts and souls be committed to that process as well?

Plea for an Eight-State Solution

■ Ruben Ridderhof

Christians for Israel Netherlands

“The will be no peace if we don’t understand Arab culture.”

Dr Mordechai Kedar is an orthodox Jew who speaks fluent Arabic and reads the Qur’an better than many Muslims. Arabic media such as *Al Jazeera* often invite him to speak, and when he does so, he passionately defends the Jewish state. “Arabs are amazed by Israel; they want to understand how Israel has become such a success in the Middle East”.

How is it that, as an Israeli Jew, you are so fascinated by the Arab culture?

“I had a wonderful teacher in high school who taught Arabic. It was through his classes that I fell in love with the Arabic language. We learned to read and write the language, and we read everything in Arabic from the Qur’an to the Arab newspapers of that time.

My knowledge of Arabic was very useful during my military service. I worked in military intelligence for 25 years, specialising in Islamic groups. At a certain moment, I really needed a sabbatical. So I started intensively studying Arab culture and mentality. I ended up becoming a researcher in the field of Arabic studies at the Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan.”

Do you think knowledge of Arab culture is necessary in order to understand the Middle East?

“Absolutely! In fact, I think that most of the problems in the Middle East today are the result of the actions over the last 100 years by Western powers who did not understand and therefore did not take into account the Arab way of thinking.

A good example was in 2011. It was called ‘the Arab Spring’. The most respected Middle East commentators in the West looked at the images from Tahrir Square in Cairo and celebrated: democracy is coming in the Middle East! But it was not to be. Look, people in the West have always known democracy. If they see a dictatorship fall, they automatically think it will be replaced by democracy. Naturally, because the West thinks within its own experiential paradigm, and imposes that on the rest of the world. They think that Israeli’s and Palestinians will end up sitting around the campfire singing *kumbaya*. But that is not the way it works here.”

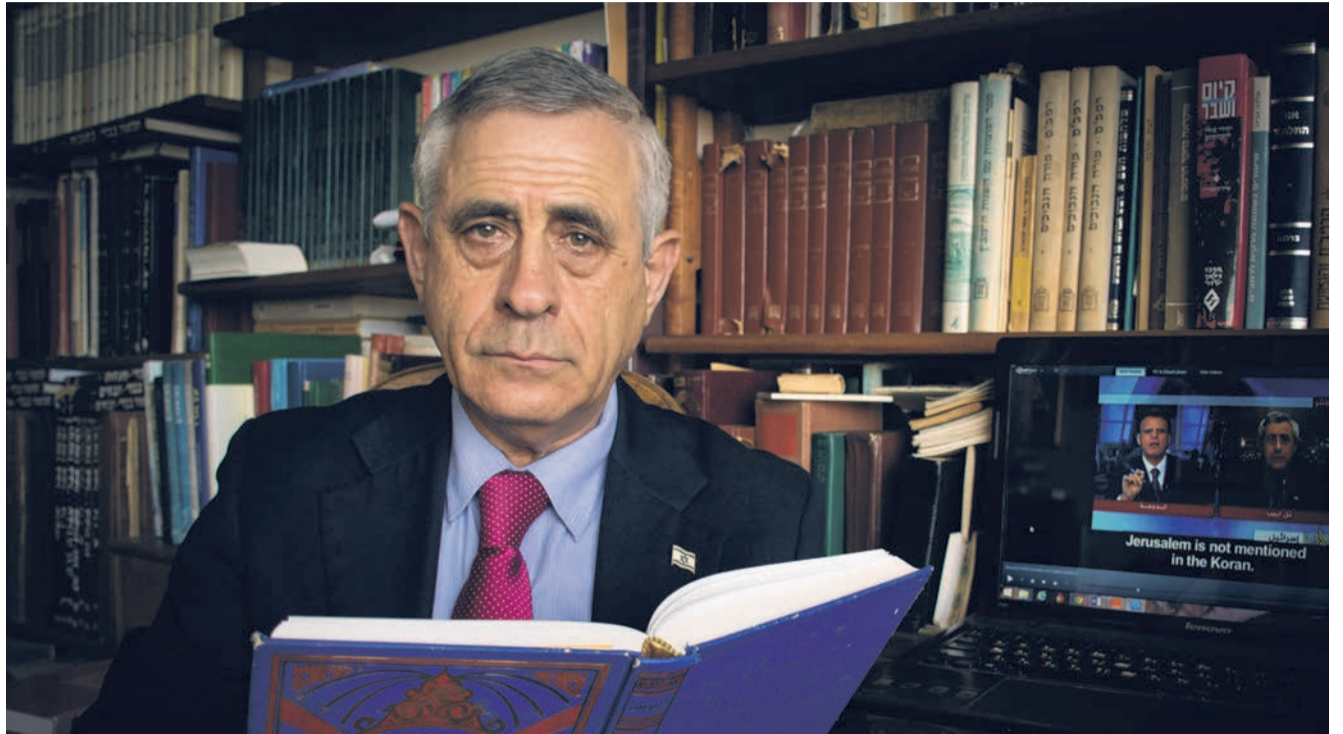
What do you think we in the West need to understand about Arab culture?

“First of all, we need to understand that tribal and ethnic background are much more important than we often realise. Take the former Yugoslavia. Since Yugoslavia collapsed in the 1990s, seven states, each with a different ethnic background, have been living alongside each other more or less in peace. The Soviet Union also disintegrated after 70 years of existence into separate republics that were established along ethnic lines. However hard we try, ethnicity is *alive and kicking!* And you can see that in the Middle East. After the First World War, the Western allied powers drew lines in the sand and installed foreign dictators. The Arab Spring was nothing other than the response of ethnic, tribal and family groups to that situation.”

So the Arab States have no legitimacy?

“The Arab world basically comprises a system of foreign dictators ruling various clans, tribes and families. Take Iraq. We have heard a lot in recent years about the different groups in that country: Kurds, Yezidis, and Arabs, comprising different religions – especially Christians, Shi-ite and Sunni Muslims who do not feel united under one flag.

In order to survive in the desert, you are dependent on others. That’s why family and tribal identity are so important in the Middle East. Loyalty to the family and tribe is more important than anything else. An Arab will



Dr Mordechai Kedar. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

hide a murderer from the authorities if he belongs to the same tribe; that is the obligation to look after a fellow member of the tribe.

A while ago a talent show was broadcast in the Middle East. There were candidates from many different countries. The winner was a young Syrian boy. When the votes of the viewers were analysed, it was discovered that his supporters were located not only in Syria but also in Iraq and Jordan. This boy was a member of a large tribe, and it was loyalty to the tribe that determined the votes.”

“When people in the West see a dictatorship fall, they automatically think it will be replaced by democracy.”

What is the role of Islam in the Middle East?

“Ah! Islam is an attempt to unite many different tribes under one flag. The religion of Islam strives to create the *umma*, which is the global body of Muslims. But there was resistance to this, even in Mohammed’s time. Islam managed finally, through massive use of violence, to conquer many tribes into submission. But the reality is that Islam has never really been able to destroy ethnic and tribal loyalties. That’s why the *umma* has never been established, and the Islamic world remains deeply divided. That’s why you see so many Muslims killing each other. Ethnicity is not only *alive and kicking*; it is *alive and killing!*”

How does that work amongst the Palestinians?

“There is no such thing as a Palestinian people. Arabs have also never used this word. This area was known as *ash-Shām* and comprised the area of what today is Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the so-called ‘Palestinian territories.’

If you open a telephone book in the Palestinian territories, you will find names like *Al-Iraqi*, *Al-Masri* and *Al-Houran*, which you will also find in Iraq, Egypt and Houran, a region in Syria. The Palestinian territories are populated by a melting pot of different ethnic groups, tribes, religions, and families. They are all supposedly represented by the Palestinian Authority. But the PA was created by Israel and the USA. No-one in the Palestinian territories feels the slightest loyalty towards the PA, because it is a violent and corrupt dictatorship.”

This means there is no negotiating partner for Israel if the Palestinian people do not support their own leaders?

“That’s right, at least not in the form of the Palestinian

Authority. Palestinians see the PA as a political dictatorship created by Israel to keep them under control. And they are right. In the Oslo Accords, it was stupid Israelis who agreed to create a terror organisation, led by the mother of all terrorists Yasser Arafat, to lead the Palestinians. Finding a solution for the conflict means finding a solution to that terrible mistake”.

Can you envisage a solution to this conflict?

“I genuinely believe that a solution can be found. It will take common sense and a long-term strategy. I advocate dismantling the PA, and establishing some form of Palestinian emirates. The only system of government that works in the Middle East is a system which takes account of the loyalty of tribes and families. That is the situation in the Gulf States, which enjoy remarkable peace and prosperity. A solution for the Palestinian territories should be based on that model. The biggest families in the Palestinian territories live in the largest cities. You could create eight city-states governed by these families, with extra space around the cities for growth and agriculture. I’m thinking of Hebron, Ramallah, Jericho, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya and Gaza – which is in fact already such a city-state. Bethlehem is more complicated, that would need more thought.”

Gaza? Isn’t that a recipe for eight terror states, like Gaza today?

“As I said, this needs a long-term vision. You cannot solve this problem from one day to the next. Israel is used to living next to hostile nations. We have had huge conflicts with Egypt and Jordan, but we managed to conclude peace treaties with both of them. In this region, you need to maintain a degree of deterrence. As long as your neighbour thinks you can do something nasty to him, he will keep his distance, and you can even live in peace with him. That’s the situation we now find ourselves in with respect to Gaza.”

And what about the rest of the ‘West Bank’?

“My proposal is that Israel annexes the territory between the eight city-states. That would also solve the problem of the settlements. We should offer Israeli citizenship to the Palestinian residents in the smaller towns, if they want it. I think most of them will immediately accept that.

I believe in this plan, as the path to peace in the Middle East. It is the most realistic solution for the long term. If it is implemented, it will take years to establish real peace. But peace will come, provided the Palestinians are prepared to focus on improving their situation and building their future, instead of fighting against Israel”.

Between Memorial Day and Independence Celebrations

■ David Lazarus
Israel Today

In the month of May, Israel observed several important days: Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom HaShoah), Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron), and Independence Day (Yom HaAtzmaut). This article, published in early May 2019, eloquently reflects the bitter reality of Israel's precarious existence between life and death, and is worthy of republication.

Yet another topsy-turvy week in Israel. One moment our heads were down racing to a shelter, the next we are looking up to the sky and seeing no more missiles. Now we're getting ready for tomorrow's Independence Day celebrations.

We barely concluded remembering our Holocaust and now tonight begins Memorial Day to honour our fallen soldiers. On Wednesday, our cemeteries will be packed with mourning crowds, and in the evening those same crowds will fill our city streets and squares with dancing and song to celebrate our independence and return to our homeland.

One more grave story for our people, one more brave story to remember. This is the bittersweet of our life in Israel. Like the fireworks that will light up the skies on our Independence Day, the celebrations will be just a temporary spark to shine some light on the pain of the price we pay to live in this land.

These contrasting poles of opposites are the story of Israel. Here we live with Left and Right, secular and religious, the mundane and the holy, conservative yet tolerant. Our very existence as a state is filled with contrast.

We have become a military and technological superpower, yet we battle daily with the boycotts and condemnations of a world that wants to limit our power



Israeli soldiers place Israeli flags on the graves of fallen soldiers in Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem, on May 6, 2019. The ceremony is held every year a few days before the Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers. | Photo: Flash90

and influence. We are the country that travelled 4 million miles to get to the moon and then crashed just a few yards before landing.

It took us 2,000 years to get back to our homeland, but even here we don't have a moment's quiet. We gave the world the Word of God's love for mankind, and we are a people hated by humanity.

Our forefathers understood this dilemma thousands of years ago when they taught us that in the beginning, in response to the chaos that was over the surface of the deep God spoke and light came into being (*Gen 1:2*). It was their faith in God that gave them strength to keep walking through the valleys and shadows of death toward the hope of greener pastures and quieter waters.

In the final analysis, only when we are willing to turn our hearts to the creator of Israel will we find the golden streets that will lead us on the path to our eternal home and our true Shalom.

We are a nation taught to love our neighbour as ourselves, and so we will feel both the pain and suffering of every Israeli and every family, and we will rejoice at our every and any unfathomable accomplishment no matter how great or small.

Happy Independence Day, Israel. May you be comforted in your hope.

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Eurovision Boosts Israel

The Eurovision Song Contest 2019 attracted thousands of fans, tourists and media from around the world. What a way to promote Israel!

The ministry of tourism organised tours throughout the country for the international press, and many events took place in the week leading up to the Grand Final of the contest on 18 May. Before each performance, a clip was shown revealing the great diversity of Israel's landscape. This all gave much publicity to the country.

Politics were mostly kept off stage. However, Madonna was criticised for her performance in which two backup dancers were wearing jackets with Israeli and Palestinian flags. Political statements are not allowed during this cultural event. Later on, the Iceland delegation showed banners with Palestinian flags during the announcement of the televoters.

More than 200 million viewers worldwide witnessed how Duncan Laurence from the Netherlands won the 64th Eurovision Song Contest in Tel Aviv.

■ Andrew Tucker
International Editor | Christians for Israel

Israel is going back to the polls. Despite a clear victory for the Likud Party in the 9 April elections, Prime Minister Netanyahu has been unable to form a coalition within the time frame allowed under Israeli law. On 29 May, the Israeli Knesset voted to dissolve itself and call for elections to be held on 17 September. As Times of Israel has reported:

"In a shocking turn of events for the longtime leader, Netanyahu failed to muster a majority coalition in the 120-seat Knesset by the Wednesday midnight deadline, due to an impasse between the secular and ultra-Orthodox members of his would-be coalition over a contentious draft law.

The standoff between the ultra-Orthodox parties and Avigdor Liberman, an ally-turned-rival who leads the secular Yisrael Beytenu party, sunk Netanyahu's efforts to form a government in the allotted 42 days. Liberman insisted that the draft law pass unchanged; the ultra-Orthodox parties rejected this, and Netanyahu blamed Liberman for the unbreakable deadlock."

The dispute between Netanyahu and Liberman concerned the latter's demand that a law be passed requiring ultra-Orthodox to be drafted to the IDF, the Israeli army. Netanyahu refused to comply.

This crisis comes at a time when Netanyahu is likely to be indicted for serious crimes. The Israeli Attorney-General

has decided to indict Netanyahu for fraud and breach of trust. In recent weeks the Prime Minister announced plans to seek the Knesset to take a decision granting him immunity. In addition it is understood that Netanyahu and his intended coalition partners had agreed that the incoming government will legislate a far-reaching constitutional change to curb the powers of the Supreme Court — giving Knesset members the authority to re-legislate laws that the court has struck down, and preventing the court from intervening in administrative decisions. Senior Likud party members and several leading current and former ministers, including Benny Begin and Dan Meridor, reacted in outrage at these reports. Of course now that new elections have been called such a law will not be passed in the foreseeable future. Netanyahu's political future is now very uncertain indeed.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu walks to a party meeting in the Knesset in Jerusalem on May 29, 2019. | Photo: Flash90

A Cruel Assignment. Psalm 2 - Part 6a

■ Johannes Gerloff

Theologian, Journalist, Lecturer & Author

When God turns to a person in a special way, when He chooses him, He gives him special status and extraordinary talents, and a task always springs from this. The anointed may be the Judean king David, the nation of Israel, the Christ Jesus from Nazareth, his followers from Jews and Gentiles or also the eschatological messianic redeemer. But the election of the anointed one always carries an assignment with itself. The Son of God is always also the Servant of the Lord. Together with the inheritance, the heir will always also receive a commission.

The 'Yes' to God's Counsel

In *verse 7* of the second psalm, we have already seen that the Messiah agreed with 'the Lord's decree.' He had decided to proclaim it. God expects the active consent of the one He has chosen to be His instrument. The Creator does not seek puppets without a will. He looks for children who consciously and resolutely want that "Your will be done" (*Matthew 6:10; 26:42; Luke 22:42*). This is now emphatically underlined once more in *verse 8*. The Lord calls upon His Messiah: "Ask of me, and I shall give nations to you as inheritance, as your possession the ends of the earth."

This challenge comes from God. The parlance reminds of Solomon's dream, where God tells the young king: "Ask me what I should give you" (*1 Kings 3:5*). Rashi phrases: "Pray to me all the time, if you come to fight against your enemies." Exactly in this manner, the raised arms of Moses decided the fight against Amalek (*Exodus 17:8-16*). God wants to be asked by those who are active on His behalf. He seeks active prayer warriors.

The Ends of the Earth

God's election may be exclusive, choosing just the Messiah or the anointed king or the anointed people or the spiritually gifted church, but the objective of God's work is never a small circle of exclusives, but always 'the ends of the earth' (*verse 8*). The Creator hears the sighing of His unredeemed creation (*Romans 8:22*) – of the whole of creation! – And He suffers from it. God loves the world (*John 3:16*), not just one group of people. Though concentrating on the individual, the Father in Heaven always keeps in view the whole of the cosmos.

Martin Luther connects *Psalm 2:8* with *Romans 15:8-9*. There, Paul writes to the Gentile Christian church in Rome: "The Messiah has become a servant of circumcision for the sake of God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises that are given to the fathers; the Gentiles, however, shall praise God for His mercy's sake."

With this connection, the reformer, consciously or unconsciously, first of all, underlines the lasting difference between Israel and the Gentiles. Luther concludes: "Therefore Zion will be given to Christ as His kingdom without Him asking for it; but the Gentiles are given to Him as inheritance as a result of His desire, as a gift of Christ, because nothing had been promised to them."

Luther then continues to develop a universal perspective: "Therefore, let us not accuse the word of this psalm of lying (so that we will not define the inheritance of Christ too tightly), neither because of the disgraceful behaviour (perfidiam) of the Turks, nor because of the multitude of others who are mistaken in error. For who else could know among us who are truly Christians? Are not even among us too many bad people, and only a few are good? The power (auctoritas) of the divine Word is greater than that we might comprehend it, how much more is it greater than our delusions (suspicio) and our imagination (phantasia) which are preoccupied with the appearance of external customs." Impressive is the modesty of these statements with regard to 'many bad people among us.' At the same time, Luther recognises in this psalm's words a hope for the Islamic world.

The ends of the earth will bow to the claim of the power of the living God. That is not a question, but a certainty. It is not questionable if this will happen, but only when

this will happen. Luther points out that the parallel between the 'Gentile nations' and the 'ends of the earth' had been observed before him: "St. Augustine thinks that here is a repetition of the same thing (tautologiam), for it is the same expressed by 'the Gentiles as inheritance' and 'the end of the world as possession.' This [repetition] is (as I have said) always an indication of certainty (firmitatis), by which our faith is strengthened even more."

A Claim of Exclusivity

The God of Israel is not just the tribal god of some desert people. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is the God before whom every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He alone is Lord (*Psalm 22:30; Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10*). Before him, each and every human being will have to answer, whether he or she wants to or not.

As much as God's character is love, as much as He is driven by the will that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (*1 Timothy 2:4*), as much is He also holy. He cannot and will not leave the rebellion of the nations unanswered. Therefore, the Messiah not only has the task of self-sacrifice, as was the case with Jesus' first coming and the fulfilment of *Psalm 2* in the time of Pilate and Herod. The anointed of the Lord also has a judicial function: "You shall break them with an iron rod, dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (*verse 9*).

Judge and Shepherd

Luther writes concerning the Hebrew תִּרְעַם (you shall break, smash), in which also the 'shepherd' רֹעֶה resonates: "You shalt smash them' (reges eos) is in Hebrew תִּרְעַם which St. Jerome translated: You shall tend them. Johannes Reuchlin, however, indicates in his 'Foundations' (rudimentis) many meanings of this word, namely: to tend, to govern, to take away, to beat, to dash, or even to smash and to crush. And this last meaning is, in my humble opinion, the most suitable for this post, first, because an iron rod, as everyone knows, is better for crushing and shattering than for grazing and governing. Secondly, for governing it would have sufficed to say, with a scepter (virga), but for grazing, one cannot properly speak of a scepter neither of an iron [scepter]."

In four Hebrew letters, thus, a whole feature of the character of God's Messiah is comprehended. We may see in these four letters the shepherd boy David, who takes care of his flock, but then definitely will become aggressive when a lion or a bear attacks (*1 Samuel 17:34-36*). We see the good shepherd going after a single lost sheep (*Luke 15:1-7*), giving His life for the sheep (*John 10:11*). But we also see the judge of the world, who calls all nations to account, distinguishing between sheep and goats, in order to send away the one 'to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life' (*Matthew 25:31-46*).

The Iron Rod

Amos Hakham explains that the 'iron rod' שֶׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל is being used 'to punish a rebellious slave. The Lord gives the king of Israel authority to subdue the rebellious Gentiles and punish them with all the severity of judgment.'

Rashi explains the 'iron rod' as 'a sword.' In *Revelation 19:15*, 'a sharp sword' and the "iron rod" stand side by side. The sword, carried by a government appointed by God, is to be feared because it "does not carry it in vain," as Paul writes (*Romans 13:4*).

For Luther, it is clear: "What is the rod (virga) of the mouth of Christ other than the Word of God, with which He smashes the earth, that is, those who are earthly-minded? What is the spirit of His lips other than the same Word of the Spirit, with which he kills the godless,



Worshippers praying at the Western Wall. | Photo: flickr

that he may live in godliness after he died to godlessness? This is the scepter, to whose point in the hand of Joseph Jacob bowed, *Genesis 47:31 [Hebrews 11:21]*. This is the scepter whose head Saint Esther touched, *Esther 5:2*."

Luther is aware that with his interpretation he leaves the ground of the simple wording of Scripture and slips into allegorical interpretation: "However, [the Gospel] is called a sceptre in metaphorical or rather in figurative speech."

Luther is not wrong when he states: "Just as the iron crushes and smashes everything, as is said in *Daniel 2:40*, so the Word of Christ crushes the great, that is, it humbles the proud, the crooked it makes just, that is, it chastises the disorderly, the straight it makes crooked, that is, it bows the haughty, the rough it makes smooth, that is, it makes the angry ones kind, the short it makes long, that is, it comforts the faint-hearted, the long it makes short, that is, it scares the presumptuous, the tightness it makes wide, that is, the stingy it makes generous, the width it makes tight, that is, the spendthrift it makes economical, the blunt it makes sharp, that is, the unlearned it makes learned, the sharp it makes dull, that is, the sages it makes fools, it takes away the rust, that is, it dispels laziness. In short, it destroys every flawed shape and changes it into another that pleases God."

The 'iron rod' in *Psalm 2:9*, however, is about more than just a figurative, symbolic function of the Word of God by which a believer is purified, sanctified and realigned. Just as the opening verses of the psalm describe a concrete situation that is visible today, the following verses are about concrete, global political events. Luther knows: "See what it means to govern them (regere) with an iron sceptre that is (as he says here) to smash many nations with an iron horn."

The comparison with the clay pot, which shatters into innumerable small pieces, is widespread in Holy Scripture (Rashi), up to the treasure that we have in 'earthen vessels', according to the Apostle Paul (*2 Corinthians 4:7*).

"The Hebrew word תִּפְצֹץ means, as Reuchlin affirms, you should disperse them, divide them, throw them apart." Luther further observes, that 'a broken pot is completely unfit for its former use, so that you see how the word of *Isaiah 30:14* is fulfilled: 'Not a shard of its pieces will be found, to get in it a fire from the hearth, or to draw water with it from a well. For a clay pot that has been broken, there is no restoration.'"

The 'staff' stands for the rule of God, which will someday be unmistakably intrinsically tangible. *Psalm 45:7* says: "Your throne, God, is forever and ever. A straight rod is the rod of your kingship." *Psalm 2* points out what Hannah, mother of the Prophet Samuel, confessed in her praise (*1 Samuel 2:6-7*): "The Lord kills and makes alive. He leads down into the realm of the dead and up [again]. The Lord makes poor and makes rich. He humbles and exalts."

This article is the sixth instalment (split into 3 parts) in a series of contributions to the interpretation of Psalm 2. Psalm 2 - Part 6b will be published in the August issue. The full text of this article, including extensive footnotes, can be found at www.c4israel.org/teaching-articles/

Short News

Happy 71st Birthday



Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, started 11 May and ended at sundown, 12 May. The original date corresponds to 14 May 1948. On that, the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel was signed. On 13 May, Israel observed Yom Hazikaron, a day of remembrance for the fallen soldiers of Israel and victims of terrorism. The message of the two days is clear: Israelis owe their independence to the people who sacrificed their lives. Yom Ha'atzmaut is celebrated by Jewish communities around the world. In Israel many people go to the parks and beaches to barbecue, attend events, concerts etc. | Photo: Flashgo

Extinguishing Fire

Members of the Israeli and Palestinian fire brigade practice together regularly. A while ago, there was a large-scale fire drill in the city of Jenin, where six Israeli fire-fighting planes were brought into action and six Israeli and two Palestinian pump vehicles. The joint drills result in good cooperation. During the forest fires near Haifa, at the end of 2016, the Palestinian fire-brigade teams hastened to assist their Israeli colleagues.

Appeal for Peace

Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, a billionaire from the United Arab Emirates posted a video on Twitter recently appealing for peace with Israel. 'Israel is not our enemy. We need to accept them and they have to accept us.' He states that cooperation would have a lot of benefits.

Ancient Trash Reveals Downfall of Empire



Once upon a time, there was a lot of trade and prosperity in the Negev. Villages and cities flourished some 1,500 years ago. Recently, archaeologists dug through ancient garbage dumps in the area. They believe they have discovered why the Byzantine Empire experienced a remarkable downfall. The urban waste management system –a sign of well-organised social life— ended abruptly in 550, probably because of a climatic disaster and disease. | Photo: Shutterstock

‘Bluetooth’ and Denmark

■ Rev Willem JJ Glashouwer

President | Christians for Israel
International Honorary President |
European Coalition for Israel

We live in a modern world. Communication is the magic word. Electronic highways connect the world and make ‘planet earth’ into a global village. ‘Bluetooth’ connects your cellphone to other systems of communication!

What is Bluetooth? Bluetooth is a short-range wireless communication technology that allows devices such as mobile phones, computers, and peripherals to transmit data or voice wirelessly over a short distance.

Where Does ‘Bluetooth’ Come From?

Believe it or not: from a Danish King in the 10th century AD! His name was Harald ‘Bluetooth’ Gormsson!

And at Jelling in Denmark, one can see the old stones with ‘runen’-inscriptions ordered by King Harald!

The Encyclopædia Britannica considers the runic inscriptions as the best-known in Denmark. The biography of Harald Bluetooth is summed up by this runic inscription from the Jelling stones: “*King Harald bade these memorials to be made after Gorm, his father, and Thyra, his mother. The Harald who won the whole of Denmark and Norway and turned the Danes to Christianity.*”

Harald ‘connected’ the Danes with Christ. From their Nordic gods, myths and demons to the God of Israel Who revealed Himself in Christ. From Edda to Torah. And Denmark placed the cross of Jesus in their national flag. Each Danish passport

to this very day shows the picture of Christ from the Jelling stone.

Rescue of the Jewish Population

The behaviour of the Danish nation about the Jews in their country during World War II was impeccable.

The rescue of the Danish Jews occurred during Nazi Germany’s occupation of Denmark during World War II. On 1 October 1943, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler ordered Danish Jews to be arrested and deported. Despite great personal risk, the Danish resistance movement, with the assistance of many Danish citizens, managed to evacuate 7,220 of Denmark’s 7,800 Jews, plus 686 non-Jewish spouses, by sea to nearby neutral Sweden.

The rescue allowed the vast majority of Denmark’s Jewish population to avoid capture by the Nazis and is considered to be one of the largest actions of collective resistance to aggression in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. As a result of the rescue, and the following Danish intercession on behalf of the 464 Danish Jews who were captured and deported to the Theresienstadt transit camp in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, over 99% of Denmark’s Jewish population survived the Holocaust.

Recent Speaking Tour

For four days (26-29 April) I had the privilege to preach and teach at various locations in Denmark about Israel and the Jewish people – and the Coming of the Lord and of His Kingdom. We met with groups of young people, held seminars in several churches and finally we had a meeting with the Danish Board.



National Viking museum in Jelling, Denmark, situated west of Vejle and it is a fascinating Unesco world heritage site. | Photo: Shutterstock

So Christians for Israel Denmark (‘Kristne for Israel’) is moving – publishing among other things a beautiful Danish newspaper! And they host a website as well.

May the Holy Spirit function as the heavenly communicator to open today the hearts and minds of many Christians and churches in Denmark for Israel and the Jewish people as Harald Bluetooth did, over 1000 years ago for Christ!

Emergency Appeal

Emergency Assistance Southern Israel

On the first weekend of May 2019, there was widespread unrest in southern Israel. In less than 48 hours over 700 missiles were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It was one of the worst rocket attacks in recent years and aimed at random Israeli civilian targets around the Gaza strip. Four people were killed and dozens wounded. Once again, a major trauma for the residents of southern Israel.

Pray for the families of the victims and the people who were injured.

Through our partner organisations in Israel, we offered to provide first aid to families in southern Israel who were directly affected by the rockets. Also, we hope to be able to contribute to the reconstruction and protection of the population of southern Israel.

There has already been an amazing response to our online emergency appeal, for which we thank all our

faithful supporters. Until now, we have received more than 61,000 euros for emergency aid in southern Israel! That sum will be used one hundred per cent for emergency aid. We feel it necessary to



A missile hit at the entrance of an apartment building for elderly people and Holocaust survivors. Your donation will be used to help repair the damaged apartments of this vulnerable group. | Photo: Jewish Agency

continue raising funds for emergency aid, because, despite relative calm at the moment, we unfortunately, expect new violence to flare up again. Therefore, your donations remain welcome! Your gift is not only a financial contribution but also an enormous encouragement for our friends in Israel. It strengthens the people in Israel to know that they

have loyal friends around the world, who stand beside them! Pray that innocent men, women and children in southern Israel and Gaza can live in peace.

You can donate by completing the coupon on the back page or online on www.c4israel.org

Jews and Arabs Together - Hope for the Future

■ **Andrew Tucker**
International Editor | Christians for Israel International

Steven Khoury felt pain in the back of his neck. He reached with his hand to touch the spot. Maybe just an insect. Then he turned around. That is when he saw them. Several men, armed with knives and heavy weapons, were approaching. “Filthy Jew-lover”, they snarled — “Traitor”. One of the men struck Khoury. He fell to the ground. They kicked him and beat him repeatedly. Finally, he was left alone.

“Strangely”, recalls Khoury, “at that moment I felt God’s presence like never before. I realised God is a God of love. As I lay there, bleeding and in agony, a wave of peace came over me. I knew, deep inside, that God loved me, and that He will never leave me. I understood what it meant to be in covenant relationship with Him. I realised that when God promises to look after us, to provide for us and protect us, He says what He means, and He means what He says”.

The Whole Bible

Steven Khoury is the son of pastor Naim Khoury, a Palestinian Christian pastor in Bethlehem. Over forty years ago, pastor Naim and his young wife Elvira came to a living faith in the Lord. Naim started to preach the gospel, and together with his wife and young family, they reached out in love to their Muslim Palestinian neighbours. They became well-known in Bethlehem.

There was only one problem. Naim taught from the whole Bible – both Old and New Testaments. He preached that God is faithful to His covenants with the Jewish people and that God is bringing the Jewish people back to the land as He had promised in the prophets of the Old Testament. He taught them that Jesus was a Jew. He spoke about the Kingdom of God and God’s purposes with the Jewish people, and he encouraged them to look for the return of Jesus.

That is when the attacks started. Molotov cocktails. Naim’s brother was murdered on the Mount of Olives. The church in Bethlehem was bombed. Death threats became a reality of daily life.

Steven grew up knowing that his father pays an enormous price for following Jesus and loving the Jewish people. Gradually, Steven came to realise that he, too, has a calling to demonstrate and express Jesus’ love, forgiveness and grace, and his faithfulness to the Jewish people, to the Palestinian people.

Step by step, Steven came to realise that it is because of God’s faithfulness towards his People, that we Gentiles can know God as a faithful God. “I can claim the promise in *Genesis 12:15-17* as my own because I know God is faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If I can’t trust God’s continuing faithfulness towards the Jewish people, why should I trust Him to be faithful to me?”

An Orthodox Jew in Brooklyn

At the same time as Steven Khoury was discovering his vocation in Bethlehem, a young Jewish man in Brooklyn got an unexpected phone call that would change his life forever. David Nekrutman – a descendant of Jewish refugees who fled the pogroms in Minsk (present-day Belarus) to New York in the 1800s - was working at the Israeli consulate in New York. One Friday morning, his boss, the Deputy Consul General of Israel in New York, called David from Jerusalem. “I have to stay here for an emergency. Can you attend a meeting in a Spanish-speaking church in New York tomorrow? It is walking distance from your home so that you won’t violate the Sabbath.”

David had never been in a church. The only thing he knew was that Christians hate Jews and that they persecuted his people for centuries for being “Christ-killers”. He called his Rabbi. “Rabbi, what should I do? Can I enter this church?” The Rabbi replied: “We are in a war. In times of war, you do what your commander tells you to do. You need to speak in that church”. And so, David attended the meeting, and for the first time discovered that there are Christians who love the Jewish people. The next thing he knew, he was appointed by the Consulate to look after relations with the Christian world.

Several years later, David made Aliyah to Israel. Soon after, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin called him. “It is time for us Orthodox Jews to reach out to Christian Zionists”, explained Riskin, who himself had left America to become the Chief Rabbi of Efrat. And so the Centre for Jewish Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC) was born in 2008. David became the Executive Director, a function he still fulfils.



Steven Khoury



David Nekrutman

Jews and Arabs – United in Covenant

Ten years ago in Jerusalem, David invited Steven to accompany him to a meeting in the USA. A friendship was born. Today, David Nekrutman considers Steven Khoury, his best friend. “I love Steven as a brother. Who could have imagined, in his wildest dreams, that an Orthodox Jew from Brooklyn would one day become best friends with a Palestinian Arab Christian from Bethlehem? God works in mysterious ways!”

Nekrutman and Khoury are working closely together on many projects. CJCUC supports the Khoury’s ministry, which has grown into the largest, fastest-growing Christian Arab evangelical ministry in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Together, David and Steven travel the world to tell Christians and Jews about how God is bringing Jews and Palestinians together, in a bond of love.

Nekrutman: “With a covenant land, comes covenant responsibility. We Jews have an obligation to help the non-Jews in the land. God called us, and brought us back to the land, in order to be a blessing to others. But it goes deeper than that. Steven Khoury has inspired me to be a better Jew. His willingness to sacrifice his own life has changed my life. I realise that together, we are fulfilling God’s divine mission to establish the Kingdom of heaven so that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Christians for Israel is proud to support the First Bethlehem Church and Holy Land Mission. Read the article on page 15.

Israel's Story in Maps

■ Map 4 | Israel in the Middle East

An isolated democracy in a sea of totalitarian states

Israel lies on the eastern Mediterranean Basin, and borders Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. There are 22 Arab countries surrounding Israel. In other words, there are 22 dictatorships or unstable regimes in the region and just one Jewish democratic state. Israel upholds democratic values, providing equal rights to Arabs and Jews, men and women. There are over 500 million Muslims and 7 million Jews living in this region. The Arab world is 500 times larger than the State of Israel.



■ Map 5 | The British Mandate in Palestine

Current-day Israel is only a quarter of the size of the original territory of Palestine that was intended to become a Jewish homeland.

1917: The Balfour Declaration announces the support of Great Britain for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish People in the territory known as ‘Palestine’.

1920-22: At the San Remo Conference in April 1920, in order to implement the Balfour Declaration, the Principal Allied Powers decided to create Mandates in the territories of the defeated Turkish empire. In 1922 the League of Nations appointed Great Britain as Mandatory of the Mandate for Palestine. Following Arab riots in 1920-22, British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill published the White Paper in 1922, dividing Palestine into east and west and retreating from the goal of creating a Jewish homeland in all of Palestine.

1923: The League of Nations approves the division of ‘Palestine’ into two parts: 76% east of the Jordan River renamed Transjordan and given to Emir Abdullah, and 24% west of the Jordan River designated for the Jewish homeland.



A Suitable Climate for Returning to Israel

James E. Patrick
Theologian | Israel & Christians Today UK

The bitterness of the Holocaust will forever be tasted in Jewish memory with the sweetness of the re-establishment of the state of Israel three years later in 1948, the death and resurrection of a nation. Antisemitism and aliyah are unavoidably associated. But some will ask us, Why focus so much on Jewish aliyah to Israel? Isn't this just the sort of colonialist settler approach that is said to be the cause of conflict with the indigenous Arabs? Or are we just trying to get all the Jews back to the land to be destroyed in Armageddon before Jesus returns, as some Christians believe? Surely the solution is to sort out antisemitism against Jewish people here in Britain, rather than trying to ship them all off to Israel?

Answering Objections to Aliyah

Far from being colonialists, the Jewish people are truly indigenous to the land of Israel, even before the land was first settled, according to the Bible. As father of all humanity, Noah granted Shem authority over Canaan under God's supervision (*Genesis 9:25-27*). It was understood that Shem's heirs would, therefore, have authority in whatever land Canaan's family chose to settle after leaving Babel (*Genesis 10:19; 11:1-9*). This is the simplest explanation for why Abram's father Terah, a direct descendant of Shem, had already set out from Ur to enter the land of Canaan (*Genesis 11:31*), even before God's call to Abram to complete the journey. Despite various periods outside the land, Abraham's descendants through his grandson Israel have always had an everlasting covenant promise from God of returning to that specific land (*Genesis 35:10-12; Psalm 105:6-11; Jeremiah 32:37-41; Romans 11:28-29*).

Jewish return to the land is of course never without hardship, even simply in relocating to a new culture, let alone the surrounding political and military tensions. The prophets do recognise that only with the coming of Messiah will permanent peace be established (*Micah 4:1-8; 5:1-5a*). Even so, the prophets also speak of spiritual blessings for those who return, far outweighing any threat of opposition from other nations. More on this below.

Yet belief in the benefits of the Jewish return to Israel does not excuse us from our duty to defend the Jewish people in our midst against antisemitism. Micah prophesied that 'the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on vegetation' (*5:7*). Jewish people have a divine gift of bringing fruitfulness and prosperity to any nation that hosts them. This happened to everything that Potiphar owned when Joseph served in his house (*Genesis 39:5*). It is also why Jewish exiles are told to 'seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... for in its welfare you will have welfare' (*Jeremiah 29:7*). It is to Britain's benefit that the Jewish people stay, but it is to their own benefit that they return to Israel. We have shared in their spiritual blessings, so we are indebted to serve them in material ways (*Romans 15:27*), first in Britain and also whenever they wish to return to Israel.

In Britain as also across Europe, antisemitism is increasing – whether from far-right Muslims and fascist nationalists, or left-wing anti-Israel liberals and socialists, to the ongoing shame of the Labour party. Evidently this is creating a 'climate' in which some Jewish people are seriously considering leaving the country. But the present article has a far more literal meaning of 'climate' in mind, and one that relates to the land of Israel rather than to Britain. If God empowers the Jewish people to bring prosperity to lands in which they reside, what might we expect Him to do with the land to which they are returning?



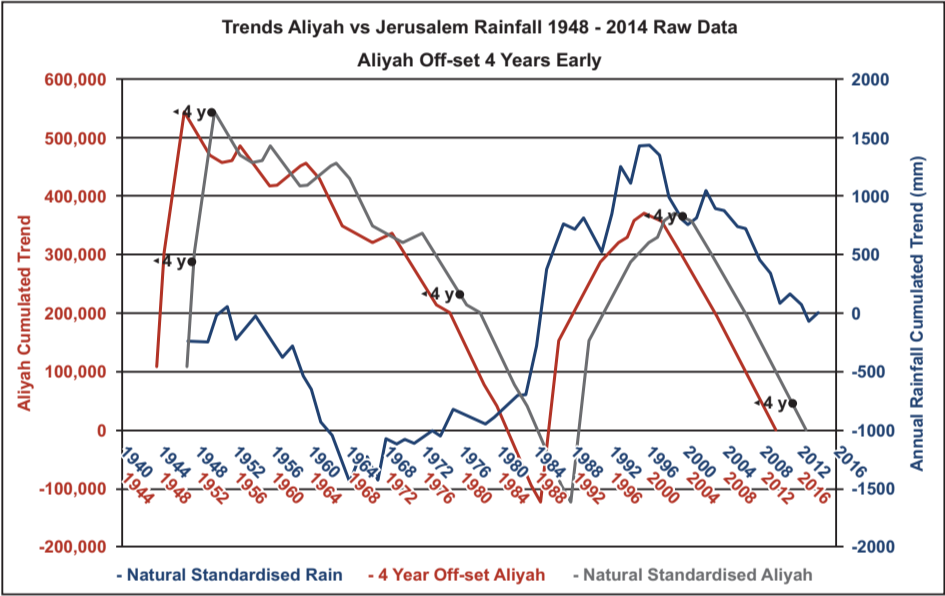
View of the Meitzar Waterfall in the southern Golan Heights, on 31 March 2019. | Photo: Flash90

Rising Rainfall Anticipated Waves of Immigration

In Israel this year, the winter has been particularly wet, and the hills have never looked so green, clothed in spring wildflowers. Even the dry wadis of the deserts are rushing with water – an image that the psalmist used for the vast quantities of exiles God will bring back to the land in the last days (*Psalm 126*). Although Israel has developed world-leading innovations in water technology, it still depends heavily on rain for its basic needs. As God said to Moses in 'the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares...'

However, the land was a desolate, dry wasteland for many centuries, described by Mark Twain on his visit in 1869 as 'a silent mournful expanse'; even Galilee was referred to as 'these unpeopled deserts, these rusty mounds of barrenness'. The Ottoman empire had decided to tax local Arab landowners not according to their actual harvest but according to the number of trees on their land. Over time, therefore, increasing deforestation led to infertile land and the occasional malaria-infested swamp. How then has such a land managed to sustain the many millions of additional Jews and Arabs who have arrived during the past century and a half? In the 1880s, early Jewish settlers planted eucalyptus trees widely, which can cope with dry conditions and can drain swampland. Yet even Israel's remarkable achievements at reforestation cannot account for the complete transformation in climate since research shows that tree planting actually reduces available water.

In 2016, a Tel Aviv scholar Assaf Hochman published an academic paper, showing for the first time that 'the first Aliyah' (immigration) to Israel during 1882-1904 initiated during favouring climate conditions (cool and wet) to establish an agricultural community in the region. These conditions were found to be exceptional compared to other periods since 1750. More and more people have been noting this unusual correlation between increased rainfall and the waves of aliyah. David Pawson's 2015 book *Kingdoms in Conflict* recorded how he asked a meteorologist for Israel's rainfall figures over the past 150 years, and plotted it against the political history. He found that 'Every time there was an aliyah, a new wave of immigration of Jews to Israel, the rainfall went up'.



In early 2018, two news websites reported on an unpublished study by Australian Gary Auld, whose data was provided and analysis approved by climatologist Hadas Saaroni of Tel Aviv University, even if she does not accept his idea of causal correlation. Auld concluded that 'the annual rainfall in Jerusalem since the rebirth of the State of Israel, and the flow of the aliyah over the same period, have similar trends'. Evidently, the biggest spikes in rainfall coincided with or closely preceded 1948 and 1991, the periods of greatest influx of immigrants, as well as 1967, when the Six Day War opened up the formerly occupied Jordanian 'West Bank' to restored Jewish settlements.

This 'climate change' is precisely what God prophesied to the land of Israel through Ezekiel the prophet (*36:8-10*) – 'O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown. I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it.'

Even more significant, though, is how natural rain is a biblical sign for spiritual renewal, as Elijah the prophet realised (*1Kings 18; Joel 2:23, 28-29*). Later in *Ezekiel 36, verse 24* onwards, God promises first to bring the exiles back, and only then to 'sprinkle clean water on you' and 'put my Spirit within you'. This is the great spiritual blessing in store for those children of Israel who hear God's invitation to return to the land, in this time of restoration of all things.

So as *Zechariah 10:1* urges us, 'Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain... and He will give them showers of rain'. May He pour out His Spirit upon Israel abundantly in our days.

Jewish Festivals

Yom Yerushalayim

Jerusalem Day

2 June 2019



Jerusalem Day (Yom Yerushalayim) is an Israeli national holiday commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem and the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City in June 1967. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared Jerusalem Day a minor religious holiday to thank God for victory in the Six-Day War and for answering the 2,000-year-old prayer of ‘Next Year in Jerusalem’.

Rosh Chodesh Sivan

New Hebrew month of Sivan

4 June 2019

Beginning of new Hebrew month of Sivan. Sivan is the 3rd month of the Hebrew year. Corresponds to May or June on the Gregorian calendar.

Shavu’ot

Festival of Weeks

9-10 June 2019

The festival of Shavuot is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan (late May or early June). Shavuot commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah to the entire Israelite nation assembled at Mount Sinai, although the association between the giving of the Torah (Matan Torah) and Shavuot is not explicit in the Biblical text. The holiday is one of the Shalosh Regalim, the three Biblical pilgrimage festivals. It marks the conclusion of the Counting of the Omer.

Rosh Chodesh Tammuz

New Hebrew month of Tammuz

3 June 2019

Beginning of new Hebrew month of Tammuz. Tammuz is the 4th month of the Hebrew year. Corresponds to June or July on the Gregorian calendar.

Tzom Tammuz

Walls of Jerusalem breached

21 July 2019

Tzom Tammuz is a Jewish fast day commemorating the breach of the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple. It falls on the 17th day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz and marks the beginning of the three-week mourning period leading up to Tisha B’Av. Like other minor fasts, Tzom Tammuz begins at dawn (first light) and ends at nightfall (full dark).

8th Thesis: Restoration

Kees de Vreugd

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

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

Thesis 8: We believe that the restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel is the beginning of ultimate redemption. We believe that the nations carry a responsibility to help the Jews return.

Elaboration: We behold and believe that the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel, and the establishment of the State of Israel is a sign of God’s faithfulness to the everlasting promises and Covenants that He made with Israel and the Jewish people. Together with Israel, we will thank, worship and praise the LORD for the beginning of redemption and the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies leading to the ultimate redemption.

Clarification: After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Chief Rabbinate added a prayer for the State to the liturgy of the Shabbat morning service. In carefully formulated words, the Eternal One is given thanks for Medinat Yisrael (the State of Israel) as the ‘beginning of the blossoming of our redemption’.

Some parts of Orthodox Jewry have their reservations, though. Some are convinced that the nation of Israel can only live in peace in the land of Israel, in the Promised Land, if and when the promised Messiah has come. Admittedly, the present State of Israel is a secular state that is not perfect, where mistakes are made and will be made, against the expressed will of the Eternal One. Therefore, it is not our duty as Christians and churches to always endorse and

applaud without criticism the policies of the Israeli government. Despite this, on the basis of God’s promises, we as Christians and churches should back, and will unequivocally back the right of the State of Israel to exist, and therefore reject all kinds of vicious boycott actions and attempts of the enemies of Israel to get rid of this Jewish State in the Middle East. Israel is and must be a safe haven for the so often persecuted and dispersed Jewish people, God’s people. For many of the Jewish people, the existence of Israel and living in the Promised Land is an expression of their Jewish identity.

Edward Mwesigwa Baligonzaki

Christians for Israel Uganda



Comment: The restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel is the beginning of ultimate redemption.

Consequently, the nations have a God-given responsibility to help the Jews return to Israel.

God’s heart is for Israel, and the eyes of the world should also be for Israel. However, ever since God’s promise to Abraham there has been a diabolical plot to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Whether it was the plot of Haman, as written in the Bible 2,500 years ago, or the plot by Hamas for the past 25 years, Israel has continually been in the crosshairs of the enemy’s attack (and those enemy’s attacks are both natural as well as spiritual). God’s unchanging heart for Israel is not based on their worthiness but rather on his irrevocable, unconditional, unilateral everlasting covenant with Israel.

God, refers to Israel as his firstborn son, my people, and the apple of his eyes (among other expressions of God’s love towards Israel). God’s commitment to Israel is something so fundamental that it should never be taken lightly. So, the issues of Israel whether big or small, physical or spiritual are issues of God’s dealing and glory!

The re-gathering of Jewish people to Israel and God’s promises of their future spiritual restoration to God, have nothing to do with whether they deserve it - as a matter of fact, the Bible says they don’t. Rather it has everything to do with the mercy of God who will ensure that his holy name will be vindicated among nations.

If we as Christians, churches and as nations wish to fulfil our God-designed destiny, then we must share God’s heart for Israel. God will judge nations based on their treatment of Israel. As Ed Flannery so eloquently stated, “The pages Jews have memorised have been torn from our histories of the Christian era.”

The time and hour is now for trends to change and for the church and nations to carry God’s heart for Israel. No wonder the enemy opposes Israel as a nation because their (Israel’s) future salvation signifies the end of the devil’s rule.

Christians, therefore need to continue praying and advocating for the rights of the Jewish people to live in safety and security in their own ancestral homeland and the modern state of Israel.

Israel has been restored as a nation. Its spiritual restoration will also take place (Ezekiel 36:24). Now is the time for an awakening in the church towards renewed awareness and sensitivity towards Israel. We must trumpet the message of God’s heart for Israel as well as support the believers both Arab and Jew labouring in the land of Israel.

Book Review

Learning Messiah: Israel and the Nations:
Learning to Read God’s Way Anew
by Edjan Westerman

If you would ask a random Christian to summarise the Biblical message in one sentence, the answer would probably be along these lines: God sent His Son to save a world lost in sin. The story of the Bible as kept in the collective Christian mind is that of creation, fall, and salvation through Christ. In that summary, Israel does not appear, and yet the history of God’s relationship with Israel covers at least two-thirds of the Bible. You could call this the narrative of much of classic and modern theology.

In his book Learning Messiah, Edjan Westerman, a retired minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, exposes that pattern as structurally supersessionist. There is no real place for Israel in the narrative. Does the Christian message necessarily imply the ultimate superfluity of Israel?

If so, then the unity of God, and His faithfulness to His promises, appear to have no lasting meaning. Consequently, there needs to be an alternative to the traditional narrative, an alternative that reads the two-part canon in one continuous story.

That is what Westerman proposes; a ‘canonical narrative’ covering the entire canon of both Old and New Testaments. In a sense, he is retelling the story of the Bible, thus proving the pivotal role Israel has in salvation history, from creation to redemption.

Key to this canonical narrative is the priestly calling of Israel. From that calling, we can also understand the relationship between Israel and other nations prior to the appearance of the Messiah, and following His coming. Moreover, we discover the profound unity between the Messiah and Israel.

The calling of Israel in the midst of the nations has an abiding character. The nations will receive blessing through Israel. When we, as believers from the nations, recognise this abiding calling of Israel, we also recognise that we want to receive blessing through Israel. Thus we acknowledge also that Israel has a different calling from the nations. In the Messiah, there is unity, but it remains a unity in diversity of Israel and the nations.

Learning Messiah can be ordered from the Christians for Israel webshop. Edjan Westerman, Learning Messiah. Israel and the Nations: Learning to Read God’s Way Anew. Wipf & Stock 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5326-5425-1 (paperback); 978-1-5326-5426-8 (hardcover); 978-1-5326-5427-5 (Ebook).



The Feast of Shavu'ot

■ Rev Cornelis Kant

Executive Director | Christians for Israel International

"You shall count seven weeks (...) Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God" (*Deuteronomy 16:10*)

Our Pentecost has amazing roots in the Old Testament. Pentecost comes from the Greek word *'pentekosta'*, which means 50. On the day that the Holy Spirit was poured into the hearts of those people in Jerusalem, the Feast of Weeks was being celebrated in the city. Thousands of people from different countries had come to Jerusalem for the feast. Not for Pentecost, as we know it, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was yet to come. They celebrated the 'Feast of Weeks'. *'Shavu'ot'* means 'Weeks'. As described in *Exodus 34* and *Deuteronomy 16*. After celebrating Passover in the night before the exodus, the people of Israel started on their journey through the Sinai desert. After seven weeks of seven days, they arrived at Mount Horeb. The next day Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, the visible sign of God's Covenant with His people. Fifty days after liberation from deathly slavery they received the sign of the Covenant from God Himself.

Shavu'ot is an exuberant feast day: "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God" (*Deuteronomy 16:11*). How wonderful to realise that exactly fifty days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead we also received a sign of God's faithfulness: The Holy Spirit as 'the earnest of our inheritance' (*Ephesians 1:14*). Pentecost is also a feast of joy.

In Israel, the Feast of Weeks is also called the Feast of the Firstfruits. It coincides with the harvest of the wheat.

A part of the harvest, the firstfruits, was sacrificed to the



A field of wheat. | Photo: Unsplash

Lord (*Leviticus 23:10*). Now it becomes even more special. For in the New Testament we, as Christians who receive the Holy Spirit, are also called firstfruits: "God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit" (*2 Thessalonians 2:13*). Just as the firstfruits of the harvest were consecrated to God, so we as believers are consecrated to God as firstfruits. That is why, as Christians, we no longer live for ourselves, but have become disciples of Jesus, followers of Him. Jesus is God's only begotten Son: His firstborn. He gave His life as a sacrifice for us. Through the Holy Spirit in our hearts -

we may believe in Him, and we ourselves become 'firstfruits'. Isn't it wonderful that both God's teachings on Mount Horeb and the Holy Spirit of Pentecost do not come from within us, but are given to us from above, by God? It is all a gift of grace to the Jewish people as well as to Christians. We both live by grace. In Israel, *Shavu'ot* is celebrated with flower parades and feasts. We also celebrate our Pentecost with joy and music as a sign of the Christian church's connection and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people.

Lessons from Following Our Rabbi

■ Mandy Worby

Christians for Israel Australia

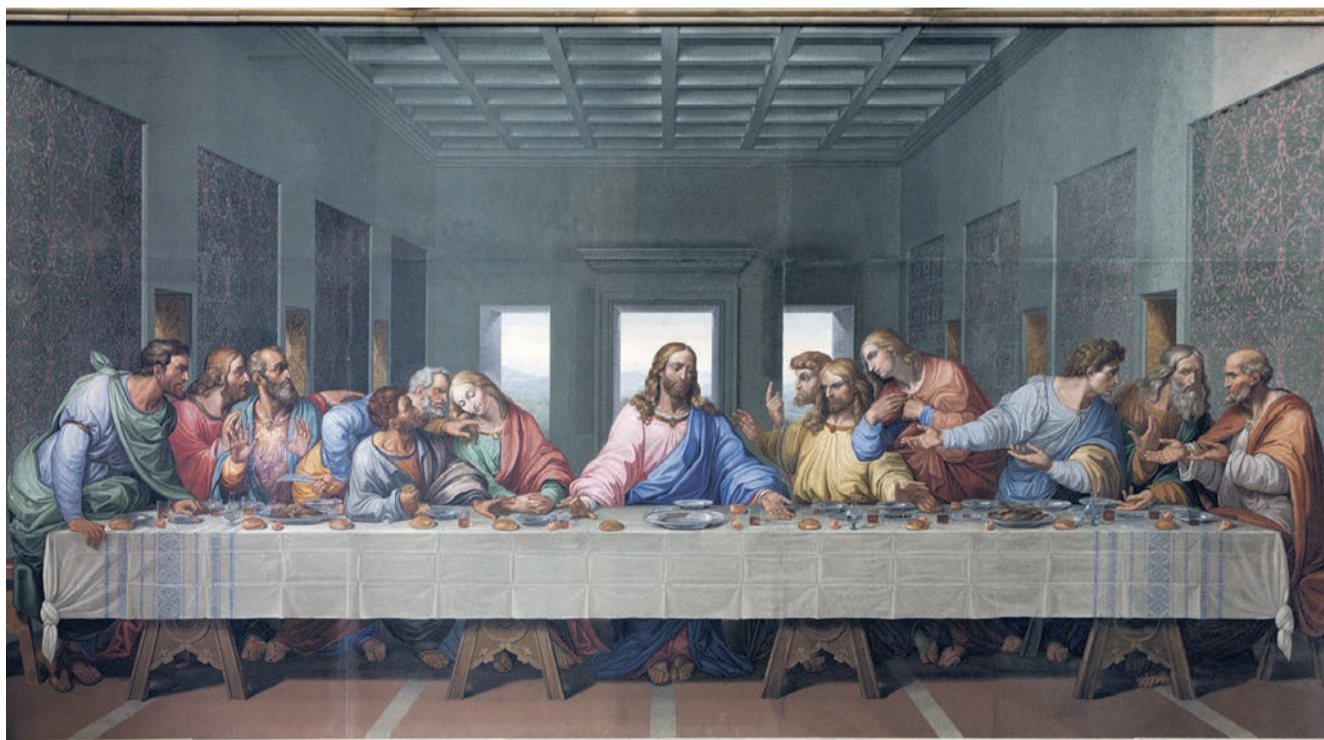
In the early centuries of church history, the Hebrew foundations of Christianity were removed due to anti-Jewish biases, and the cost to both Jews and Christians was huge. Context and culture are incredibly important for understanding the Bible correctly.

Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* was painted in 1498, and over half a millennia later it was in a terrible condition. Some paint was flaking, it was damaged from pollution and humidity, and was in such disrepair that, in 1977, Pinin Barcilon was tasked with restoring the masterpiece.

She had to tackle nearly 500 years' worth of dust, grime, deterioration, mould, candle soot and several appalling attempts at restoration from the eighteenth century. Heavy coats of varnish, glue and poor efforts by painters filling in the gaps with their own interpretations needed to be removed.

Every square centimetre of the painting was photographed, and months of preparation work undertaken before it was even touched. Once the work commenced, a good day may have revealed a section the size of a postage stamp; it took 22 years to restore *The Last Supper*, finishing in 1999.

The essence of the scene was unchanged, but the gloomy shadows were gone. Andrew was no longer sullen, Jesus' face glowed, Matthew had blond hair not black, Peter's beard and nose were finally clear, Thomas had his left hand restored, and the vibrant colours of the master were revealed after being hidden for centuries. The 'before and after' photos online show the difference the restorers made. It was the same picture but with far greater clarity and vibrancy.



Mosaic of Last Supper of Jesus by Giacomo Raffaelli in the Minoriten church as a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's painting. | Photo: Shutterstock

I use this example to make my point about the Hebrew foundations of Christianity. The Bible is Jewish; the words in it come from Jewish thought, mind and cultural contexts. The language of the Scriptures Jesus used is Hebrew; the prophets were Jews; the apostles were Jews; our Messiah Jesus was, and remains, a Jew. If you want to understand the words of Jewish prophets, kings, priests, apostles and the Messiah Himself, then you need to understand Hebrew culture and custom, and the environment in which those words and events took place.

The picture you already have won't necessarily change, but the details, clarity, significance and the message will

absolutely take on greater meaning and depth.

Some things will absolutely be very different—but the goal is to know the truth.

This new series will focus on the Hebrew basis of our Christian faith. I hope that the segments will enrich your life and reignite your passion for Scripture.

Mandy Worby is an experienced Israel Tour leader and also the popular radio host of 'Night Vision' featured on Australia's national Vision Christian Radio network Monday to Friday 7-12pm. www.vision.org.au/radio/night-vision.

Some elements and content in this article are taken from the book 'Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus' by Lois Tverberg. www.ourrabbiJesus.com

Legal Status of the Golan Heights

■ Gabriele Luise

The Hague Initiative for International Co-operation

President Trump's recent announcement that the USA recognises Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights (Golan) has been very controversial and was met with fierce criticism from the international community. This is based on the widespread belief that Israel's claim to sovereignty over the Golan is contrary to international law. Trump's announcement, of course, does not change the legal status of the Golan. But what is the status of this area? Why does Israel insist on keeping control, and why is this so controversial?

The announcement must be seen in light of the unique geographic situation of the Golan Heights and the complex political and military situation in Syria. The Golan Heights is made up of a 480-square-mile volcanic (basalt) rock plateau perched above the Hula Valley to the west and Jordan Valley to the south. It rises gently from 600 feet in the south to 3,000 feet in the north, with abrupt escarpments dominating the valleys to the west and south.

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 – which Syria and other Arab States immediately tried to destroy – Syria immediately turned the plateau into a huge network of bunkers and artillery positions. Syrian gunners, shooting at random and without provocation, would fire on Israeli fishermen plying their trade on the Sea of Galilee or at Israeli farmers in the Hula Valley below. That was the situation when Israel – unexpectedly – took control of the Golan Heights during the 1967 Six Day War.

Today, Syria is a major existential threat to Israel. Writing in late 2018 (i.e. before President Trump's proclamation), international expert Colonel Richard Kemp described the context of Israel's control of the Golan Heights as follows:

“Syria is now and will remain for the foreseeable future under the domination of Iran. Through both actions and words, we know the Iranian ayatollahs are intent on aggression against the Jewish State. They are establishing a land corridor from Iranian territory through Iraq and Syria to Israel's border and plan to link their forces in that area with Hezbollah's strong offensive forces, including 100,000 rockets, in southern Lebanon. They have positioned their own forces and their proxies where they can threaten Israel and are intent on building these up and maintaining them in position for the long-term.”

“The Syrian government, as the civil war dies down and when it reconstitutes its forces with Russian assistance, will itself threaten Israel at Iran's behest; and Hezbollah and other Iranian proxy militias will also continue to do so. If these — or any other — malignant entities gain possession of the Golan Heights, the threats of indirect cross-border fire could well escalate, leading to the deaths of Israeli civilians and forcing Israel into an overwhelming response that would cause significant bloodshed. This would potentially draw southern Lebanon into a conflict that could easily explode into a regional war”.

Against this background, in a paper recently published by The Hague Initiative for International Co-operation, *US Recognition of Israeli Sovereignty over the Golan Heights*, Dr Matthijs de Blois, Senior Fellow of *thinc.*, reflects on the question whether Israel's acquisition of and continued control over this territory is contrary to international law. This question, according to Dr. de Blois, is complicated and deserves a nuanced approach.

Dr. de Blois describes the close historical connection between the Jewish people and the Golan. The Jewish people have continuously lived in this region from the times of Joshua until the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Golan were originally intended as part of the Jewish homeland, as per the San Remo Resolution of 1920. However, in 1922 Britain and France agreed that the Golan would instead fall under the Mandate for Syria. So it came that the Golan were controlled by Syria upon its independence in 1946.

When Syria declared war on Israel in 1948, the plateau was repeatedly used as a strategic position to attack Jewish villages in Israel's Galilee region. In 1967, during the Six-Day



Golan Heights, Israel. | Photo: Unsplash

War, Israeli forces captured the Golan, out of military necessity of achieving a defensible border. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel miraculously kept control of the region – failure to keep control of the Golan would have resulted in annihilation of the State of Israel. And in 1981 the Golan officially became a part of Israel when Israeli law and administration was extended to the region. This was condemned by the UN Security Council (UNSC) as ‘null and void’. The UNSC repeated that no territory can be acquired by force under international law.

The prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force is at the heart of the fierce criticism from the international community of President Trump's Golan announcement. The US President has been accused of ‘[legitimising] Israel's illegal conquest of occupied territory’. Many international lawyers observe that Israel has no legitimate claim to sovereignty over the Golan because the acquisition of territory, even in defensive wars, has been prohibited by international law since 1945.

... Israel's security, its very existence, depends on maintaining sovereignty over the Golan.

Dr. de Blois acknowledges that the prohibition of acquisition of territory by force is today a foundational principle of international law. But the question whether Israel gained sovereignty over the Golan Heights should be judged by international law not as it stands today but as it was understood in 1967 (when Israel acquired control over the Golan). At that time, it seems, the law was still largely undecided on the matter. As leading international lawyer Professor Eugene Kontorovich notes, there is a difference between aggressive and defensive conquest. In 1967 there was no consensus on whether states could acquire territorial sovereignty as a result of a defensive war. As former International Court of Justice (ICJ) President Stephen Schwebel noted in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, ‘no weight shall be given to conquest, but such weight shall be given to defensive action as is reasonably required to ensure that such Arab territory will not again be used for aggressive purposes against Israel.’

It was only in the 1970s that the prohibition against territorial acquisition from the threat or use of force became customary international law. De Blois disagrees with the “one size fits all” approach advocated by some, and stresses that the status of the Golan deserves a more nuanced approach. He observes that, when applied to cases where a state acquires territory acting defensively against a neighbour that is consistently trying to annihilate it, such a blanket rule would do little to deter aggression. Without the

fear of territorial loss, countries like Syria that launch aggressive wars to acquire territory, but in the process lose some of their own territory, and continue their aggression to reclaim such territory, would only be encouraged to maintain their state of hostility towards their neighbours. Such consequences would surely be at odds with the Charter of the UN.

Further, Dr. de Blois calls to mind that every state has the right to live ‘in peace within secure and recognized boundaries’, as reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 242 (October 1967). History makes abundantly clear that Syrian control of the Golan will not, for the foreseeable future, result in peace and security for Israel. Israeli control of the Golan Heights is the only guarantee that it will not be attacked by Syria. To that extent, he argues, Israel may have a valid claim to sovereignty over the Golan, and therefore recognition of that sovereignty by the US is justified.

However, President Trump did not rely on the legality of territorial acquisition. Instead, he focused on the ‘necessity’ argument – that Israel's security, its very existence, depends on maintaining sovereignty over the Golan. Dr. de Blois argues that even if Israel's claim of sovereignty over the Golan is at odds with international law, it does not lead to liability if a ‘state of necessity’ can be invoked. Moreover, it can be argued that the continuation of Israeli control of the Golan will only serve the interests of stability and security in the region.

Respecting Israeli jurisdiction over the Golan is, to use the words of Schwebel, necessary in order to give ‘such weight ... to defensive action as is reasonably required to ensure that such Arab territory will not again be used for aggressive purposes against Israel’. As Ambassador Alan Baker has recently observed: ‘An aggressor state that loses its territory after an offensive war and consistently refuses all efforts to make peace for over half a century cannot expect to maintain a genuine right to claim back the territory.’ Therefore, the criticism of both the Israeli claim and the recognition thereof by US President Trump appear unwarranted.

In conclusion: the question of whether Israel has validly acquired territorial sovereignty over the Golan remains undecided. However, an argument can be made that such a claim to sovereignty is justified on the basis that in 1967 Israel was fighting a defensive war. In any event, even if Israel cannot claim sovereignty, international law is clear that Israel has a legitimate right to administer the Golan on the basis of its security needs. Syria's consistently aggressive attitude towards Israel and the growing influence and military presence of Iran and other actors in the region stress the ‘state of necessity’. Dr. de Blois believes that this conclusion is justified under international law as it currently stands and constitutes good legal policy.

For more information see: www.thinc.info

Ancient Jewish Village Discovered

Courtesy of United with Israel

An excavational dig taking place in the Sharafat neighborhood of eastern Jerusalem, where an elementary school is to be built, has uncovered the remains of a Jewish village dating back some 2,000 years to the Hasmonean period, says the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).

The excavation is being carried out on behalf of the Jerusalem municipality, funded by the Moriah Jerusalem development corporation.

The IAA says that the finds have included the remains of a large wine press containing fragments of many storage jars, a large columbarium cave (rock-cut dovecote), an olive press, a large ritual bath, a water cistern, and rock quarries.

“It seems that this burial estate served a wealthy or prominent family during the Hasmonean period. The estate was in use for a few generations as was common in that era,” according to Ya’akov Billig, who is directing the excavations for the IAA.

The most significant feature of the excavation is an extravagant burial estate, which included a corridor leading to a large courtyard chiseled into the bedrock, says the IAA.

“Such quality craftsmanship of architectural elements is very rare, found mostly in monumental buildings or burial estates in the Jerusalem area,” it added.



Archeologists unearth Jewish community from Hasmonean period at construction site in eastern Jerusalem. | Photo: Arutz Sheva TV

The entrance into the multi-chambered burial cave was through its facade, behind which oblong burial niches were carved into the stone walls.

The earth covering the courtyard of the burial estate contained some large building stones, some of which are elaborate architectural elements associated with the Second Temple period.

The current excavation is said to have exposed only a small part of a larger village that existed to its south.

However, despite the limited exposure, the finds seem to indicate that the village was of an agricultural nature, and among other things produced wine and olive oil, as well as breeding doves. During the Temple eras, doves were needed for both a Temple offering and for food.

Landmark Windmill in Jerusalem

Marijke Terlouw Christians for Israel Netherlands

The Montefiore windmill in Jerusalem is a real tourist attraction, especially for Israelis. It is an amazing location to take beautiful photos, either of the mill or the Old City of Jerusalem. But now there is an extra reason to visit the windmill: a few months ago Jerusalem Wineries opened a Visitor Center inside.

According to the manager, there is a lot of interest in the wines that are sold at the mill. You can do a tasting, browse and watch a film about the history and restoration of the windmill. The wines are all the same brand: Jerusalem.

Vineyards

Interesting, wine from Jerusalem? “Yes,” the manager enthusiastically replies, “This place, these hills around the windmill, used to be covered in vineyards. They were tended by the Christians from the Old City. No one lived outside the safety of the city walls, but the land was used.

When the first Jews came to Jerusalem at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they bought grapes from the vineyards to make wine. No, they didn’t buy the wine because it wasn’t kosher. But they could use the grapes just fine. So from a historical point of view, it isn’t strange that wine is being sold here again.”

Visiting

The manager knows that the windmill was restored by Dutch donors through Christians for Israel. He quickly

takes a bag of flour from the shelf. “This flour is from the mill; we grind flour regularly. Visitors can see the inside of the windmill. Every month we open the floors above the store to visitors for one week.”

On the plaza at the windmill, there is an attractive wooden cart where you can buy coffee. Together with some tables and chairs, it makes the area around the windmill more inviting. Now you can take in the view of Jerusalem with a nice cup of coffee.



| Photo: Shutterstock



| Photo: Christians for Israel



| Photo: Christians for Israel

Letters of the Aleph-bet

By Kees de Vreugd

Tav

The *tav* is the 22nd and last letter of the aleph-bet. The original sign consisted of two crossed lines, sometimes in the form of an x, sometimes of a +. From this, in several stages, not just the actual *tav*, but also our T developed. *Tav* means ‘mark’. Originally, it represented a softer t-sound than the *tet* (the ninth letter), though in modern Hebrew pronunciation there is no difference. In some dialects, however, in certain cases, it sounds like English th, or even, in *Ashkenazi* (Eastern-European Jewry)

as an s. Instead of Shabbat, for example, they would pronounce Shabbos.

In the prophecy of *Ezekiel*, we read that when God was about to destroy the temple, He ordered His angel to “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed” in the city (*Ez. 9:4*). They literally received a *tav* on their foreheads.

The numerical value of *tav* is four hundred. Abraham paid four hundred shekels of silver to Ephron to buy a

grave for Sarah (*Genesis 23*). Interestingly, the numerical value of Ephron is four hundred, too.

Tav is the last letter of the word *emet*, truth. The word *emet* is the seal of God, the *Talmud* (Jewish tradition) says, for “The sum of Your word is truth” (*Psalms 119:160*).

The word *emet* further consists of the *aleph*, the first, and the *mem*, the middle letter of the aleph-bet! So there is a large distance between the positions of these letters. Truth, the *Talmud* then explains, is difficult to find, as opposed to lie (*sheqer*, see the

letter *shin*). However, the letters of *emet* have a firm base, while those of *sheqer* all balance on one foot: truth stands firm, while lie does not.

But why is the *tav* taken as a symbol for truth, and not the *aleph*? That is because you have to perceive the end. Very often, in the beginning, we do not see it. Only when we see the result, we discover that the way of *emet* was the only passable road. In this sense, the *tav* represents the final destination, the truth that will be revealed completely in the last stages of the coming of the Messiah.

Short News

Top Hospital



In a worldwide hospital top-ten, the Sheba Medical Centre in Tel Hashomer, near Tel Aviv takes tenth place, according to the English magazine Newsweek. The hospital is “a leader in the field of medical science and biotechnical innovations, both in the Middle East and worldwide,” according to the editorial staff. | Photo: Flashgo

The Secret of Sleep

For centuries it has been a mystery as to why living creatures actually sleep. Scientists have conducted a lot of research into it. Israeli scientists think they now have the answer. For that purpose, they meticulously examined the nerve cells in transparent, young zebra-fish. And what did they find? Sleep provides rest to nerve cells, rest needed to recuperate the DNA in these cells properly.

Computerised Customs Check



“Did you pack your luggage yourself?” Everyone who has come to Israel before has heard that question asked. This standard question is still asked today by security guards at the Israeli airport Ben Gurion. But soon a robot will ask that question. Smart machines should reduce the long delays at the airport. Israel is also installing passport gates for foreign travellers with a biometric passport. Nowadays you sometimes have to queue for quite sometime before the passport control. | Photo: Flashgo

Smart Road Initiative

Israeli company ElectReon has developed a wireless loading technology. This technology can accommodate wireless loading of electric trucks and buses while driving on the road via a copper strip installed under the asphalt. ElectReon recently won a tender in Sweden, and a 1.6-kilometre road will be built using this technique. The road will be built as part of a 4.1-kilometer route between the airport and Visby on the island of Gotland.

Views from Bethel



Bethel is neighboured by several Arab towns, like Ramallah. | Photo: Flashgo

■ Rev Henk Poot
Christians for Israel Netherlands

We continue our journey along highway 60, the ancient patriarchs’ route to the south. It is still mountainous, but the area is busier. You can tell that we are approaching Ramallah. It is close to the destination of today’s journey, Bethel, which is situated along the border between Ephraim and Benjamin’s territories.

We drive through the streets of modern-day Bethel and stop at a broad high round platform. From the top, you get an amazing view of the whole area. To the east is Ofra, another Jewish town. It is not very well-known but is likely to have been the Biblical town of Ephraim, where Jesus was taken after the Sanhedrin, under Caiaphas, sentenced Him to death (*John 11:54*). Nowadays, Ofra is known for the girls’ high school whose students are active participants in one of our projects: Lev Benjamin. After school activities and vacation, camps are provided here to children with mental disabilities.

Ramallah sprawls ahead of us. Behind it, when the weather is clear, we see the contours of Jerusalem, the city of God. It takes us back to *Genesis 12*, which records that Abraham journeyed south and set up his tents between Bethel and Ai. He built

an altar at Bethel and called on the name of the Lord there. That was where he saw Zion for the first time. He had no idea of everything that would take place there, of what the future held for him. There in the distance he also saw mount Moriah, which he would later climb with his son.

Once we climb back down, we walk out of town along a winding country road until we reach the ruins of what was once a mosque. The mosque was presumably built on the ruins of a church, which in turn was built on the ruins of a synagogue. The reason is soon clear. Next to the rubble, there is a standing ladder, a bronze sculpture silhouetted against the sky. There is nobody around, just as when Jacob was fleeing from Esau and decided to spend a night here. He took a stone for a pillow and dreamed. Next morning he woke up, rubbed sleep from his eyes and stammered, “Beth-El, house of God, the gate of heaven. I had no idea.” He saw angels and heard the voice of God speaking about promises and protection and a way back. When you stand here, you have an urge to look up to heaven and then down to see if you might be able to spot that particular stone.

Later, Bethel would become a place of idol worship. The northern tribes turned away from Juda and Jerusalem and built a new

sanctuary on the border. The prophet Amos raged against Jeroboam II for the sacrifices he offered here and forbade him from opening his mouth in Bethel. Hosea says, “The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.” (*Hosea 8:6*)

All of this was long ago. There is nothing left of the calf, and Jeroboam’s national temple has disappeared. What is here is a flourishing Jewish community wanting to serve God in the footsteps of Abraham and Jacob, here at the gate of heaven.



The ruins of a mosque, church and presumably a synagogue at the traditional location where Jacob dreamed about the ladder from heaven. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons



The sanctuary that was built by the northern tribes stood on this plateau. | Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Time of Relief and Fellowship

■ Steven Khoury
President, Executive Director | Holy Land Missions

The book of Acts offers us a pattern of how the church originally lived and worshipped together in a tightly knit unit. “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people” (Acts 2:44;46). At First Baptist Church, we hold fast to this Biblical truth, knowing that fellowship and community is vital to our spiritual growth and maturity. That is why our *Family Camps* are so important to us.

For the past decade or so, we have set aside a weekend every summer for families from our congregations all over the country to come together like the Believers we read about in Acts 2. Every year, approximately 300 fathers, mothers, sons and daughters from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho and so forth join us on these retreats. It is a time for brothers and sisters in the Lord to fellowship, to share the truth and love of Jesus that we have in common, to break bread, eat and relax together, and to join our voices in worshipping God as one.

Stepping Outside the Stress and Struggles

“For us, the conference is a special treat, something so out of the ordinary,” Nareman, one of the participants, shares. “We are not used to taking many trips or going somewhere on social outings. So when we do, it is a time we treasure, a time that God uses to speak to our hearts.”

Life for Christians in Bethlehem is often not easy. The conferences, Nareman explains, allows her family to step outside the stresses and struggles of daily life to focus solely on worshipping and loving God. “You get to leave all that behind. For three days, it is just about your family and God. We can learn, pray and worship without



anything distracting us. And God has used that time so wonderfully to draw me closer to His heart.”

Thanks to the Family Camp, Nareman, her husband and their children enjoy a richer, fuller relationship with God. But spiritual growth is not the only way in which her family has benefited, Nareman explains. “All the families attending First Baptist Church here know one another. Over the years, we have become friends. But it was only once we attended the first Family Camp that I really had the opportunity to connect deeply and profoundly with my brothers and sisters.

Nareman and her family’s testimony is in no way uncommon. Time and time again we have witnessed

God’s anointing to grow, knit together and refresh families during these times of community with other Believers.

We want all the families in our flock to be part of the Family Camp – regardless of their financial ability. With your help, Nareman and her family, as well as other families will be able to enjoy Family Camp with us!

Christians for Israel has been supporting the First Baptist Church for many years. Our goal is to raise US \$15,000 this year to support their Family Camp. You can donate by completing the coupon on the back page.

Making Charity Happen in Samaria

■ Sondra Oster Baras
Director | CFOIC Heartland

Energetic, amazingly warm and spirited are words that best describe Anat Safrir, a one-of-a-kind charity powerhouse in Samaria. Born and raised in Even Yehuda, near the coastal city of Netanya, Anat comes from a farming family where she learned the importance of helping others, as they would consistently apportion their surplus produce to the hungry.

Anat and her husband Ilan moved to the Samaria community of Barkan in 1994, and for more than a decade, Anat has been working in the social services department of the Samaria Regional Council, responsible for special humanitarian projects.

Over the past seventeen years, Anat has felt blessed to have been involved in so much charity work for so many



Anat Safrir in front of the Barkan Senior Citizens Center, a project of the Samaria Family Assistance Programme, funded by Christians for Israel.

families in need. Strengthening individual families who live in Samaria is critical to providing a solid foundation for community living and expansion.

More than 100,000 Jews are living in Samaria today, spread out over 30 small communities and several larger towns, covering a large area in the heart of Israel. The small communities come under the umbrella of the Samaria Regional Council, and its social services department. Sadly, about a third of the families in the Samaria Regional Council’s jurisdiction live below the poverty line. Hundreds of families experience economic difficulties, and many of them require food staples just to maintain a basic standard of living.

For years, the social services department has worked tirelessly to provide families in need with the basics, restoring their self-worth and sense of dignity. As the social workers interact with both community leaders and individual families, they can assess the needs. Government funding will help provide programmes and subsistence funds to those with the greatest need, while the social workers work with the families to teach them financial management skills and help them find employment. But often, a family needs the most basic help – food and clothing.

The Samaria Family Assistance Programme was developed to provide food packages to needy families even as they receive counselling and employment assistance to help them step out of poverty. And Christians for Israel, through CFOIC Heartland, has been involved with this programme since its inception:



Anat and her volunteers pack hundreds of food parcels for needy families, thanks to Christians for Israel.

“CFOIC Heartland does exceptional work assisting us in providing needy families with food regularly. It’s okay not to have the newest clothes or sneakers on the block, but food is a necessity. This is what I was born to do. This gives me a sense of purpose,” Anat explains.

Christians for Israel has always been generous in providing funds in difficult situations – a family in need because the main breadwinner has been murdered by terrorists, or because he or she has suddenly lost a job. A mother who is diagnosed with cancer or a father who is suffering from mental illness. These are the people whom Christians for Israel has helped over the years. This is a partnership that the people of Samaria can count on – a partnership that continues to provide food for the needy families of Samaria.

Support the Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria through CFOIC. You can donate by completing the coupon on the back page.

Koen Carlier
Christians for Israel Ukraine

Every Jewish family who goes to Israel leaves for different reasons. That's why we always ask them what motivates them to go. So we put that to sixty-year-old Edick, who recently left for Israel with his 84-year-old mother Schindla, a Holocaust survivor.

On arriving at Edick's apartment, just before leaving for the airport, we were let in by Alona, the caretaker who has cared for Schindla these past two years. We introduced ourselves to Schindla, but she didn't say a word and looked at us very suspiciously. It was a typical Soviet apartment: two small rooms. Edick came in from the other room, gave us a friendly smile, and we started talking. He said he'd been praying to be able to go to Israel with his mother for either seven or seventeen years - I did not understand exactly what he said. Either way, he had been praying for a long time. Edick had been reading the Bible a lot, especially scripture verses that talk about the return, and would often say to his mother: "Let's do what the Bible says and go to our homeland". But Schindla was a bit stubborn and would always say: "Let's wait a little longer". Edick eventually considered going by himself, but he didn't want to leave his mother alone.

Your Wish Will be Fulfilled

One day, a few months ago, Schindla said to her only child: "Your wish will be fulfilled. I am ready to leave Ukraine indefinitely." Edick looked at his mother in unbelief, but she really meant it. The official papers were quickly taken care off. An interview at the Israeli embassy in Kiev, exit visa and date of departure were arranged by the Jewish Agency. Schindla has difficulty walking, but she was very determined. Slowly but surely she walked to the bus without saying a word. Two other families were also going.



Edick and Schindla at the airport with Koen, right before departing for Israel. | Photo: Christians for Israel

Saying Goodbye

When everyone was on the bus, we introduced ourselves and shared how Christians for Israel helps people to return practically, in collaboration with the Jewish Agency. Once at the airport, we helped everyone with their luggage, seventy kilograms per person. After everyone was checked in, we gave them instructions as to what to expect on their arrival in Tel Aviv and also gave them a calendar showing the Jewish holidays. Right before saying goodbye, I asked Edick whether he'd been praying for seven or seventeen years. He laughed and said: "From the age of seventeen, I have prayed regularly

to be able to return to my homeland." I did the math and said: "Edick, you have prayed for 43 years?" He smiled and nodded. "Yes, I have". I was amazed.

Right before going through security, Schindla suddenly grabbed my hand, looked at me kindly and said: "Thank you very much, may the Almighty bless your work!"

God is Faithful

On the way back, I kept thinking of those 43 years. Truly, God is faithful and answers prayers. Not in our time, but in His time.

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